**JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM**
**IDENTIFICATION FORM**

**AGENCY INFORMATION**

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<td>MEMO: VIEWS OF SIDNEY LENS ON DOMESTIC RACIAL SITUATION</td>
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[R] - ITEM IS RESTRICTED
APPEALS REVIEW FORM

Tab 0-11 contains MEMO - NO ATT. with 2 ATTACHMENTS of
Recommended for

Previously denied in toto under exemption(s)

Segregable portions previously released; excised portions exempted

Located during the DDO appeals review.

Referred to DDO for review by

Further description, identification, comments, and/or referrals, etc.

This memo denied in toto to Sidney Lens (F 75-186)

I RECOMMEND:  

Sustain initial denial in toto under exemption(s) of

ADD exemption(s)

DROP exemption(s)

Sanitize initial sanitized version with excised portions

ADD exemption(s)

DROP exemption(s)

Release additional information with excised portions exempted under

Release a sanitized version with excised portions exempted under

The exemptions cited above are being claimed to protect the following:

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Name of CIA employee

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OTHER

COMMENTS and/or SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

During the DDO classification review, this document which was marked as SECRET was:

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Classified to

Declassified

Desensitized

Downgraded to

E2 IMPDET
CL 012170

CONFIDENTIAL

TOP SECRET
SUBJECT: Views on Domestic Racial Situation and the New Politics Convention

1.

2. said that the Black Caucus and the CPUSA had virtually wrecked the Convention, yet the Communists had failed to get the Convention's support for a King-Spack or some other third ticket in the 1968 presidential elections, which the Communists were very eager to obtain.

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE
Date 13 MARCH 1978
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In my case, I strongly believed that King had the possibility of playing a future role of great importance in the black community.

The Bureau may pass the above report to appropriate field offices for background use only.
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\[Date 19 AUG 1976\]
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11. The Bureau may pass the above report to appropriate field offices for Background Use Only.
1. Sidney Lens was extremely pessimistic about the present political situation in the United States. He believed that the growing racial strife was bringing about the breakup of the American liberal consensus, revealing the "cynicism and hypocrisy" of the American power structure. He wondered whether liberal reformers were about to stage a violent domestic strife and inevitable repression of black militants and left liberals and radicals were even possible. He believed that some sort of vast conspiracy on the right might already be underway to destroy American democracy.

2. Lens' state of depression might in part be explained by the failure of the New Politics Convention, with which Lens was greatly involved. He said that the Black Caucus and the CPUSA had virtually wrecked the Convention, yet the Communists had failed to get the Convention's support for a King-Smith or some other third ticket in the 1956 presidential elections, which the Communists were very eager to obtain.

3. Lens said that relative racial peace had been maintained in Chicago during the summer by massive use of money moving into the pockets of known black nationalist leaders, youth gang leaders and certain local politicians. This operation, to keep Chicago "cool", had been successful, but it had also produced much cynicism among ordinary black people who were beginning to understand at last what went on and to feel abused by such treatment. Lens believed that conditions were such that black people in Chicago could not fail to protest militantly in the future, and perhaps not only during hot weather. The black community, he maintained, showed great solidarity, despite its divisions. According to Lens, not one Negro sniper was caught or denounced during the summer.

4. Lens said he had been able to maintain fairly good contacts with many Negroes in the ghettos and with black intellectuals, and he seemed to have a fairly self-confident idea of what was going on within the black community.

5. He maintained that white radicals in general, however, had virtually no influence inside the ghettos and that the Daily Worker was more influential than the Progressive Labor, the CPUSA or the Socialist Workers Party. He knew nothing about NW's influence, if any, but said that the center of black nationalist activity seemed to be present in the West Garfield area.
6. Concerning any possible black conspiracy on a nationwide scale, Lens thought this was nonsense. Ties between groups and leaders had been reported to him as loose, with many feuds between them, Lens said. He added that he had heard of no international contacts by black nationalists, except the well-known trips abroad of SICC leaders.

7. Lens remained a strong admirer of Dr. Martin Luther King, who he felt had made many mistakes in his Chicago operations, but who nevertheless was a sincere leader who maintained his charisma over the black masses, despite the demagogic behavior of the leaders of the smaller black extremist groups. On the other hand, Lens felt that Rev. James Bevel was often erratic and even irresponsible in his actions. In any case, Lens strongly believed that King had the possibility of playing a future role of great importance in the black community.

