

**On the Battlefield;
Cairo, Illinois**

ON THE BATTLEFIELD:

CAIRO, ILLINOIS



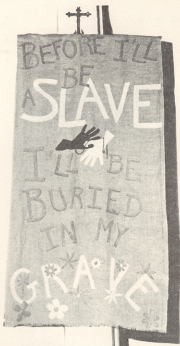
prepared by

THE CONCERNED COMMUNITY COALITION OF BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL

and

COMMUNITY FOR SOCIAL ACTION

as a public service



In response to an invitation from the United Front of Cairo, Illinois, some members of the Concerned Community Coalition and the Community for Social Action of Bloomington-Normal went to Cairo to participate in the Saturday rally and boycott march on February 28, 1970. Many spent the night in Cairo, sleeping in St. Columba's Church adjacent to the offices of the United Front, returning to Bloomington-Normal on Sunday, February 29. Miss Kathy McKinney, then a reporter for *The Daily Pantagraph*, accompanied the group on assignment from the *Pantagraph*.

The group went to Cairo to support the black residents' efforts to achieve social justice, and out of concern, interest, and curiosity to see for themselves what conditions there actually were. The visitors found the trip to be a rewarding, disturbing, enlightening, and deeply moving experience. Since the Coalition and CSA felt that the people of Bloomington-Normal should have the opportunity to know the impressions and thoughts of the participants, and that the public should be informed of the situation in Cairo which has received so little press coverage in this area, this booklet was compiled and published.

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"THERE AIN'T NO LOVE DOWNTOWN"

Kathy McKinney

(This news story was written while Miss McKinney was a reporter for The Daily Pentagraph. She was sent to Cairo by the Pentagraph to cover the participation of the Concerned Community Coalition in the boycott march of February 28, 1967; but her story was not used at that time. It is printed here for the first time with the permission of The Daily Pentagraph.)

White hate so strong you could feel it. Black determination so great it was astounding.

Twenty-five Bloomington-Normal persons spent last weekend in the black community of Cairo, Illinois. The group had been invited by the United Front of Cairo to take a look at the situation.

The first thing that strikes you as you enter the city is how economically depressed it is. This town, in the southern tip of Illinois, where the Ohio and Mississippi rivers merge, has been losing population steadily. The 1950 census gave the population as 12,123. The 1960 population was 9,348. Estimated population now is 8,500. Approximately half are estimated to be black.

Blacks in Cairo are determined, self-confident, strong. Hate from the white community may be just as determined.

Leon Page, Coordinator of the United Front, spoke in an orientation session for various visiting groups as follows: "Cairo is the one truly polarized community in white America. What is happening here could easily become your community. That is why we must deal with the situation."

Preston Ewing, president of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), gave a short history of the situation in Cairo. Not since 1937 have blacks and whites of Cairo worked cooperatively together, he said. They worked then to sandbag the levee so the city wouldn't flood. In 1944 there was a lawsuit against the school board because white people were paid more than black people. Thurgood Marshall, now Supreme Court Justice, won the lawsuit. He is black.

In 1962, Mr. Ewing went on, there was token integration of 14 public schools. Funds were withheld from the schools because they refused to allow black students to attend. The resulting integration was token because blacks were allowed in only after whites were enrolled. In 1962-63, there were sit-ins to open public places such as the swimming pool. In 1965 the movies were integrated. In 1967 the schools were totally integrated.

"On July 15, 1967, a black soldier died in the Cairo jail from strangulation," Mr. Ewing said. "They said he hanged himself. They expected us to believe that in a cell seven feet high, a six-foot tall man stood on a 19-inch toilet and hanged himself with a shirt threaded through the bars of the ceiling.

"The result of this," Mr. Ewing continued, "was the first unrest."

On July 20, 1967, State's Attorney Peyton Berbling organized the first chapter of the "Committee of 10 Million," also called the "White Hats." Leaders of the group say it was formed to protect their homes. Leaders of the black community say it was formed as a vigilante group to harass and intimidate the blacks.

"During this time there was intimidation of blacks, and there was shooting into the black community," Mr. Ewing said. "About this time a minister, the Rev. Larry Potts, killed a black man whom he alleged was raping his wife. Potts, who is six feet tall, said he caught the black man, 70 years old, five feet six inches, raping his wife. He said he wrestled with the man but was overpowered and thrown against a wall. His hand just happened to land against a baseball bat, and he beat the man to death with it.

"Potts was not charged with anything. They said it was evident his wife had been raped because she had bruises. Except that everyone knew this woman's reputation and that the family fights frequently ended in physical blows."

Tensions rose in the black community, and the White Hats stepped up their activities, he continued. On March 31, 1969, whites drove into Pyramid Court, the housing project in the black community, and opened fire on passing automobiles. The car of a black man, Ripley Young, had its windows shot out.

"From this we saw the need of mobilizing and educating the black community," Mr. Ewing said. "This was the birth of the boycott."

On April 7, the boycott began. It has run 11 months. In that time, eight businesses have closed. One was closing Saturday, February 28.

"As we look at it," Mr. Ewing explained, "we have never been part of the economy of Cairo. We don't hold jobs there, we just spend money there.

"We have decided not to spend our money there. We have found no laws that require black people to buy downtown. When you begin to tamper with the Man's money, he begins to feel it.

"Let's look at the sacrificing the white people have been willing to do to keep their racism.

"They gave up their swimming pool when it was integrated. It is closed and people go 12 to 30 miles away to swim. I have seen blacks and whites from Cairo swimming together in those pools, but not here.

"They have given up their school system. About half the white students go to a private school called Camelot.

"They are now giving up the downtown businesses.

"Basically people in control are just as determined as we are. The people in control today controlled Cairo when I was born. The average age of the community leaders is 66 years.

"The problem here is not a result of the black people," he continued. "Cairo was dead long before 1967. Decadent white racists controlled it."

"The Chamber of Commerce has helped industry locate here that won't hire black people," he said. "The order of hiring goes like this: whites from Cairo and surrounding cities, whites from Kentucky and Missouri, then blacks. The result is that when these people from Kentucky and Missouri get paid, they take their money back home to spend it. They don't spend it in Cairo.

"We submit that those in control have earned their money. They don't care if no more money comes into Cairo—they have theirs. The type of leadership here is so negative and unprepared that they can't deal with the situation. As an example, when the ordinance that disallowed the assembly of two or more people—which meant a man couldn't even sleep with his wife or eat with his family—was taken to court, they paid a lawyer from out of Cairo to appear for the case. The lawyer knew he didn't have a case; he didn't even prepare for it or take a briefcase to court. But they paid him \$5,000 for it."

As a result of the lack of positive leadership, he said, the initiative has been taken by the black people.

"The problem here is that the white people are not free. We enjoy some freedom they don't have. We can say what we think, do what we can. In all the years I have been here, there has not been one white liberal. Not one white person has said what he thinks. The mayor and the city council are controlled by the white militants. We know we have to deal with the White Hats. We know we can largely ignore the city officials."

