It wasn&T the whole west side of Chicago that wasin flames. Just part of it, mostly the old twenty fourth ward, but it scared the hell out of the city. The flames from the burning stores could be seen from the high rises along the lake. In their fantasies whites imagined the confrontation spreading with black insrugent band taking fire into bordering white neighborhoods or the loop. The heart of the black community on the south side didn't go up but ~~no~~ the old established black families weren't sure it wouldn't. The South Side wasn't the west side. The south side had been a black community for 80 years. The west side had been black for barely thirty, turning from white to black in a speedy transition as the Jews abandoned it like a flight of crows. Once the cultural center of the whole midwest Jewish population and the center of cultural, business, health and social life among the imigrants, the second generation children of immigrants , moved out of the crowded but adequate apartments and scattering of single and double houses

of North Lawndale and into the modern respectable and with their arrival affluent north side. They left in the nick of time and in doing so took a generation of heat off of Chicago. The black population was exploding with no place to go. There was a housing shortage for everyone after the war and the black community was surrounded by nationality communities with enough vitality and strength to resisit the block busters and the ~~ddddd~~ black crime and the recriet new residences among the refugees and displaced persons Hitlers bestiality had left tragically scattered over Europe. But when the older generation of jewsih immigrants fromt the 1910s died or went to live ~~in~~ with their children ~~ddddd~~ in the fashionablenew neighborhoods it opened up room for over a 100,000 blacks on the west side. It also presented them with a shopping center, thriving mo and pa storres the Income from which had educatad a large portion of Jewish doctors, lawyers dentists musicians and interllectuals.

as well as the skeleton of a political organization once the most powerful in the country. ΛΛΛ It wasn't that the Jews had fled the blacks. There had been asmall west side Black community for years, who had jewish friends and whom many Jews counted a close and best friends. It was an age thing. Large numbers of Jews, motly polish and Russian had come in a very short time, They had prospered and when the old Jewish population died or grew old their children moved out. It was a quick transition for those going as well as those arriving. Blacks inherited all of the equipment ~~for~~ of a a great commuhity. But they didn't know how to use it. A community isn't buildings. ¢¢¢ A community is experi3nce. Historic experience that has endured, been reconciled, shared, exhalted, dramatized, allegorized. Whatever it isblacks didn't have it. It is still eveoloving. The flames that lit up the Chicago skyline were not the flames of bitterness. They were the flames of mischief and greed, of vandalizm , Of disorder and isorganization, of stupidty and human

opportunizm. The bitterness and frustration was in the hearts of blacks who never hit the streets, men and women who huddled behind loked doors ~~dddddddddd~~ in darkened houses, as they did many nights, hoping violence waould pass over them, feeling tragic in the knowlege they had no power to stop it. With no blood of the lamb to splash over their mantel, they knew the volence could very well strike them. The looters and asonists on the street were for themost part the ordinary run of vandals, petty thieves, and underclass but the fires they set had no more judgement then those who started them andd they bothterrified not only the whites from their distant towers, but the respectable and struggling blacks who were trying to hold their families together, and hang on to their t.V. radios, clothing lamps beds etc and their lives.

When the burning and looting showed no sign of letting up and even increased in intensity several ~~dddd~~ black members of my staff who were required to take positions in the riot torn areas and to pass on what information they had to a hastilly assembled information center dowtown asked to be relieved to try to stand guard or helpn move members of their families from apartments over the stores where they lived in the threatened area or help guard their families in cottages and appartment houses in the nearby neighborhoods I approved the requestsand went tosee the Mayor. He was in his office alone and looked very despondent. I reported such facts as I had and the impressions of my staff which included the impression that thousands of poor people living in the buldings on the west side were near to panic, afraid for their lives. He asked me what I would suggest he do. I told he try to use enough force to stop the looting and rioting. Who could he talk to. I told him to talk to as many black leaders as he could to reassure him but not to assume that any of them could

stop the rioting. Third,he asked me whay are they burning down their own communities, their own city. This hurt him most of all and most puzzeled him. I said "they arn't". Bums , delinquents, vandals, cheap opportunistic scavangers are burning down these neighborhoods and its an unfortunate fact that this part of town and the black population has a larger number of this class of people than others. The mayor didn't ask me what Its just as well. It would have been the wong time to try to tell him why I thought so. Besides the liberal press the sociologists were all mouthing"the common knowlege" alientation, powerlessness, frustration, unemployment housing segregation. When the Mayor , the next morning told the police to "shoot(arsonists) to kill", it had a salutary effect although the order was never issued and nobody was actually shot. A howel went up from liberals and tender hearted people all over and added immeasurably to the Mayors reputation as a brutal man with a neanderthal metality. Conferences were called

with scores of black leaders especially of the ministerial variety. It had a calming effect and a few actually hit the streets to talk with thepeople, but for the most part they didn't find anybody they knew to talk to.

