

ANATOMY OF A RACE RIOT

TIME

NEWARK
CAB DRIVER
JOHN SMITH

THE NATION

RACES

Sparks & Tinder

(See Cover)

The Los Angeles ghetto of Watts went berserk in 1965 after an unemployed high school dropout named Marquette Frye was arrested for drunken driving. In six days of rioting, 35 died, 900 were injured. In 1966, the Cleveland ghetto of Hough erupted when a white bartender denied a glass of ice water to a Negro patron. And in Newark, N.J., a trumpet-playing Negro cab driver by the name of John Smith last week became the random spark that ignited the latest—and one of the most violent—of U.S. race riots.

Smith was driving his cab through winding, brick-paved streets in Newark just after dusk one evening. Ahead of him, moving at a maddeningly slow pace, was a prowling car manned by Officers John DeSimone and Vito Pontrelli, on the lookout for traffic violators, drunks, and the angry brawls

that often mar a summer's night in a Negro neighborhood. In the stifling heat, Smith grew impatient and imprudent. Alternately braking and accelerating, flicking his headlights on and off, Smith tailgated the police car. Finally, after a quarter-mile of tailgating, Smith tried to swing past the police. They cut him off. *Who the hell? . . . Goddam . . . Son of a bitch!* There was a short scuffle, and Smith was trundled into the squad car.

It might have ended there, like any one of a thousand police-blotter items. But Smith's arrival at the station house happened to be seen by scores of Negro residents of the red brick Hayes Homes housing development across the street and by other cab drivers as well. Out over the cabbies' crackling VHF radio band went the rumor that white cops had killed a Negro driver. Within minutes, cabs and crowds were converging on the grey stone headquarters of the Fourth Precinct in the heart of Newark's over-

crowded, overwhelmingly Negro Central Ward. By midnight, the first rocks and bottles were clattering against the station-house walls; by the next day, the tinkle of broken glass was counterpointed by cries of "Beat drums, not heads!" Out charged a phalanx of police to break up the crowds. After three hours calm returned, but not for long. Along the ghetto grapevine, the word was passed: "You ain't seen nothin' yet." By that evening, New Jersey's largest city (pop. 405,000) was caught up in the fiercest race riot since Watts.

Four nights running, and even during the heat of the day, snipers' bullets spanged off sidewalks, night sticks crunched on skulls, and looters made off with the entire inventory of scores of stores (one small Negro boy was seen carrying table lamps his own size). New Jersey's Governor Richard Hughes proclaimed Newark a "city in open rebellion," declared a state of emergency, and called out the National Guard. More



NEWARK NEGROES TAUNTING NATIONAL GUARDSMEN
Terrifying in the very triviality of the immediate cause.



SMITH (RIGHT) & LAWYER LOFTON

Summary in soul music.

than 4,000 city police, state troopers and Guardsmen patrolled the city's debris-littered streets.

The toll in human suffering mounted hourly. Before the week was out, at least 21 people were dead, more than 1,000 injured, another 1,600 arrested. Property damage soared into the millions.

No Call for It. The very triviality of the riot's immediate cause made the Newark outburst particularly terrifying. It seemed to say that a dozen or so people could be killed in almost any city, any night, by the purest chance. In the past three years, racial riots have flared in some 50 U.S. cities, from Harlem to Hough, Chicago to Cin-

cinnati, Boston to Buffalo, Watts to Waukegan. Most began with a vagrant spark, and often it takes nothing more than that.

In Hartford, Conn., last week, a Negro luncheonette owner threw out a Negro customer for getting fresh with a waitress—and the upshot was two days of violence. What began as a dispute between Negroes ended in damage to 14 shops, a few of which were white-owned; it also brought injuries to 14 of both races. Police in Erie, Pa., broke up a sidewalk crap game among Negro youths—and the result was two days of stonings and stick-work. Officials in Cincinnati, Tampa and Buffalo, where ghetto dwellers rampaged earlier this summer, nervously sought ways to avert fresh flare-ups. Racial disturbances also occurred in Plainfield, N.J., Laurel, Md., Kansas City, Mo., and Miami.

As unlikely a place as Waterloo, a nice, small city of 75,000 in northeast Iowa's dairy area, was touched, too, by the madness. Waterloo's Negroes make up only 8% of the population, are well integrated into the schools, and enjoy an unemployment rate of a minimal 2.3% (well below the current national average of 4%). But trouble exploded anyway. A young Negro, in full view of a prowling car, deliberately knocked down an old white man who was sweeping the sidewalk in front of a tavern. His arrest touched off yet another 48 hours of rioting by Negro youths—to the perplexity of their elders. Said Albert Morehead, 68, a Mississippi-reared Negro who takes pride in the symbols of his success in the

North—a neat frame house and around it flourishing patches of greens and flowers: "I can't see no call for it."

