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**1968: Democratic National
Convention III**

Introduction: *A Moment in Time, 1968*: A special series on the 40th anniversary of a year of upheaval, in a world seemingly out of control.

Content: Jerry Rubin was a Yippie, the nickname for members of the Youth International Party of which he was a founder. He and his troops descended on Chicago determined to protest the Vietnam War and racism in America. Denied permits to assemble and camp in city parks, the Yippies joined thousands of other activists on the streets of Chicago. In

typically purple prose, Rubin warned of momentous events to come: "On Wednesday night the shit is really going to hit the fan 'cause we bust out of this park and go down to Grant Park and then go out to the amphitheater. There're going to be some right strange theatrical events. And you'd better have your theater thing down pretty pat."

Ranged against the protesters and whipped along by Mayor Richard J. Daley, one of America's last great city bosses, were 12,000 policemen, 5,000 regular army troops, and 6,000 National Guardsmen. Proud of his town, the Mayor was incensed that the protesters should sully Chicago's reputation for law and order. Many of

his police officers resented the middle-class kids whom they perceived as ill mannered, self-righteous, and having no respect for authority. And most of them needed a bath, badly.

Each night of the convention, the swelling number of demonstrators would engage in ridiculous street theater and the attempt to march to the Amphitheater near the stockyards. They would fling themselves against a phalanx of hostile Chicago policemen who often clearly lost control of themselves, waded into the crowds with billy clubs, having a riot of their own.

The worst night was Wednesday and it has gone down in history as the Battle of Michigan Avenue. As the

protestors tried to march to the Convention, they were halted at the Hilton. The police closed in and attacked the crowd with tear gas, mace and clubs. Innocent bystanders were assaulted. Part of the crowd was trapped against the windows of the hotel's restaurant. The glass broke inward and the police followed, beating restaurant patrons as well as protesters. Doctors who tried to treat the injured were clubbed. Police parked their vans outside hospitals and arrested victims who stumbled in seeking treatment. Television caught it all and broadcast it to a stunned America.

The Mayor nevertheless, stuck by his men, even though his defense was a little peculiar.

He said, "The confrontation was not created by the police. The confrontation was created by the people who charged the police. Gentlemen, get the thing straight once and for all. The policeman isn't there to create disorder, the policeman is there to preserve disorder."

The Democrats left Chicago demoralized and ill-prepared to take on Richard Nixon and the united Republicans. The nation divided into hostile camps. Whether you were for the Mayor or the protestors defined your politics. Despite all this, the Democrat's candidate, Hubert

Humphrey, came breathlessly close to winning in November.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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