"1970 is a critical year in Cairo. The only way it can be saved is with black people in the leadership. We know we can operate a city. We aren't professionals, but we know we can do a better job than they can," the black leader concluded.

Following the orientation session for visitors, a weekly rally was held in the church next to the United Front offices. A rally precedes the march through Cairo each Saturday. The Rev. Charles Koen, executive director of the United Front, spoke:

"We are looking forward to the day when we will change society," he began. "We will either change society or die, and it will change anyway. We must begin to understand the essence of love, the kind of love that Jesus Christ was all about, the kind that makes people love everybody no matter what their social level."

"On March 31," Mr. Koen continued, "something brought us together. It was the will to live, the will to walk around in the open. On June 19, there was a three-and-a-half hour siege on the community. Then we really started loving one another."

"We began to understand that if I got shot, you could get shot. We began to watch out for one another. We started marching. State troopers beat peaceful marchers. One girl lost her baby from a brutal beating," he said.

"Finally the FBI came into the community to investigate, after we had learned to take care of ourselves."



Leon Page, coordinator; and the Rev. Charles Koen, executive director of the United Front, Cairo.

You know what they said. They said that it was the black people who were doing the shooting.

"Then we understood that all we had was ourselves to turn to."

"You all know who Paul is in the Bible," Mr. Koen said. "How he was a member of the power structure and how he was converted overnight. He talks about what love is."

"There ain't no love downtown. You don't go against your brother because you want something," he said, speaking about the boycott of downtown businesses. "We've been united for 11 months. I don't want you to forget why we are united."

"There are over 100 State troopers here. These are the same savages that beat us in the street, arrested us in the State Capitol." He was referring to an incident in July, 1969, when demonstrators were removed from the State Capitol Building in Springfield.

"When you live in a savage society you become as savage as the savages. Seems like when it's all over, all you have is savages. And we have a lot of savages, local, state, federal, governor, President, Agnew."

"We have gone through this," he went on, "because we have the principles of love. We have been dealing with the fringes of love. If we are going to make it, we've got to deal with 'sho-nuff' love."

The love in the black community, Mr. Koen said, has been greater than exists anywhere else. There have been no killings, no stabbings, no robbing. But that is not enough. We used to be ashamed because we were black, he said, but be proud of what you are; then we won't have to worry about black or white. Then you find you blend in with the universe which is nature. Then you have unity with your brother.

"I'm talking about the kind of love that is deeper than kissing. It is in the soul. If you have this love, you suffer deep."

This love will help you bear all things, he continued, believe all things, endure all things. "This love will make you care for yourself, love your brother, hold on to your sister, fight men even into the dead of night. If we don't have it, we won't make it. This is the kind of love where if a man moves on you to kill you, you are not going to die. The kind of love that makes a man a man and a sister a sister."

"Our responsibility is larger than Cairo or the southern region. There ain't no one in the country that is feeding the masses and clothing the naked and building homes for those who live in shacks."

"It is up to us," he concluded.

Approximately 100 persons took part in the march which wound through the black community and into the business section of Cairo. They marched in twos, singing, chanting, some holding up dollar bills as a symbol of the boycott, some holding up their clenched fist (the "all power to the people" symbol) or the two-finger "V" for victory sign. Through the black neighborhoods little children shouted greetings and ran alongside the march for a way, or stood silently and watched. Some adults waved from their windows.



On their way downtown, the marchers walk through Pyramid Courts, the black housing project, to gather additional recruits for the protest.

As the group entered downtown Cairo, there were groups of whites on corners and along the sidewalks. State and local police held up traffic for the march, and stood on corners. A police car followed the marchers. Recorded laughter came from the "Cairo News and Music" store; a large group of white people stood in front of the store, not smiling. The store is owned by Carl Heldt, a leader in UCCA (United Citizens for Community Action), the organization which succeeded the White Hats, and which now is constituted as the Citizens Council.

Robert Cunningham, head of the local Ku Klux Klan and the UCCA, followed the line of marchers with a tape recorder as did three men with cameras. He was about the only white to comment or talk to the marchers. He called out such things as, "How you doing, boy?" to the blacks, and "They don't really look too queer!" to the white marchers.

There was tension.

At one point, when the march passed a store, a young white girl came out shouting something at the marchers. A group of young blacks, about the same age, hung back in the line and shouted back at her. Two United Front marshals were there within seconds.

"What's the matter with you," they said to the black youths. "Get back in line."

The youths replied, "Well, she started it; she called us a bunch of . . ."

"Talk never hurt anybody," the marshal replied. "Get back in line and stay in line."

"She wouldn't come any farther," was the parting comment from the black youths for the white girl who stood in the half-open doorway.

As the line passed the closed-down businesses there were cheers from the marchers, who held up billfolds and dollar bills as taunting symbols of withheld money. A group posed for pictures in front of the store that was selling out that Saturday, a victim of the boycott. From the top-floor window of the boycotted movie house, a man made a motion to indicate cutting someone's throat as the blacks waved their money at him. In the fire department station house, firemen made obscene gestures to the marchers.



A demonstration of Green Power. Marchers waving dollar bills to symbolize lost business as they pass boycotted stores in downtown Cairo, Illinois.



Oh, Freedom!
 Oh, Freedom!
 Oh, Freedom over me!
 And before I'll
 be a slave,
 I'll be buried
 in my grave,
 And go home
 to my Lord,
 And be free!

The marchers moved back into the black community, back to the church for a meal and some music.



Turning the corner. The marchers file past the leader of the old "White Hats" vigilante group, now the United Citizens for Community Action, affiliated with the (White) Citizens Councils. He followed the march with his portable tape recorder urging people to speak into the microphone.



Here he is again, between the dog and the mailbox. His friends took pictures of the marchers during the entire time that the march was in the downtown area.

It was nearly dusk. A patrol of three State Police cars began to roll through the community.

One of the Bloomington group asked if there was anyplace he could go to get a soft drink. He was told there was one place we could go. A black youth, about 10 years old, was sent with the group. He was to stay and bring us back. It wasn't safe for whites to be on the streets in the black community as darkness fell. There was danger both from the State Police, and from the blacks who might think we were from white Cairo.

"Whites got no business coming in here at night. They are only here for one thing," a man from the United Front said, referring to the whites they say have driven into the black community to harass the people.

We were to sleep in the church that night, one block into the black community. Blacks from the United Front would keep an eye on us, we were told, in case there were fire bombs. Except for a police raid on a nearby gambling house, the night was uneventful.

We talked with the Rev. Manker Harris, public relations director of the United Front, and Father Gerald Montroy, a Catholic priest who has been in the forefront of the movement.

Mr. Harris was asked what he thought the State could do to help alleviate the situation in Cairo.

They could start, he said, by bringing balance into State employees here. There has been some improvement, but the percentage is still less than 10. They could use the resources already allocated, namely \$290,000 for housing from the State Housing Authority that hasn't been used.