8. Lens said he had heard nothing from the organizers of the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam, which he had attended, and wondered if any efforts at all were being made by the Continuing Committee of the Conference to develop peace initiatives. He said that he had never heard from the Latin Americans who had proposed in Stockholm that U.S. and Latin American peace militants hold a meeting somewhere in the near future. Lens thought they had dropped the idea, which was to have been concretized through him, as chairman of the American Delegation in Stockholm, but could not understand why.

9. Speaking of his associates in the peace movement, he said that Staughton Lynd, although a member of the editorial board of Liberation, never consulted him about anything. Perhaps, Lens felt, this was because Lynd was very hostile to any proposals for electoral action, while Lens was not. As for Dave Dellinger, Lens said he did not understand that Dellinger was up to these days. Dellinger, he maintained, had assumed an "equivocal attitude" to the pacifist principles he had believed in until the death of A.J. Muste. Lens said he had never heard Dellinger explain himself or his projects.

10. Attached is a hand-out of a paper entitled "Some Thoughts on the NSCP Conference" written by Lens, and a copy of a press release containing Lens' statement on his return to the States from the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam, 6-9 July 1967.

11. The Bureau may pass the above report to appropriate Field offices for Background Use Only. It is requested no direct action be taken against the Subject on the basis of the contents of this report without prior consultation with this Agency. This restriction may be considered withdrawn one month after Source's departure from the United States, although the fact that these statements were made by Subject should continue to be considered restricted.
1. The Conference was a noble attempt to bring about a coalition of three groups which generally shared a common political perspective for reaching changes in a new field, but disagreed strongly on short term strategies for achieving it. One group, believing the movement was still too weak to merit a dramatic national action in the electoral field, wanted to concentrate on organizing community groups as a sort of on-going Vietnam Summer. Another group felt that 1969 offered an exceptional opportunity for a breakthrough to hundreds of thousands who were not yet aligned with the movement, and suggested that in addition to protest and resistance a new type of Presidential campaign, concentrating less on votes and more on taking roots, would widen the movement's influence appreciably. A third group, the Black Caucus, sympathized with both strategies but believed that before a meaningful coalition could be built, Black Americans must first concentrate on creating their own separate identity and power base.

2. The young people planning the Conference had four alternatives before them: (a) to bring together solely those who believed in community organizing as the concentration point for the next year, and develop strategy for accelerating that campaign; (b) to bring together those who wanted to emphasize electoral action to plan strategy for the Presidential year and perhaps choose a Presidential ticket; (c) to hold three simultaneous conferences of the three constituencies at the Conference and arrange a structure by which the three groups could live in one house, with autonomous leadership and structure, but with machinery for collaboration and mutual aid when there was agreement to do so; (d) hold a single conference but evolve, as was done, a leadership which is based on two sets of politics, between the community organizers and the electoral wings on the one hand, and between both of these and the Black Caucus on the other.

3. The conference planners did a laudatory job of assuring democratic representation and democratic expression, but it seems to me that the effort reflected an immature form of participatory democracy. Alternatives (a), (b), and (c) above gave considerably more hope for a mature participatory democracy than alternative (d). It was clear in advance that no common strategy could be wrought out of the divergent strategic perspectives represented at the Conference, and it was a mistake to call people together on such a basis. The SDS model was followed, in my opinion, too schematically. SDS is an organization composed of a single stratum of the population, the students, who find the SDS and similar moderate institutions too confining. KEP, on the other hand is not, and will not be for some time, anything but a coalition of groups made up of members of many strata. The task here is much more difficult. Eventually the coalition will bleed into an organization, but it was premature to think it could be born that way. Staughton Lynd and Ronnie Davis were
The coalition that came out of the Conference in a stronger one. That it did not disintegrate before being born can credit to the sense of dedication that existed among the 5,000 participants. No matter how angry each of us became over this or that point (in all there were ten) there was a general and shared realization that we had no place else to go, that the movements had to be maintained no matter what the difficulties. But in the cool light of today it would be wise for the National Board to consider the realities of the situation, namely that there were three distinct wings to the house we built. There is much more hope of survival for an NCCP which could have three autonomous sections, coordinating their work and coalescing only when agreement can be reached, than under the present form. It would strongly suggest that the Board consider setting up three separate bodies within NCCP, a community organizing group, an electoral politics group, and a Black organizing group, each with its own leadership. The Board might also consider asking the National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, to become the fourth autonomous body. Coalition between these four groups would be practiced through a small governing board of six, one from each of the non-Black groups and three from the Black, to work out joint action where joint action is feasible, and to join in common projects such as raising and allocating money. The present Board is an improvement over the previous one in that it more accurately reflects the currents in the movement. But it is not the final form; a more viable one can be found along the lines suggested here, I think.