Preferred Brands. There seemed to be little call for the explosion in Newark, either. Nevertheless, after building up slowly, it spewed violence in all directions. After the first pop bottles and bricks were heaved, the looters moved in. Harry's Liquor Store, a fueling stop about a block from the precinct house where Cabby Smith was booked, became the first target. A brick smashed the unprotected display window; gallons of liquor poured out—into throats, not gutters. From other liquor stores, Negro looters formed human chains that reached clear around corners. They went first for the imported Scotch (Chivas Regal and Johnny Walker Red Label were the preferred brands), then for the bourbons and gins, next for vodka and champagne and—when everything else ran out—for cheap muscatels and cordials. TV stores were hard-hit. "I can get \$500 for this color set," exulted one looter. "It's got a \$1,000 price tag on it."

Negro youths clambered onto the iron grilles shielding store fronts and, straining in unison, ripped them free. They sometimes spared stores whose windows bore the crayoned legend "Soul Brother," a sign of Negro ownership. In stores owned by "Whitey," clothing was stripped from mannequins, and the headless, pale pink forms soon dotted the length of Springfield Avenue, one of Newark's shopping streets, along with a fine, crunchy layer of window glass. Women pranced through supermarkets with shopping carts, picking and choosing with unwonted indifference to price tags. One young Negro mother was stopped by cops as she exited from a bicycle shop, her four children riding on shiny new tricycles. She was arrested, along with 350 other looters; countless others got away with the swag.

Springfield Rifles. One ransacked store near Springfield Avenue yielded rifles, shotguns and pistols. Soon shots were snapping from windows and rooftops, aimed at police patrols and firemen en route to battle the dozens of blazes that broke out. Over the police radio came cries of alarm. "We're sitting ducks out here—give us the word. Let us shoot." As Molotov cocktails exploded in stores and around police cars, one radio bleated: "We're getting bombed here. What should we do?" Replied the dispatcher, laconically: "Leave."

But it soon became clear that—as in Watts—leaving would only feed the mob's appetite for destruction and loot. Soon after midnight on the second night of rioting, the police were finally given the word: "Use your weapons." As could have been expected, police guns proved much more lethal than those in the hands of Negro riot-



INJURED RIOTER BEING LED OFF TO HOSPITAL
The direst damage was psychological.



FIGHTING BLAZE IN HABERDASHERY
In a way, like laughter at a funeral.

ers. Of those dead by racial violence in Newark last week, only two were white. Plainclothes Patrolman Frederick Toto, 34, a police hero cited for saving a drowning child in 1964, was shot through the chest by a sniper and died two hours later, despite heart surgery. A fireman was later shot in the back and killed. Among the Negro dead were children and women, looters and gunmen.

Fixed Bayonets. In response to an appeal from Newark Mayor Hugh Addonizio, Governor Hughes called up 2,600 National Guardsmen. Soon Jeeps, trucks and a clanking eleven-ton armored personnel carrier mounting machine guns roared into the ghetto. When several police were pinned down by Negro sniper fire, the APC rumbled up and began blazing away with its .30-cal. guns; unknown to the mob, they were loaded with blanks. The police got away. Simultaneously, Guardsmen and police patrols coursed through the streets—often behind fixed bayonets—picking up every Negro in reach. Black-Power Playwright LeRoi Jones, 32, was snatched from a Volkswagen with two loaded .32-cal. pistols in his pockets. Jones, who once urged Negroes to handle white men by smashing their “jelly white faces,” ended up beat-up himself: a blunt weapon split his scalp, and he required seven stitches.

Governor Hughes pretty much took over. Besides calling up the Guard, he closed all of Newark's liquor stores (“We’ll dry this city out”), ordered all guns and ammunition confiscated from the stores that were selling them, imposed a curfew that advanced from midnight to 11 p.m., and finally to 10. He also worked long hours touring the riot area, and his task force arrest-

ed some 50 looters. Still the mob reveled in the curious exultation of the explosion. “Was the Harlem riot worse than this?” a Negro girl asked a reporter. When he assured her that it was not, she cried: “That’s good; that’s great!”