The State troopers here are doing a lot for the white economy, he said. The State is paying \$15 a day for each trooper. There are at least 100 troopers here. Next month there will only be three local police per shift; the rest will be State Police, Mr. Harris said. The local police will be in a state-sponsored training program.

The health clinic two weeks ago is a good example of the State's dragging its feet, he continued. More than 200 persons were examined by doctors from the Flying Black Medics of Chicago. They found all kinds of things wrong with the people.



Father Gerald Montroy, worker for the United Front, long active in petitioning Gov. Ogilvie to give State support in resolving Cairo's problems.

"Dr. Audley F. Connor of the Chicago Board of Health reported that of the first 15 adults he examined, 12 of these had serious medical problems which needed immediate treatment," Mr. Harris said. "The public health officials were real excited about it. They said there was so much they could do. Nothing has happened. Governor Ogilvie put the lid on it.

"Ogilvie still has a sheriff's mentality. He runs the office that way. He has no comprehension of the social viewpoint. And he is getting terrible intelligence from the people here. They have miscalculated the depth of black feeling. They have miscalculated the racism of the whites. They have miscalculated the degree of polarization.

"But his biggest problem is that he doesn't understand blackness, he doesn't understand poverty. Much like (President) Nixon, he has a constituency that put him in office. He listens to that constituency, and they are tired of militancy, tired of welfare."

Mr. Harris said he thought the black community was pretty well unified. "Of course there are some who disagree with what we do. But in times of disaster, they turn to the United Front. Whites have for years used the gun as intimidation. So, much of the shooting into the black community has been over the tops of the buildings. But this time the blacks have not run.

"The blacks," Mr. Harris continued, "have never initiated the firing. But--and we have told the whites this--we will fire back. We are not playing."

Mr. Harris discussed some specific incidents of whites firing into the black community. "There was a fire at the tavern here at the end of this street, at the beginning of the black neighborhood. Two hours after the fire was out, firemen and White Hats came back and started shooting down the street into Pyramid Courts (the housing project).

"Two firemen were hurt in the return fire from the courts. The news story that went out said that snipers kept firemen from saving the building. It was two hours after the fire that the shooting started. The tavern was owned by a black man.

"The warehouse fire: a black teacher saw some white people running out of the building. We don't know who has been doing the shooting, but we are pretty sure it isn't blacks. Up until this time there have been no arrests for the fires, black or white." The only arrests there have been for the shootings were two Malcolm X College students from Chicago who arrived immediately following a shooting. They were charged with not having a valid gun license, he said.

That Cairo is very economically depressed was the consensus of opinion of people in the United Front. Seasonal farm workers who pick cotton by hand receive \$5 a day, Mr. Harris said. Black domestic help gets fifty cents a day. White people who only earn \$5,000 a year can afford domestic help.

"Contrary to the popular opinion that black people are lazy and shiftless, the black man will do any work to earn money, and work hard," he said. "It is a major problem. Not only is there unemployment, but under-employment. Wages around here are about \$1.35 an hour."

It is possible that the whole downtown will close because of the boycott, Mr. Harris said. This wouldn't hurt the black community.

Whites traditionally haven't done any shopping in Cairo. There is not enough variety. And they are not now coming to the aid of white businessmen, he said. With the exception of one person, the leaders of the UCCA don't own downtown businesses. Yet pressure from these militant whites and racism of their own makes the small businessmen hold out. "The boycott was initiated after incidents on March 31, 1969, when Ripley Young's car was shot at. There also were several more shootings.

"The blacks wanted to respond in some way. They felt they had to put a stop to it. They decided it was pretty silly for them to provide money for the whites to buy bullets to shoot at them. This was the main reason for the boycott."



Mr. Rice Whitfield, choir director of the United Front, examines his gunshot-pocked car after it was blasted by white vigilantes in Cairo, Illinois. (NOTE: Between March 31, 1969 and Feb. 28, 1970, there were over 86 nights on which black residents were fired upon. For an updating since February, see the Appendix.)

"The blacks have also asked for more jobs downtown, and for a change in the general attitude of whites to black shoppers. Blacks have been the main ones

who spend money in Cairo." (There were signs on several businesses in the downtown area that read, "Buy here, we need your money.")

"The boycott has been our most powerful action," Mr. Harris said. "We have also made demands to the city as to appointed jobs, and other things. But we don't talk about the two issues together. They are separate actions. The boycott has nothing to do with demands against the city, the school board, the governor."

"We know that the boycott causes a hardship for the small businessman. But black people have had hardships for a long time. The white businessmen are willing to put up with the hardships for their racism."

Several United Front cases are now pending in court, Mr. Harris said, for such things as expulsions of students from school. One girl was expelled, he said, for an incident in a music class. The teacher had required all the class to sing "Dixie." When they had finished that, the girl started singing the United Front theme song.

The United Front has legal aid from the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under Law, a group funded by the Methodist Church. "This is one of the wisest uses of church money possible, and yet the hardest to get funded," Mr. Harris said. "This money is not for people out demonstrating in the street, marching, anything like that. It is for going through due process of law. It is doing it the way we are told to do it. We just have to continue to get the money to keep on in the courts." (NOTE: The Methodist Church is no longer providing financial support; beginning in August, 1970, the program will be funded by a federal grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity.)

In discussing the Black Panthers, Mr. Harris said "we feel a close affinity with the Black Panthers. We are working for the same thing; we won't say anything against them. We may not believe in their methods--we are not Panthers. We don't choose to go that route."

"Since we started, our rhetoric has toned down. We don't have to talk about what we are going to do. Our actions speak for themselves. There are no tougher black men anywhere. We know it, they know it. We don't have to talk about it."

Mr. Harris is a white man. A student from Bloomington asked how he and other whites in the United Front saw their place in the movement.

"I have a role in the movement and I play it. I am a part of the United Front, but I am not the leader. The United Front has collective leadership. We discuss and make decisions that way. We whites are accepted as a part of it. We wouldn't be allowed to take over--we wouldn't want to."

"We project two people--Leon Page and Charles Koen--as the leadership. Yet, I am sure the white community believes, be-



The Rev. Manker Harris, center left (dark coat), discusses the racial conflict in Cairo with visitors from Bloomington-Normal.

cause they want to, that the whites in the movement are the leaders.

"But the leadership is black. Blacks from Cairo have the brains, the ingenuity, the imagination. There is no need for outside leadership," he concluded.

When we left Cairo we drove along the top of the levee. During the more than 80 days of shooting during the last year, we were told, whites shot from the levee into the black community.

The vantage point was a good one. A person can see most of Pyramid Courts and surrounding areas of the black community from the levee.



A view of Pyramid Courts from the levee directly to the west. It is an all-black housing project in which about 1,000 people live, often in fear of snipers' bullets. On many nights of shootings, weapons have been fired from here into the Courts; sometimes these shootings have lasted for over three hours. The United Front is certain that many of Cairo's white policemen are members of the "White Hats" and have participated in the shooting.