It would be wrong to exaggerate the three issues that caused friction, namely the 13 points, the Foreman resolutions, and the 20,000 Black Caucus vote. The fact that there was no major outcome indicates how strongly the delegates were united philosophically and how overriding was the desire to maintain unity. In the long run, if we want to build a healthy NCCP, these issues will be forgotten or washed away by healthier forms of collaboration. But precisely because we hope to coalesce more fruitfully we must analyze mistakes. It was wrong for the Black Caucus to insist that the 13 points be accepted without changing a comma; the three points that were in dispute could easily have been worked out to everyone's satisfaction, particularly if subcommittees of the Black Caucus and the Steering Committee had sat down and discussed it for a half hour. I am aware of the psychological overtones behind this issue and also aware of the problem within the Black Caucus with those who oppose formation of the coalition altogether. Nonetheless we must weigh this against the loss of credibility suffered by the vast majority who voted to endorse, say, ALL the resolutions of the Newark Black Power Conference without having read any of them. Foreman's speech had the merit that it relaxed tensions between Black and White appreciably, but it was a mistake for him—surely jocularly—to introduce parts of his speech as resolutions and vote on them without discussion. For instance, while I favor the boycott of General Motors for doing business with South Africa, I might have preferred a boycott against Standard Oil as being more meaningful.
Finally, weighing the vote for the Black Cause to making party was a mistake not because of the power of votes accruing (the number could have been bigger as far as I was concerned) but because it was a clear vote for the dismissal of all other people involved. Even more distressful was the disapproval used by some who spoke on this matter from the floor. It could have been presented candidly as an expedient or a correcting; it did not have to be held with this kind of irrational and false rhetoric.

6. A more significant movement comes from the different needs of the three constituencies which make up the Congress. The communist organization and the Blacks appeal to citizens who are sensible to radical plans. The electoral group, on the other hand, radical itself, nonetheless must appeal to many who are far more moderate. No real effort was made to help this group in that task. The mass action people—in the National Mobilization, for instance—have solved the problem through the policy of "non-exclusion". The April 15th demonstration included the whole political rainbow from reform democrats to left revolutionaries, but non-exclusion had as a corollary a relatively moderate platform. This was a wise decision, for I think history proves that radical action is stymied unless it can draw the liberal constituency in its direction. Even the Russian Revolution (or the American) could have been impossible if millions of the followers of Dau, Krensky and other moderates were not drawn along with Lenin (and in the American Revolution hundreds of thousands of moderate merchants, farmers and lawyers were drawn along with Sam Adams and his Sons of Liberty). We did not make it possible here to pull along with us the innumerable liberals moving to the left who are looking for a new home. A state of King-Speck might have achieved this. But radical delegation, with whom I agree politically, refused to consider that there was a world beyond the Palmer House in which we are a tiny minority. Tens of millions are against the war in Vietnam and against racism, but they are opponents of war and injustice out of liberal motivations, not radical ones. We can not win them by arguing phrases, but by building bridges. King-Speck, perhaps Hollis–Speck or Speck–Rev. C.T. Vivian, might have built such bridges. I urge the new Board to review this matter once again. I am sure that in a calm, small meeting it will come up with bridge-building formulas that will make our very radicalism infinitely more effective.

7. MND is now a babe in swaddling clothes, soon hopefully to begin walking. I am impressed by the fact that the delegates left for home somewhat puzzled, somewhat disappointed, but with a total absence of rancor. This is a humanitarian state of mind in which a movement can be built. We must not lose the opportunity. Ingenious mechanisms for participation and leadership must be evolved now so that tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, can be brought into this movement. The coalition did not quite fall at the Palmer House, but it didn’t fly apart either. It can be built.
Saying Long, Chicago author and editor of the political weekly, Illinois, posted the following statement today on his return from the Southeast Conference on Vietnam and private talks with spokesmen for North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front both in Hanoi and Saigon. Mr. Long, representing the Illinois Peace Council and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, ran the chairman of the African American delegation to the international conference called by the world-wide peace movement.

The statement is as follows:

The North Vietnamese spokesman, with whom I held private talks, authorized me to advise the American public that there is only one condition for initiating negotiations to end the war—not many conditions the American public has been led to believe. The United States must only stop the bombing of North Vietnam and issue an eight-word statement to that effect: "We have stopped the bombing of North Vietnam." In pure, the spokesman told me, in required, The United States does not have to use the term "unconditional" or "permanent."