Harmony. John William Smith, the chance actor who started it all, grew up some years ago near Salisbury, N.C., during an era when many whites thought of Negroes (if at all) in Amos-’n-Andy stereotypes. Smith was no Kingfish. He had a year of college (a predominantly Negro school: North Carolina A. & T.), where he studied

music and played the trumpet. Then came the post-World War II Army, in which he served as an enlisted infantryman in Japan, Korea (where he won a combat infantryman’s badge) and the Philippines. But this was still the segregated Army and, for the Negro G.I., a discouraging morass of minor humiliations and kitchen routine.

A short (5 ft. 7 in.), stocky man with a mustache and goatee, Smith has been a cab driver for the past five years, paying a daily fee of \$16.50 to use a “rent-a-cab.” From that investment he can expect \$100 a week—in a good week—as personal profit. He is unmarried (“I’m all alone in this jungle,” Smith told his lawyer, Oliver Lofton, a former aide to Under Secretary of State Nicholas DeB. Katzenbach). He rents a one-room apartment in Newark’s “Ironbound” district (so named for its wrap-around railroad lines), has a collection of 25 “cool” jazz records, and is saving for a plate to replace his missing front teeth (lost in an accident years ago). Says Smith, a quiet and articulate man: “I got to tighten up my upper register and study a little harmony.” Before last week he had been ticketed five times—not much by cabby standards—for minor traffic violations.

Smith came up against a police force commanded by a tough, no-nonsense Italian-American named Dominick A. Spina, 56, who won repute on the virtues that mark the best of American law-enforcement officers: personal courage and political neutrality. A stocky, cigar-chomping man with steely grey hair and temperament, he heads a 1,400-man force that is heavi-

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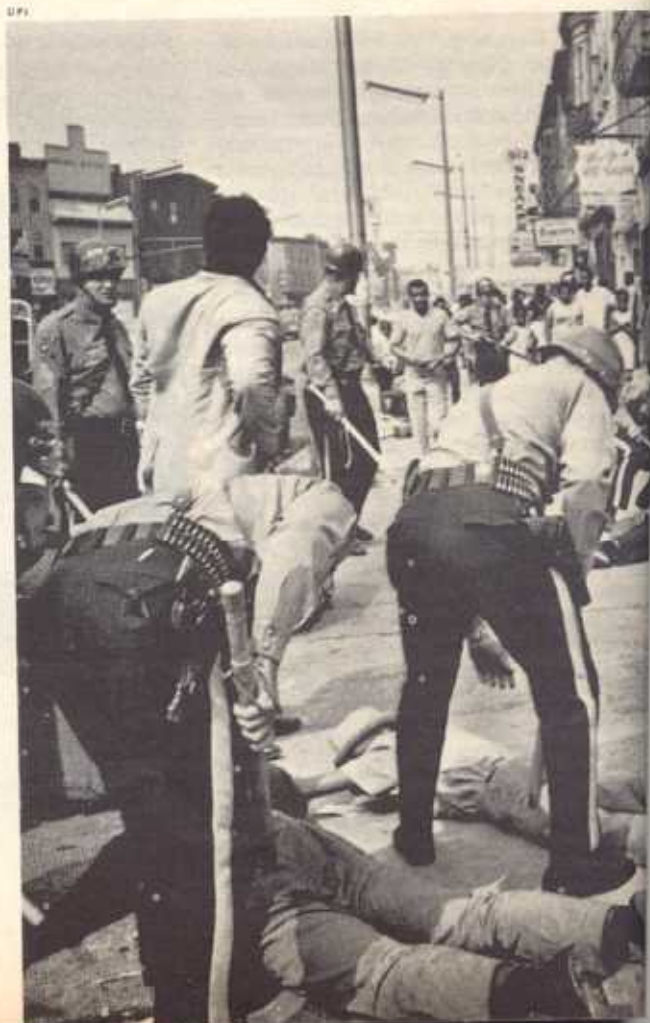
HUGHES & ADDONIZIO
Even the improvements fueled the grievances.

NEWARK'S AGONY: Bloody Outbreak In a Hot, Taut City

Crouched behind squad cars, police and National Guardsmen take cover from sniper fire on third night of riot. One cop was fatally shot; dozens were injured.



Negro lies dead on Mulberry Street. Police said he refused to halt after he was caught looting a burning building.





ROBERT W. COTTROL

TED COWELL



Hauling away booty from shop at height of turmoil. Soon after picture

was taken, man at right was shot and killed, presumably by a police bullet.