What good did the trip do for the Bloomington-Normal visitors, or for Cairo? A conversation between a middle-aged black man called "Smitty" and a member of the Twin Cities group, Robert Sutherland, teacher at Illinois State University, may indicate what was accomplished.

"The question," Smitty said, "is not in terms of black and white, but whether you are or you aren't.

"I don't hate the white man in my heart," he continued. "I hate the thing that is keeping progress down. Progress, that's what I'm for.

"For progress we have to be together--it doesn't matter what color. We have to get together. United we will stand, but divided we will fall.

"I want us to be united like it's supposed to be," he said. "What keeps me down keeps you down. You've got to realize that. I am a man, too, not a dog. What keeps one man down, keeps all men down.

"White men and black men were destined to be together. Without each other, we are only half.

"You came to help us, but you also came to help yourself," he concluded.

"I came to learn," Mr. Sutherland replied.



St. Columba's Church, where the weekly rallies are held. At the extreme left is the building which houses the office of the United Front of Cairo, Illinois.

STUDENTS TOUR CAIRO WAR

Dale Masley

(Written by a student at Illinois State University from Streator, Illinois. The story was originally published in ISU's newspaper, The Vidette, March 8, 1970.)

Saturday, Feb. 28, was an eventful day for 25 ISU students and faculty. It was eventful because these 25 people became physically and mentally aware of an existing war.

Not the war in the Middle East nor the war in Viet Nam, but the war in Cairo, Illinois.

"Whatever you do," Sam, a 15 year old inhabitant of "Soul Valley" warned, "don't walk down Washington avenue for more than 10 minutes." When asked why, his reply was, "Well, I did, two months ago in broad daylight."

Sam's arm revealed a recent scar where the bullet had torn through his skin. Sam is black. Washington Ave. is a white neighborhood.

Leon Page, state coordinator of the United Front told the Concerned Community Coalition (of Bloomington-Normal) Saturday morning, "What's happening here in Cairo is really a sophisticated type of war. Since March 31, 1969, there have been 86 nights of shoot outs, and not one arrest."

Cairo also stations approximately 150 State Police to add a military-like atmosphere for the 8500 townpeople. About one half of the population is white, while 4000 are black. The whites have six millionaires. The blacks have poverty.

Amidst a rank and tattered row of shanties on 14th Street stands the United Front office where Leon Page depicted Cairo as the "one truly polarized community in all America."

Preston Ewing, Jr., 34, president of the local NAACP chapter, said the last time the black and white people worked together was in 1937 to keep the Ohio River from flooding the town. Since then it has been strife or racial hatred.

The blacks are in poverty simply because they can't acquire jobs due to racial discrimination. Ewing reported that 40 percent of all jobs in Cairo are held by (white) people from Kentucky and Missouri. In order to rectify this situation the United Front established an economic boycott on March 31, 1969, after the first shoot out. The boycott against those merchants who would not hire blacks recently closed its eighth store.



Leon Page, left, with the Rev. Charles Koen, executive director of the United Front.

This lawless community is led by a white mayor and all-white city council who average 66 years of age. On Sept. 13, 1969, the mayor proclaimed that no two people be allowed to assemble together in the city limits. This proclamation was confronted by the black community. The case was ruled by the Federal Judge as unconstitutional.



Visitors to Cairo with the Concerned Community Coalition of Bloomington-Normal being briefed before the march on Saturday, Feb. 28, at the Office of the United Front. Next door is St. Columba's Church where the rally was held prior to the march, and where, after the march, a meal was eaten.

Saturday afternoon the ISU delegation, coordinated by the Rev. Jack Porter, met with the Rev. Charles Koen, executive director of the United Front, in St. Columba's Church where he prayed for strength and unity in the crisis. As he was ending his prayer, the choir sang softly in the background, "On the Battlefield."

After the rally, about 250 people formed a line, two abreast, for a peaceful march protesting the prevalent racial inequality. The group, led by Rev. Koen and Page, marched through Pyramid Courts, a black housing project, and into the downtown business district. The group was met with amplified and hideous laughter from the local music store.

As the marchers passed the Cairo fire station an employee expressed his opinion of the blacks and their cause. He elevated his left hand while his middle finger protruded from his closed fist.



Another follower carrying his walkie talkie and camera intoned his views with a question. He asked a black marcher, "What ya doin', boy?"

The marchers returned to St. Columba's where a meal was provided by the United Front.

In an interview with The New York Times, Preston Ewing said, "As soon as it gets dark you can feel it. Life here is like living in a jungle."

Saturday night brought with it that "jungle feeling." The Coalition was advised to remain within the church. Discussions were held and the day was reviewed. The events that took place were epitomized as a pathetic situation, dream-like, almost absurd.

Sharon Jennings, an ISU junior, home economics major from Bushnell, Ill., stated, "Cairo could be Bloomington, Illinois or any city in the nation . . ."

At 1:30 a.m., a 17 year old girl came running into St. Columba's complaining that she had been terrorized. Five white men had confronted her at gun-point. Father Ben Bodewes, a concerned clergyman residing at St. Columba's, commented, "A typical night."



As night falls on the black neighborhoods of Cairo, Illinois, an eerie tension, a brooding sense of menace and danger, which has been called a "jungle feeling," sets in. The caravans of State Police cars begin their silent patrols round and round the blocks, people get off the streets and lock their doors. For there may be shooting and firebombs.

"An Aura of Dead Magnolias"

Cindy Williams -- student at Illinois State University from East St. Louis

Cairo, Illinois is a city with a plantation atmosphere, divided by racism. I have been to Cairo several times, and the first thing that struck me was the extreme poverty of the city. Cairo cannot afford racism. It only serves to divide the people and make them poorer. But whites cling steadfastly to their prejudices which are costing them plenty. The year-old boycott by the black community against the white downtown merchants is taking its toll in the white community. Yet the whites will not change their age-old degrading methods of dealing with blacks. There is a definite aura of dead magnolias in Cairo.



Welcome to Cairo, an economically depressed town divided against itself and paralyzed by racial discrimination, violence, hatred, and fear. It's hard to find anything to smile about in Cairo.

Righteousness is the overpowering feeling in the black community. They are working to free Cairo of the racial discrimination that divides the city and oppresses the blacks. After centuries of being called "nigger" and "boy", they are answering, "I am somebody." The very young and the very old join in the United Front rallies and marches held every Saturday afternoon. Very

young children know the beauty of blackness. The very old beam with pride on their children who are aware and proud of their black skin. Black children proudly wave dollar bills on the Saturday marches past the downtown stores, knowing the success of the boycott has proved that the blacks of Cairo have economic power.

Marching proudly downtown, blacks chant "Soul Power" while white crowds stand on the street corners sneering and smirking. Perhaps the hateful looks of the white faces are caused by the tight pinch that blacks have on their white pocket books.