"What we are interested in," he said, "is in the de-escalation of the bombing—not the war. As soon as bombing ends good things can follow." He did not pin down the time it would take for talks to begin, but implied it would be a few weeks.

Anxious on it counts this soft position on negotiations was accompanied by a tougher and more confident attitude toward the war. World-famous experts on Vietnam, such as Philippe Davignon, France's foremost authority on Vietnam, told me that they haven't heard the HRF or North Vietnam so confident or as determined for quite a few years.

HRF officials told me that their confidence springs from a number of factors, both political and military. Politically, they say, large numbers of people who were previously associated with the United Buddhist Church are losing hope of finding any solution except with the Front and are coming over to it in very considerable numbers. I say say that this estimate has been confirmed to me by a completely reliable religious professor friend, an American, who recently spoke with the top Buddhist leaders in Saigon. It was also confirmed by a key Buddhist monk with whom I spoke in Hanoi.

On the military front the HRF spokesman says that they have had decisive victories in the last few months which have convinced them that
By concluded on the editorial board of Liberation magazine, David Dallinger, had an opportunity a few weeks ago to interview Vietnamese soldiers in North who had fought at Junction City. They told him that the U.S. had used 310,000 troops, of whom 14,000 had been "put out of action," and lost hundreds of the 920 tanks at their disposal, many of them to unexploded U.S. bombs which the Viet Cong had fashioned into mines. The defeat of American forces there, these soldiers said, made possible the offensive at the demilitarized zone and forced the U.S. to withdraw troops from the Mekong Delta, where a U.S. campaign had been projected. Dallinger was told: "If they couldn't conquer us at Junction City, they can't conquer us at all."

The NLF leaders asserted to our American delegation that the NLF controls 50 percent of the territory of South Vietnam and 10 million of the 16 million people. When an American said that these figures are much larger than those indicated by the U.S. government, the official said that the NLF has copies of CIA reports which put the figure even higher.

The North Vietnamese who spoke about negotiations also held a long and frank conversation with me on strategy. Both the North and the NLF he said, faced a major problem of adjustment and reorganization up to the point where the U.S. armies reached 250,000. I got the impression he considered this a difficult period. "Yes," he said, "we are ready for anything, regardless of how far the escalation goes." He laughed at the prospect of a United States invasion at the 21st parallel, near Vinh, the so-called thin neck of North Vietnam. He would not go into detail but he stated that the United States would get the "weird surprise" of the war if it undertook such action.

He was more obviously concerned about the possibility of American bombing of the cotton, but he implied that Hanoi has made plans for that too.

The North Vietnamese said that despite the heavy U.S. attacks, suffered from the bombing, both industry and agriculture in 1966 rose conventionally from the previous year. The "value of engineering output," he said, "has increased by 20.7 percent."

The rice harvest, he claimed, was "one of the best" in his story. It may be "strange" to American ears, he insisted, but
In contrast to the CCR's American plans for an increase of 150 percent as compared to the school year before the U.S. intervention, the North Vietnamese say that their costs have shot from 2,000 to 20,000.

They deplored American claims of successes in locating his country's military barracks, "Do you think we're dumb enough to have our soldiers live in barracks?" they asked.

The Hanoi spokesman, in addressing the American delegation, was even more disparaging of U.S. efforts, "If all the casualties claimed by the U.S. were true," he said, "there would be none of us left. But as you see we're growing stronger every day."

He called the American policy one of "burn all, kill all, destroy all." He accused the U.S. of perpetuating "hundreds of millions." Nevertheless, he said that since the U.S. claims to have rounded up large numbers of Viet Cong in a village it is usually old men and children.

So far as I know, every member of our American delegation was greatly surprised by the obvious self-confidence of the Vietnamese. They had not expected it. The Vietnamese neither boasted nor feared.

In the private talks I held I got the impression that this self-confidence was genuine, not merely to impress the Conference. But I had the growing and pervasive feeling that North Vietnam in particular felt that the initiation of negotiations would be very simple if the United States really wanted it. The North Vietnamese went out of their way to make it clear that there were not many conditions for talks but a single one. At one point a North Vietnamese spoke to me for a half hour about the different "roads to socialism" being followed by his country and other communist countries, and of the considerable difference between the Vietnamese and Chinese character. "Don't forget," he said, "our people are true individualists."

The implication was clear that Hanoi had no intention of becoming anyone's puppet. He also reminded me that despite the fact that his country had fought a long, bitter war with the French, relations with France now were good.