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26 April 1973

SITUATION INFORMATION REPORT

The Underground Press

The origins of the underground press can probably be traced to the establishment of New York's Village Voice in 1955. Until the mid-1960's, the Village Voice was a voice calling in the wilderness.

But as dissent from the Vietnam War grew on college campuses and few conventional sources of journalistic opinion reflected this viewpoint, the need for an alternative arose. The first effort that could truly be called an underground press began in 1964 with the establishment of the Los Angeles Free Press. Not surprisingly, that inveterate haunt of radical politics, Berkeley, California, spawned the second major underground enterprise, the Berkeley Barb in 1965. Its first appearance coincided directly with one of the first active manifestations of antiwar dissent, the attempt to halt a troop train at the Santa Fe Railroad Station in Berkeley.

The underground press, an inaccurate name used mostly for its romantic connotations, was the product of a changing national consciousness reflected most visibly by young people. But if changing consciousness created the need for an alternative press, it was advancements in printing technology that made it possible.

Newspapers, both commercial and underground, could be printed cheaper and easier by the offset press, an innovation that gained widespread usage during this time. It cut production costs of tabloid newspapers by more than half and greatly reduced the amount of expertise and time required to prepare hard copy for printing. Most of the essential skills could be learned in a few months of practice. Another significant advancement was the

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development of "cold type." Cold type - basically a very sophisticated typewriter - could be set in the kitchen, bedroom or storefront crash pad by anyone who knew how to type.

The underground press of the 1960's appealed primarily to middle class youths who had the money and leisure time to explore "life styles" that posed alternatives to the "nine-to-five" work week syndrome. The pages of the underground press carried news and information on drugs, sexual "liberation," rock music, Asian religions and to some degree the antiwar and anti-draft movements and student struggles.

The editorial line relentlessly blasted the "straight, authoritarian world" and supported all aspects of the struggle for "total freedom." Liberation of the spirit through karma forces, LSD, and electronic music were familiar themes.

By 1968 the existing underground press was undergoing a radical change and newspapers with a more political approach were created. The antiwar movement, third world liberation movements, police brutality; the military-industrial complex, racism, and students' rights became central issues. Each new radical group went into print with its own paper. The Black Panthers put out the Black Panther, the Young Lords published Palante, and the Progressive Labor Party circulated Challenge.

Although lacking a clear analysis of current events, many of the new underground papers - and the old ones that didn't fold up in the transitional stage - made motions to Marxism but actually leaned heavily toward anarchism.

The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) helped give direction to a good number of the largely student-oriented underground newspapers. The Rag in Austin, Texas, the Rat in New York, and the Washington Free Press followed the SDS party line.

The 1969 SDS national convention, which split SDS into a number of opposing factions, signaled the downfall of the underground press.

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Lacking national focus and leadership, each paper was forced to define its role and develop its own political line based on what remained of the radical youth movement, its own readership, and financial backers. Most papers vacillated during the ensuing months and many more folded in the process.

The underground press is now in decline. It would appear that the vitality of the "alternative" press was directly proportional to the health of the radical movement in general. The underground press arose from the ferment of the times and the abatement of that ferment has undercut its strength and need.

In the last year, the Quicksilver Times in Washington, D. C., Space City in Houston, The Seed in Chicago, The East Village Other in New York City and scores of other underground newspapers have reluctantly thrown in the towel. The trend indicates more may follow.

The decline of the underground press reflects a fundamental change in the political, ideological and cultural nature of its six million readers. The press's inability to transcend the depoliticization of the generation that it has served, has apparently led it to the brink of extinction.

Washington Post April 1973 (Quicksilver Times)

CALENDAR OF TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

28 April, Washington, D. C.

As previously reported, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and People United to Save Humanity had planned to hold a rally in Washington, D. C. on the above date.

Due to the lack of support and the financial instability of SCLC/PUSH, the rally has been cancelled. The U. S. Park Service reported no permits have been requested for this event and other Government agencies have confirmed this report. Unconfirmed information states the rally will take place in August 1973 in Washington, D. C. This

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delay will enable SCLC/PUSH to gather support from OEO (Office of Economic Opportunity) recipients whose funds may be cut off in June 1973.

28 April, Washington, D.C.

The local chapter of the American Indian Defense Committee, made up of members from the Youth Against War and Fascism (a military and violence prone communist front group), are planning a demonstration in Lafayette Park on 28 April at 1:00 p. m.

The purpose of the demonstration is to gain support for the American Indian Movement. Reportedly, plans for the demonstration are still being formulated and the total number of participants is unknown at this time.

28-29 April, New York City, San Francisco, and Toronto

The Worker Action Movement; a front group controlled by the Progressive Labor Party, has scheduled three regional conventions for the above dates. Recently announced convention sites are New York City, San Francisco, and Toronto. The WAM are calling the meetings with the hope of making "30 for 40" a new left-wing cause.

The term "30 for 40" was coined by the PLP and refers to demands that workers be able to work 30 hours and receive pay for 40 hours. Since competitors on the revolutionary left have been ignoring the "30 for 40" issue, PLP is hopeful that it can have this issue all to itself and thus pick up some badly needed recruits.

link sheet on the 1st 17 Feb. 73

7 May, Worldwide

Israel will celebrate its 25th anniversary as a state on 7 May with a gigantic military parade through Jerusalem. The celebration of independence is not likely to go unmarred by the Palestinian guerrillas.

Weekly report on the 1st 17 Feb. 73

11-13 May, Chicago

Recently at a press conference, Angela Davis announced a

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founding conference for the formation of a national defense organization against racist and political repression to be held at the Pick Congress Hotel. Registration for the conference by official delegates from local and regional organizations will take place from 7 to 11 p. m. on 11 May. The opening session is scheduled for 9:30 a. m. on 12 May.

Workshops will be held on 12 and 13 May to discuss the following topics: prisoners and prisons, police brutality, immigration and deportation, repression in the military, amnesty, repression and labor and repression of political organizations and individuals.

Sponsors of the founding conference include the following:
Ralph Abernathy, Julian Bond, Rev. Dan Berrigan, Professor Noam Chomsky, John Conyers, Rep. Ronald Dellums, Rev. James Groppi, William Kunstler, Jarvis Tyner, Henry Winston, and others.

26 May, Nationwide

The African Liberation Support Committee has announced an "African Liberation Day" demonstration for the Washington, D. C. area on 26 May. In addition, simultaneous "African Liberation Day" demonstrations are planned for Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Jackson, Mississippi, Los Angeles, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco.

The nationwide demonstrations are designed to "awaken the black community to the fact that a war is going on in South Africa." A similar demonstration last year drew 12,000 people to Washington, D. C. Information will be reported as it becomes available.

Workshop in Detroit 5/11/75

SOURCE: Government and News Media

RELIABILITY: Probably True