The spirit of the black community is overwhelming. Visitors to the rallies are made to feel welcome and involved. Love and brotherhood are effective forces in their work.

The United Front has started programs to help provide the people with clothes, food, and housing. For me, one of the most impressive parts of the function of the United Front is the opportunity of the people to participate and help in the programs and decisions of the Front. In this way the people realize that they are a vital part of their own community. Whites and blacks in the United Front work constantly to rebuild the city of Cairo.

In the United Front people are treated as human beings with dignity and power. The response is one of sensitivity once they realize that people do have power when working together in this sort of bond.

The black community of Cairo and the United Front have strengthened this realization for me. They are in danger and constantly on the battlefield fighting for the dignity of all men.



...with dignity and power.



Members of the United Front choir at St. Columba's Church.

CAIRO: LET MY PEOPLE GO

Fat Gade -- student at Illinois State University from Morton, Ill.

Cairo, Illinois has been in the news frequently for well over a year. Reports of marches, boycotts, shoot-outs, and other chaotic events have prompted reactions of disapproval from the "average middle-class white American."

Since I arrived at Illinois State last fall, I have become increasingly aware of the overwhelming social problem that is beginning to affect each and every one of us: the lack of sensitive communication among people, especially between the average white man and his oppressed black brother.

What has caused the excess of "trouble" in Cairo? I wanted to find out for myself, so I signed up for the trip sponsored by the Concerned Community Coalition of Bloomington-Normal. I returned from Cairo feeling that I had not only been educated about the great problems of this southern Illinois community, but had been enlightened about the situation existing everywhere in America--enveloping the entire society.

Cairo, Illinois is a "truly polarized community," a unique case. Prejudice and white racism are prevalent to extreme degrees. The city, which is now almost 50% black, is controlled by six white millionaires. The average age of city officials is 66. A group of vigilantes called "the White Hats", now disbanded by state law but reorganized as U.C.C.A. (United Citizens for Community Action) and affiliated with the Citizens Councils whose headquarters is in Jackson, Mississippi, carries on such activity as firing high-powered rifles into the black housing projects at night from a nearby levee. They deliberately harass blacks with whom they come in contact and, generally, follow the orders of top whites in Cairo in an attempt to keep blacks in an inferior position.

Whites between the ages of 20 and 40 are decreasing in numbers, for most people old enough move away before they become involved; the population of Cairo has dropped by some 10,000 in the past 20 years. Those whites who are over 40 stick around: they are comfortable in their positions of control.

The black United Front in Cairo has begun to organize and "get their thing together." They have already achieved a strong sense of unity and realize that they must move together if they are to gain any power in the city government; then, and only then, can any worthwhile change come about.

Their means are primarily political; but their unity and strength comes to them through their religion as related to them by Charles Koen, executive director of the United Front of Cairo and an ordained minister. On the Saturday that members of the Coalition were in Cairo, as on every Saturday, a rally was held. Rev. Koen stressed the reality that unselfish and complete love among the people was the only way they could find the strength to fight for their liberation. In his sermon, I found many things to which all people could relate.

The movement in Cairo is primarily black, but there are several concerned whites who live outside of Cairo and are working hard for the "black" cause which has become their cause also: ridding our society of the "white supremacy complex" which has dominated the American culture for some 400 years. They strive for a society reorganized on the basis of equality of life for *all* people. The whites involved in this movement are accepted as equals by the blacks, but the white supporters realize that blacks must hold the leadership positions. Blacks alone can realize the true extent of the problems: they have *lived* them from the day they were born and are keenly aware of "what's happening."

The blacks and their supporters in Cairo are not unlike groups all across America who have United Fronts in almost every major city; they are united by their common goals. Generally, these groups do not advocate violence as a means of accomplishing their liberation; their basic means is trying to get qualified blacks into governmental positions--changing laws is a *beginning*. Any groups of people, however, will protect themselves; hence, the outbreaks of violence in Cairo and other cities.

During our short stay in Cairo, we became painfully aware of the dis-integration that has taken place in our society; but, at the same time, we were encouraged by the dedication, unity, and faith of the people who have become involved in this overwhelming, but necessary, reform.

I "communicated" with members of the black community and found them to be beautiful people--people with the same basic dreams that I have; but because they are "non-white", our society has denied them many of the rights and privileges that *every* man deserves.



Cairo has a plantation atmosphere; a visit to a black neighborhood such as this one is an unwelcome trip into the past.

SATURDAY MARCH (Cairo, Illinois)

Richard L. Eldridge -- graduate student at Illinois State University from Normal

And when they cried,
Soul! Soul! Soul!
And threw their voices at you
With their fists
Rising with each
Soul!
I saw you hearing nothing
But your echo hatred,
You lining the sidewalks
With your terrible shaggy silence.
The street was theirs:
They only claimed the tar,
But sent you guarding
To your doorways.
The black in you
Saw no beauty
In their straightened backs,
In their neck tendons
Thrust around each
Soul!
You choked upon your chalk
And turned inward to feel for light.



"It ain't such a pretty day
For marching, is it,
Boy?"
The White Hat chieftan said,
Walking beside the marchers,
His eyes and mouth set steadily
Between a smile and an obscenity.
A marshall,
Young enough
To feed his feelings with wisdom,
Never broke his stride.
"No it ain't,
Boy!"
He replied,
And motioned to the marchers
To keep their line proud with order
White Hat dropped back
To the sidewalk,
Knifed his smile along the line
And waited for his sun.
His wound bled white.

I had no Soul
To shout above the still of hate,
For you who posed before the stores
Like mannequins
Were white like me.



So centuries of grief
Had I to keep my voice
Unshackled.
Chained to *you*,
My brethren of the skin,
I felt the slave within me stir:
A new and darkened fear of you
That promised me the Soul.

CAIRO--MYTH OR REALITY?

Albert Bonick -- student at Illinois State University from Summit, Ill.

The excursion to Cairo, Illinois was met with great anxiety. Anxiety for what Cairo is said to be, and anxiety for the actuality of Cairo.

The town has a population of 8,000 with roughly half of those being black. This would seem to indicate that the decision-making processes would be heterogeneous, but that is not the case.

If it were said that the blacks were being oppressed, it would not be true. It would be a glaring understatement. The black man in Cairo is being castrated. Castrated by the institutions that are relics, but still found in Cairo.

Can a black man on the police force speak of anything but tokenism? Can the fact that blacks are hired only after the supply of whites from Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri is completely exhausted be justified? Can the starving children and the elderly's grossly inadequate medical care be rationalized by anyone? Are the schools that are black equal? Can the attempted shooting of a white priest working with the blacks be explained?

The fundamental question being asked is whether the inequalities in life chances will be allowed in a society as affluent as ours.



Keeping warm is a constant problem for thousands of black residents in Cairo. This woman has prepared her fuel in this manner for "over 40 years."

ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Bob De Bourbon --- student at Illinois State University from Bloomington

For more years than you or I have lived, Black Cairo has labored; White Cairo has reaped the harvest. Generations of black people have walked at dawn into white-owned fields and factories, have slaved 'til dusk, have walked back home to Pyramid Courts--shantytown. Each Saturday for decades ebony bodies have walked stiff into downtown Cairo to trade their pittance for food in the white man's stores. And there has been hunger, and the disease of no-water.

Yet, with the bitter has been the sweet. The exploited in Cairo have come to see that they must consume with one another in order to survive. Each produces all that he is able. Each takes only what he needs lest his brother starve; lest his sister die. There is much love in Shantytown.

And the love has been galvanized into intelligent determination. The enemy must be defeated. The Maker of Pain must be destroyed. White Capitalism and Profit Motive must be vanquished. Love must be given expression. Human need must be met.

In the beginning of struggle, was the boycott. The decades of ebony bodies walking stiff into downtown Cairo had come to an end. Instead of delivering their pittance into the hands of the enemy, Black Cairo used it to build a co-operative store. A store owned by all; owned by none. A store which exists to serve the communion of peoples.

Food from that store is delicious.



Cairo is number one in Illinois in substandard housing, in the top three in poverty incidence.



Over 1,500 families and 6,000 persons were regularly given food and clothing through Operation Need, sponsored by the United Front of Cairo. St. Columba's Church was one of the main distribution points.

And tomorrow that pittance will again become creative. Tomorrow the People will begin a housing co-operative, and Ghantytown will be transformed. The struggle goes on. The struggle grows, fed by love.

Let Profit Motive try his cruel tricks. Let him speak his sophistries, his lies. Let Capitalism don a Black Mask. There will be no seduction. The People are Wise__

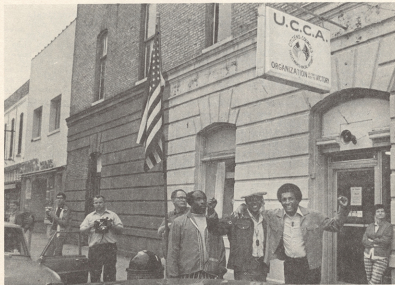
BLACK COMMUNITY IN CAIRO, ILLINOIS

Robert Hathway -- Associate Professor of Mathematics, Illinois State University

I don't wish in this statement to repeat when I heard and saw during our visit to Cairo on February 28, 1970, but I want to reveal the intensity of the movement in Cairo as to its rightness and vitality because these things were strongly imprinted on my mind on that day.

More specifically, during the time of the rally, the march, and the communion supper I witnessed a people who by their actions, words, and very presence put forth a spirit of human concern, a sense of community, which I have never before seen in a group.

I saw a people--adults and children alike--proud and with a dignity I was taught people had, but had not myself witnessed until Cairo. I left with the feeling: if only white people could discover this spirit!---



The Rev. Charles Koen (right), Executive Director of the United Front, Mr. Leon Page (center), Coordinator of the Front, and Mr. Frank Hollis (left) stand outside the offices of the UCCA, successor organization to the "White Hats," and affiliated with the (White) Citizens Councils. Behind them is Mr. Robert Cunningham, head of the UCCA, and his photographers.

CAIRO: A STUDY IN RACISM

Rich Wilson --- student at Illinois State
University from Des Plaines

Cairo, Illinois is a frightening example of what racism can do to a town and to people. The opposing factions of ultra-conservative whites, and blacks who are struggling for freedom have made Cairo the most racially polarized city in the nation. Ever since there have been black people in Cairo (which is to say, for over one hundred years), there has been a sort of caste system which places blacks below even the poorest whites. Blacks are not able to get jobs in Cairo with any higher status than that of servants or, perhaps, janitorial work or pumping gas for certain of the most liberal establishments.

Several factories have been built in Cairo, but they hire almost no blacks, either. Many of the people they do hire are whites from out of town and from out of state, although there is no shortage of labor in Cairo if the factories would be willing to hire blacks.

This discriminatory practice is not only illegal, it is impractical: with a willing labor supply at hand, there is no need to compete for outside labor. The blacks also discovered that the stores in downtown Cairo will not employ them; and so they decided that they, in turn, would not shop downtown. As black people make up half the population of the town, the boycott--which has lasted a year--has caused several stores to go out of business. But these stores could have stayed in business if they had hired blacks, because they would no longer have been boycotted.

Besides being averse to elevating the "position" of the blacks by employing them, it seems that the whites want to "teach the niggers a lesson and put them in their place." These dubious aims were the purpose of a vigilante-type group called the "White Hats," now replaced by a white Citizens Council. This group, which includes much of the local police force, gathers occasionally on the levee and fires high-powered rifles into the black community. They also enforced the law, made by the mayor of the town, which stated that no two people could be together within the town. Seldom, if ever, was anyone but a black arrested for this "crime."

A further activity of the Citizens Council and of individual "civic minded" white citizens is general harassment and attempts to murder blacks. Blacks who have been daring enough to walk down the streets in the white section of town have experienced being raped, mugged, and shot at.

All of these experiences have taught the blacks that they are being denied their rights as human beings and that the police will not help them to gain their rights. State Police have been sent to Cairo, but the hundred troopers have done little to stop the harassment, and nothing to stop racial discrimination. It may be that they are there in case a riot occurs. (The blacks don't seem to have that sort of thing in mind at present, however.) If a riot like the one in Watts broke out, the blacks would have nothing to lose but their poverty and frustration, so that riot control by the State troopers could only be to the advantage of the whites.

Why, in a country that was founded on the principle that all men are created equal is there a place where men are persecuted, discriminated against, and denied their rights? This is a question that must be asked *and answered* if this country is to be free. Cairo is not the only city of its kind, it is just the most "exemplary." Chicago, New York, Detroit--all the large cities, plus many of the smaller ones--all have problems similar to that in Cairo.

Perhaps, if a way can be found to help stop established racism in Cairo, other cities may also be helped. Only when racial discrimination has truly been destroyed, and the social status of blacks made equal to that of whites, can this country begin to be free.

REFLECTIONS ON CAIRO

Barb Guerra --- student at Illinois State
University from Cicero, Ill.

The trip to Cairo made me very aware of my own racism. I realized that even if I was to live in Cairo for the rest of my life, I would never be able to experience that environment in the way those people do. My mind, so well trained by a white, affluent society, prevents me from feeling what it is to be black in Cairo, Illinois. I can't really imagine existing in those shacks or living constantly with the fear of death, or knowing I can only go so far in life because of the color of my skin. I can only see their suffering, almost as a detached observer. Because I cannot truly feel their poverty and oppression, I can never really understand those people. This is racism.

The other thing that really struck me about Cairo was the United Front's non-violence and the black people's faith in the political and judicial system of this country. The United Front has been functioning as the only protection for the black community. Arms are carried, but used only for self-defense and for actual survival. As one of the ministers said, "We are non-violent in the face of the greatest violence in this country."