Driving back from the flaming riot area by a round about route it was nociable that in fire station after fire station, the sparkling red and white fireenjins sat alertly undisrurbed, Just as it was noticable that the riot areas were not overrun with police. They had all gonve in at the beginning and been assalted with rocks and bottles and a few shots. Police ~~and~~ were somewhat used to this from making arrests in crowded street crner distubances, but the fire men were not. "Why the hell are they mad at us. We're there to save lives." But it was also clear that in a larger framework of action, without knowing or being able confidently to predict how contageous the violence was or how mobile the incendiary elements might be, that the city was not about to send significan rserves into a hostile area

and leave the rest of the city undefended. It was just as well. Had more cops been sent in there would certainly have been more violence, perhaps more deaths and shootings and someone would have been sure to say that the police had actually started the riots and that the firemen had set the fires. Although peace finally came back, the blackened builds stood for over a decade. No business would rebuild, no new housing would appear but the slow and tedious taske would be taken up by thousands of individual heros of evolving through millions of modest and humane social acts a community. There would be more riots and burnings and for a long time even to now, the Summer heat brings aprehension and worry to communities like North Lawndale in every city in the country.

The next summer Dr. Martin Luther King came to Chicago having decided to move his crusade out of the south. It was a dumb decision. The black population in the North was both worse off and better off than the black population of the South. The urban social environment of the north was certainly more harsh and abrasive than the social environment of the South, especially on the children than the rural environment in which the largest number of black families lived in the South. The brutality of sudden change so much a parr of ~~the~~ life in large cities, the impersonality of the social systems on which life dpends, has a fiendish effedt on poor people white or black as it grinds human flesh and psychyes. Although cities set men free as Socrates observed a few thousand years ago -- they extract their prive, in social diso ganization, class discriminations jaring osocial contacts, a feeling at times of helplessness, pwerlessness in a complicated world, even among people whose neighbors regard as solid substantial, prosperous.

Since the Civil War a small but talented black population had been building a community with churches, politics, trades (draymen, barbering, canal workers, constrcution small business, catering) and in spite of conflict with competing etnic neighborhoods, had constructed an efective skeleton of effective meiating institutions and relationship. Physically it moved from the loop area to make way for the new federal building and Post office south, later swelled by railroad workers porterw and waiters and then by migrations of workers in the steel industry during world war one to for the famous Chicago Black Belt, twice it had reeled back on its heels by rushes of imigration, to fall back and then stager on, building and even prospering.

The third rush of world war three ~~dddddddd~~ swamped it. But this time Federal programs Federal policies were to create conditions thatwere to upset the meager margins of stability on which progress had been buildingnd undermine whatever control estblished institutions

and youth of the established Ourches some of the radical bubbleheads in Dr. Kings entourage tried to enlish the support of Black gangs like the murderous a Blackstone Rangers, a goup nobody saw much virtue in except the aspiring Pulitizer prise writers at the Chicago Sun Times Daley News Marshal field papers and Bobby Kennedys crime fighter agencies.

Fifty years of political experience had taught the mayor not to turn his back on old friends in order to make new ones (especially if you didn't know too much about the new ones would turn out) was never confused. He honestly wanted all the hdlp he could get and proiced to cooperate with Dr. King if he came to Chicago and brought about thebiggest event of Dr. Kings Chicago journey. A conference with all of the power makers and shakers, cardinals bishops, business tycoons civic and social leaders, everybody who was anybody as well as a few who were nobodies. It was called hastilly to be sure but it was a big buss. Daley delivered to King a goup of people who had to give whatever Chicago had to give and what he asked for a a change of heart in

still retainedretained. This proud community was separated by fifty years in time from the South of Dr. King, jealous of its progress and pöwer and felt quite superior to the segregated south. Northern leaders esppecially Black ministers, while mostly admiring of Dr. Kings work did not relish a messiah being thrust upon them to establish his own new power base, with his own evangelical purposes. Dr King did not get the warm reception he had anticipated. It was a situation the tensions of which were exacerbated by the fact that Chicago was the home of one of the alck worlds most powerful and conservative leader Jackson, not Jesse who had crossed swords both verbally and physically eith progressive southerner Martin Luther King in the babtist conference of which they both were members and of which Br. Jackson was the otherwise uncontested ~~ddddd~~ President and leader. His influence was great enough to dampen any fire among the gras roots of the Black religious estalishment for climbing on Dr. Kings fire engin. Rebuffed from access to the sunday schools

all of Chicago with the complete conversonof thr-ee and a half million people to the human brotherhood. If he'd asked Daley for 5000 joys, ten jusges and two billions dollars in credits for community development new franchises, new schools whatever --- that was something Daley and his friends could have negotiated but a change of heart ---- how the hell do you do that. And it was clear that Dr. King had nothing in his negotiation bag. He couldn't stop the threat of riots and arson and looting that plagued the city and all its citizens. He was there to shake the tree and see what would fall off of it. Enough came out of it to save face for Dr. King, the Mayor saw to that, and after a few other pointless sortees Dr. King went home and to his martyrdom. Blacks got a National Holiday and Dr Jackson changed the address of his Church from Dr. Martin Luther King Parkway, (formerly South Parkway) to the other street that forms the coner on which his church is located, 33rd st.

tragic and heroic

and everyone else

Part of the problem confronted by Dr. King was the the deep conviction that what the Blacks need is a lot more of what the whites have. A bigger share of that old gross national product. A larger hunk of the pie. Movin on up to the big time. Nothing wrong with that. 90% of both blacks and whites would agree. That's what they need alright. In the black bars they also say "We'd have it too if whity wouldn't discriminate us" And in the white bars they say, "Niggers are too fuckin dumb." In what passes for native wisdom they're both right. Theb power of positive drinking.