

AS 1967 ENDED, CHICAGOANS ANTICIPATED A GOOD YEAR. THE local economy was booming, supported by government defense contracts and Great Society social welfare expenditures. With over three and a half million people, Chicago was the nation's second-largest city, full of well-paying jobs for hard-working people.

But 1968 quickly turned sour. National antiwar organizations announced they would protest in Chicago during the August Democratic National Convention. Chicago-based comedian and civil rights activist Dick Gregory threatened convention-week protests if the city did not get an open housing bill and promote African American policemen to high-ranking posts.

On April 4, disaster struck when Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated. Three days before, the *Chicago Tribune* had editorialized against his support for striking Memphis sanitation workers, calling him "the most notorious liar in the country." In a memorial service at City Hall, Rev. Jesse Jackson indicted the political establishment, exclaiming, "The blood is on the chest and hands of those that would not have welcomed King here yesterday."

Despite pleas from the city's African American leadership, rioters filled the streets of Lawndale, looting and burning. Parts of the South Side also burned. During the conflagration, Chicago police, following the orders of superintendent of police James B. Conlisk, tried to use minimal force and avoid

1968

Unemployment rate 3.3%

January: Tet Offensive begins; North Korea captures USS *Pueblo*

February: 543 Americans killed, 2,547 wounded in one week in Vietnam

March: President Johnson announces he will not run for reelection

May: United States, North Vietnam announce peace talks; protests in Paris

a Protest organizer Tom Hayden, furious over a brutal, unprovoked police attack on Rennie Davis, voiced the protesters' frustration and anticipated what would happen: "This city and the military machine it had aimed at us won't permit us to protest. . . . Therefore we must move out of this park in groups throughout the city and turn this excited, overheated military machine against itself. Let us make sure that if blood is going to flow, let it flow all over this city. If gas is going to be used, let that gas come down all over Chicago. . . . If we are going to be disrupted and violated, let this whole stinking city be disrupted and violated."

b Using the good press of "The City That Works" and his political clout, Mayor Daley had persuaded the Democratic Party to hold their 1968 presidential convention in Chicago. A buoyant Daley boasted that the city knew how to throw a national political party convention—23 of the previous 56 had been held in Chicago.

c Protesters gather in Grant Park near Columbus and Balbo on August 28 preparing for a march on Michigan Avenue.

d The *Chicago Seed*, one of many underground newspapers that flourished in the late sixties, celebrated the Yippies, who organized a "Festival of Life" during the Democratic convention in Chicago. Joining them in Chicago were student supporters of candidate Eugene McCarthy ("Clean for Gene"), supporters of the assassinated Robert F. Kennedy, antiwar activists of all ages, various groups demanding that the Great Society fulfill its social promises, and local activists hoping to secure changes in Chicago.

e In the days after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in more than 130 cities, hundreds of thousands of black Americans let their anger and grief boil over into collective rage. In Chicago, more than 48 hours of rioting left 11 Chicagoans dead, 48 wounded by police gunfire, 90 policemen injured, and 2,150 people arrested. Some two miles of the commercial heart of Lawndale on West Madison were little more than charred rubble.

f Postconvention polls showed a great majority of Americans approved of the Chicago policemen's use of force and Mayor Daley's strong stand against disorder. Ironically, Mayor Daley, a political and economic liberal who believed that government had an obligation to foster a more equitable society, became a hero to Americans who shared few of Daley's core political beliefs.



unnecessary bloodshed. Once order was restored, however, mayor Richard J. Daley attacked Conlisk's approach: "I said to him very emphatically and very definitely that an order be issued by him immediately and under his signature to shoot to kill any arsonist . . . and to issue a police order to shoot to maim or cripple anyone looting any stores in our city." Later, the mayor backed away from his extreme position.

Nonetheless, four months later when the convention came, authorities wanted no disorder. Far from the cordoned-off International Amphitheater where Hubert Humphrey won the presidential nomination, protesters and police met in angry confrontations. The worst occurred August 28 after po-

lice stopped protesters from marching to the convention center. A crowd of some 10,000 ended up near Michigan Avenue and Balbo Drive. As protesters chanted "The whole world is watching" and television crews filmed, policemen beat hundreds of protesters bloody. Some 83 million Americans watching their televisions to see democratic process at work instead saw a street riot.

The violence poisoned Humphrey's bid locally and nationally. Unlike in 1960, Chicago's Democratic machine could not turn out enough votes. Illinois, like the nation, went Republican. By the end of 1968, Chicago had become a tragic symbol for a nation that had come undone.

David Farber

June: Robert Kennedy assassinated

August: USSR invades Czechoslovakia

September: First Boeing 747 rolled out

October: 541,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam; Mexico City Olympics

November: National Turn In Your Draft Card Day

December: Apollo 8 orbits the moon



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WE SUPPORT
MAYOR DALEY AND OUR CHICAGO POLICE

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