The United Front is backing several candidates for political office. Their faith in the political system astounded me. To some degree, they have no choice but to accept our present system of "democracy." State and Federal troops would be sent immediately upon any threat to the established system. Also, assuming that elections will be fair, the black community really does have a chance of gaining political control of the town. Maybe the judicial structure will rule in their favor. Cairo is in many ways a microcosm of our whole society. If their liberation can be accomplished through the present system, maybe there is some hope for this society.

"Cairo Makes Me Worry"

Debbie Perry --- student at Illinois State
University from Des Plaines

Cairo makes me worry. If Cairo is an example of what the entire country is going to become (and the course we are on seems to be leading to it), then I am afraid. I began to develop these feelings on the march; subsequent events have made me more pessimistic.

I had not expected the reaction we got; most of the white Cairo citizens paid no attention to the marchers except for a disapproving glance when they heard us coming. The people who did stop to watch us had expressions ranging from amusement to open hostility on their faces. What worried me most was that I saw amused looks on the faces of older people; the angriest look I saw was on the face of a boy about 14 or 15 years old. That pattern held along the entire route.

It worried me that young people seemed to have swallowed and digested their elders' prejudices. I was upset that the adults indicated that they regarded the event as unimportant, as though it were a children's parade; but I expected them to be hostile. I had not expected young people to be such faithful mirrors of their parents' bigotry. I have always laid my hope for the future in the fact that old biases gradually die out as those who hold them die out, and those to whom they attempt to pass them along are exposed to other views.

In Cairo, it appears that the new generation has already been indoctrinated. I left Cairo believing that the blacks' only chance was the success of the boycott and the elections. Since then I have learned of the defeat of the United Front-backed candidates, and of citizens of other communities organizing to go and shop in Cairo to break the boycott. If Cairo is an example of what every other town in America is going to become, then I am worried about the future.



APPENDIX

UPDATE ON EVENTS IN CAIRO SINCE FEBRUARY 28-29, 1970 (written July 9, 1970)

Boycott. In late March and early April, the South St. Louis (White) Citizens Council tried to break the United Front boycott of Cairo downtown businesses. As reported in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Citizens Council was promoting a plan to bus citizens from neighboring communities to Cairo to patronize the merchants there. Two busloads of shoppers went to Cairo and made small, token purchases; but that seems to be the end of the effort. By June 25, eleven businesses had closed because of the boycott, three more since February 28.

Elections. The attempt of the United Front to elect black candidates to County offices failed, since no blacks were elected. In the recent school board election, many black residents of Cairo voted; but the white vote in Cairo amounted to 130% of white registered voters. The United Front was informed by angry whites that some white voters were being taken from one polling place to another to cast their votes more than once.

State Police. On June 10, the State Police relinquished their control over the Cairo Police Force, and many of the approximately 110 State troopers left town; as of June 25, about twenty-five remained.

Civil disorder. Since June 10, when the State Police relinquished control of the local police and began to leave town, white harassment of the black community has shown a marked increase. The United Front offices were set afire; and though the building was saved, about \$7,000 worth of clothing intended for distribution to the people was destroyed. Also, the United Front recreation center was firebombed. There had been 98 nights of shooting into the black community between March 31, 1969 and June 10. Between June 10 and June 25, there were 12 additional nights of shooting; as of June 25, the total was 110.

Arrest and harassment of key figures in the United Front. On June 14, the Rev. Manker Harris, white public relations director of the United Front, was shot at from a moving car while standing on a porch. When he attempted to file charges against the man who shot at him, State's Attorney Peyton Berbling refused to let him. On June 18, the State's Attorney charged Mr. Harris with two counts of attempted murder and one count of illegal use of weapon for allegedly firing back at the car. He is currently free on \$5,000 bond; and after a preliminary hearing at which he pleaded "not guilty" as charged, his case was bound over to a grand jury.

Firemen have come into Pyramid Courts 17 times in recent days on false alarms. Instead of checking the home supposed to be on fire, they tried to enter several homes. On June 18, when they came into the black housing project, the residents asked the Rev. Charles Koen to talk to them. He did, telling the Fire Chief that the residents could manage on their own and did not need the Fire Department. On June 22, the Rev. Koen was arrested on a charge of "aggravated assault" filed by the Fire Chief. He is currently free on \$2,000 bond.

The United Front is now publishing a newspaper, the United Front News (subscription rate: \$3.60 for 6 months; \$7.00 for 1 year). If anyone reading this wishes to subscribe, to make financial contributions or otherwise indicate support for the efforts of the United Front, or to gain further information about the situation in Cairo, he should contact:

The United Front of Cairo
P. O. Box 544
Cairo, Illinois 62914

THE HISTORY OF STATE POLICE ACTIVITY IN CAIRO, ILLINOIS FROM MARCH, 1969
prepared by the UNITED FRONT OF CAIRO

March, April, May, 1969

Refused to investigate shooting into Ripley Young's car on March 31. Cooperated with Cairo City police in allowing White Hats to conduct a reign of terror against black residents beginning March 31, through shooting and arson.

May, June

With the removal of Cairo Chief of Police Carl Clutts, Superintendent of State Police James McGuire with other state police restored order to the city. Allegedly, some White Hats were arrested and disarmed. Their names were never published, nor were they brought to trial.

June 15

With the appointment of Cairo Chief of Police Petersen, State Police stated they were helpless to control snipers and arson, as they were placed under Petersen's jurisdiction.

June, July

State Police were called on several occasions when prolonged period of sniping occurred; but they refused to respond.

July 22, 23, August 1

Arrested blacks from Cairo, ministers, nuns, and many young people from Springfield, while these persons were entreating Governor Ogilvie at the State Capitol in Springfield to give justice to the blacks in Cairo. State police used storm trooper tactics in pushing, shoving, and knocking to the concrete and marble floors several of the nuns and young persons.

August

Several times participated in arrests of blacks picketing for equal opportunity. Arrests were made under a bogus city ordinance allowing only six pickets in Cairo at one time. Federal Judge Wise, Danville, ruled the ordinance unconstitutional and the arrests illegal, and all charges were dropped. State police stood by while mobs of whites harassed picketing blacks, sometimes allowing whites to strike and spit at pickets. When asked to either disperse or arrest those doing these illegal acts, the state police refused to do either.

Stood in front of VFW Club with city police when white vigilantes there commenced firing into Pyramid Courts housing project. No arrests made.

September 13

Attempted to enforce emergency ordinance enacted by city disallowing assembly of two or more people. Used storm trooper tactics again, rushed blacks who were attempting to exercise constitutional rights of marching and parading. Restrained by Federal Judge Wise after making several arrests under illegal ordinance. Ordered thereafter by Federal Judge to protect all United Front marchers.

September 16

Refused to assist blacks in evacuating black female resident of Pyramid Courts when she was shot by white vigilantes.

October 4

Used "peddler" statute of Illinois State Law to disallow marchers from crossing state highway. Arrested blacks and participated in beating of black men, women, and children crossing highway. Superintendent James McGuire, Capt. Thompson and 150 state troopers cited for contempt of court for this incident.