Police aid an injured colleague, were finally given the order "Use your weapons" after being cornered by mobs repeatedly and pinned down by rooftop gunmen.

Looters are frisked on Springfield Avenue during second day. Rioters made off with entire inventories of some stores, favored TV sets, liquor and guns.

ly Italian, but—according to city officials—includes some 400 Negroes as well. Until last week, Spina could claim the ultimate satisfaction in police work: without undue harshness or permissiveness, merely by enforcing the law as it is written, his cops had kept the peace in a potentially turbulent city. Even when the Harlem riots of 1964 set off secondary explosions of racial strife in the neighboring cities of Jersey City, Paterson and Elizabeth, Newark managed to keep its cool.

Treat's Trick. It was not an easy place to keep chilled. Bounded on the east by the waste-grey waters of the Passaic River and shrouded by a chronic cloud of yellow industrial smog, Newark's black enclave is a grassless realm of rotting brick and crumbling concrete; no less than 32.6% of the city's housing, according to a 1962 study, is substandard. Newark was founded 301 years ago by a dissident Connecticut Puritan named Robert Treat, who, by current standards at least, tricked the Indians into selling him a site including most of what is today, in all its greenery, Essex County for \$700 worth of gunpowder, lead, axes, kettles, pistols, swords, beer and a number of other items. As recently as 1950, Negroes constituted a scant 17% of Newark's population. With the rush to the suburbs by whites in the affluent era that followed, and the northward he-gira of Negro refugees from Dixie, the black population is now estimated at 50% to 55% and even more, making Newark the only major city in the North, except for Washington, with a Negro majority.

Under Mayor Addonizio, 53, a bulky, balding liberal Democrat who once quarterbacked for Fordham behind the "Seven Blocks of Granite" and served as an infantry officer from Algiers to the Bulge, Newark until recently was considered a city in control of its problems. Addonizio, who served 14 years in the U.S. House of Representatives before his election as mayor in 1962—largely on the strength of Negro and Italian votes—outlined an ambitious urban-renewal program. Newark today spends \$277 per capita on repairing urban blight—the highest annual figure for the nation's 50 biggest cities. Newark officials claim an overall unemployment figure of 7%—down from 14% when Addonizio took over city hall—and Newark has 125 federal poverty workers who spent \$2,000,000 last year on community-action projects. But the funds face a cut because of the war, and the number of workers will be scaled down to 30 by September.

Dead-End Street. Newark's Negroes find plenty wrong with the city. Although Newark has two Negroes on its nine-man city council, neither was on hand to fill the ghetto's leadership vacuum during the riots: Councilman Irvine Turner was ill; Councilman Calvin West was in Boston for a convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The city has no civilian review board (Mayor Addonizio refers all charges of police brutality to the FBI). Nor did it have any Negro police officers above the rank of lieutenant before last week (when Addonizio hastily ordered a Negro officer promoted to captain, and



LEROI JONES AFTER ARREST
Smash those jelly white faces.

the city council later showed its good will by authorizing the move).

To many Negroes, the gravest grievance is one engendered by somebody's idea of an urban improvement. Last year Addonizio designated 46 acres of the Central Ward as the new campus for the New Jersey State College of Medicine and Dentistry—a move that would force some 3,500 Negroes out of their homes. However dilapidated those dwellings might be, the threat raised hackles throughout the city. A subsequent proposal to extend two interstate highways that pass near Newark through the downtown area might displace 20,000 more Negroes. The resolution of these problems is not yet clear.

When displaced, the Newark Negroes, as in other Northern cities, generally move to another part of the slums. Rarely do they escape into the white suburban communities that ring the city, nor are they very welcome in most of the Italian, Ukrainian, Irish and Jewish communities in other parts of the city itself. For John Smith and the rest of Newark's Negroes, a current "soul music" hit called *On a Dead-End Street* summarizes the Negro's plight all too aptly.

*They say this is a big rich town,
but I live in the poorest part;
I know I'm on a dead end street, in
a city without a heart.*

"Criminal Insurrection." Real as the grievances may be, last week's outburst was violently out of proportion to the provocation—as many of Newark's Negroes realized. "Oh, Alice," said one elderly man to his wife, "this is a terrible day for our people." A young Negro woman with two small sons snapped: "They ought to shoot all them rioters. Who do they think they are anyway?" "We need the police," said another woman. "All of



POLICE VAN AFTER STONING IN HARTFORD, CONN.
Reflections of a yawning gap.