October 7

Attempted showdown with black marchers. Stationed men on top of Berbling Tire Company and Hub Lounge with riot guns to enforce "peddler" statute. Other troopers blocked 12th Street at Washington to prohibit marchers from crossing Washington Street. Over 100 cars of state troopers present in full riot gear. When 65 feet from confrontation, Federal Judge Jurgens prohibited troopers from making arrests, ordered troopers to protect marchers. State troopers left town; refused to protect marchers.

November, December, January

Cooperated with City Police in allowing white vigilantes to harass black residents through several incidents of sniping and arson.

January 1-5, 1970

Shooting into Pyramid Courts by white vigilantes. State Police notified. They made no response, no investigations, no arrests.

January 24, 1970

Shooting into Pyramid Courts from levee. State Police called. Concise description of two cars with whites given to State Police by eye-witnesses to shootings. No investigation. No arrests.

January 31, 1970

Heavy shooting from levee into Pyramid Courts. State Police asked to investigate. Instead, they arrested two black students from Malcolm X College who are visiting in Cairo. Shooting continued after their arrests.

February 2

State Police attempt to get "blanket" search warrant to search all homes in Pyramid Courts for weapons. This occurs after State Police claim police car was shot at. No evidence of black participation in alleged shooting. State Supt. of Public Safety, James McGuire, announces thorough investigation of shooting. Even though Blacks have been shot at, sometimes hit, for over 86 nights since March 31, 1969, this is the first investigation. This shows, of course, the police mentality of placing greater value on lives of two troopers than on the lives of 4500 blacks in Cairo. Capt. Thompson of State Police, who previously had referred to Blacks in Cairo as "DOGS", announces that Pyramid Courts would be encircled by State Police. Another obvious, oppressive measure against blacks.

February 3

Governor Ogilvie promises that State Police will equally enforce the law as State Police take over control of local law enforcement from racist Cairo police department. He announces that Cairo Police will be extensively trained. The Rev. Charles Koen replied: "Take a rotten apple, shine it, polish it, make it look pretty on the outside, but when you bite into it, it is still rotten." Hope is expressed by United Front, but Governor is told that because of past practices of State Police, proof of equal protection will have to come from State Police in action.

February 4

Shaky hope of February 3 is shattered as State Police walk provocatively into Pyramid Courts. They are asked to leave. After nightfall, scores of State Police begin to encircle Pyramid Courts. State Police cars follow, chase, shine spotlights on individuals, homes, and cars. Children put tacks and glass on street. State Police respond by bringing in dogs. State Police point rifles at cars as they drive by parked police cars near and around Pyramid Courts. State Police cars park around Pyramid Courts, car door open with rifle pointing toward the 800 men, women, and children in the housing project. State policemen in uniform and on duty are seen buying vodka at liquor store. The same type of heavy patrolling and intimidation cannot be seen anywhere in the white community.

February 5 -----

Heavy patrolling and parking around Pyramid Courts continues each night. No visible evidence that any patrolling takes place in white areas. Close to 100 State Police remain in Cairo. Blacks feel the cold, heavy hand of oppression and intimidation as these heavily armed "protectors" continue their nightly harassing patrols of the Black Community.



Since this pamphlet was compiled, many incidents have occurred in Cairo which heighten the black struggle for justice. In the summer of 1970, Lt. Governor Paul Simon came to Cairo to discuss the "situation" with 6 white representatives and 6 blacks. Six blacks appeared at that meeting and fourteen whites, who promptly demanded 14 "votes" on anything that was decided. When they were refused, all 14 whites left the meeting and refused to negotiate. This is one example of the white's attempts to "co-operate."

The "white hats" which reorganized under the name of the National White Citizens Council, has been responsible for the destruction of over 22 black businesses and over 20 black homes, all of which were destroyed by bricks, firebombs, and bullets. When the United Front attempted to file charges against their assailants, the district attorney-Peyton Berbling-refused to accept their charges. Only one white man has ever been arrested for aggressive action against blacks, and he was arrested by a black citizens group. This man came from Kentucky and the district attorney refused to extradite him. Thus, no charges were ever formally filed against him!

On August 29, 1970, Senator Ralph T. Smith met with Peyton Berbling, organizer of the white citizens council and four other states attorneys. Senator Smith promised Berbling law and order money from Washington which would enable the county to prosecute the heavy case load which consists of many blacks who have been framed on ridiculous charges. Among these men are Reverend Charles Koen, Director of the United Front and Reverend Menker Harris of the Front. The former was charged with aggravated battery and the latter on attempted murder. Both men were released from custody only after paying unusually high bails and both await trial on these false charges.

On October 23, 1970, the mayor of Cairo, Pete Thomas released a press statement saying that the police station had been fired at by black "guerrillas" and that over 400 rounds of ammunition hit the police station. The white press carried this statement in headlines. Through careful investigation, it has been proved (even to the satisfaction of the Chicago "Sun Times") that the mayor's statements were totally false. Only one bullet hole was found in the second story window of the police station, and various "pock" marks on the building were proven to have been there for months. Blacks have been fired upon for over 20 months, yet it was only at the request of a mayor, proven to be a liar, that the Governor sent armed state troops and an armored truck to Cairo. Governor Ogilvie has made his position on Cairo explicitly clear.

On October 24, 1970 a conference on Black Survival was held at the Southern Illinois University campus in Carbondale. The St. Louis Post Dispatch reported that Charles Koen admitted that black guerrillas had fired upon the police station and asked the guerrillas to stand for applause. The United Front has a video and audio tape of the statements made by Koen and at no time did Koen make such a statement; but that did not prevent the white press from printing such lies. In the past week a black G.I. was seriously wounded by eight bullets which obviously came from the white vigilantes. He was hit while returning from a party with a black minister. This incident was reported



A Black resident of Cairo, Ill., looks at two bullet holes which ripped through her home in a recent night of White led violence against the Black community. The Black community has been fired on by whites on over 142 nights since March 31, 1969. (Photo: Carl Hampton, United Front)

in the next to the last page of the Champaign Courier and no reference was made as to where the bullets came from. At no time does the press blame the police, the state troops, and the white citizens council of taking aggressive and inhuman action against the blacks!

It is absolutely imperative that the truth now be told. We must join in the struggle of the blacks in Cairo, for their struggle is our struggle and the truth of the situation must be told; the truth not as it is sometimes reported and oftentimes believed, but the truth as it is !

Community for Social Action is an action oriented community in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois banded together to promote common moral-political concerns in struggling for a decent society. CSA has concerned itself with, among other questions, racism, economic exploitation, war, governmental repression, and dehumanizing aspects of education.

If you want to find out more about CSA, wish to give us information, or desire more copies of this bulletin contact Jack Porter, 1405 Blackstone, Bloomington, Illinois 61701, phone (309) 828-9148.