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5 OCT 1967

SUBJECT: Views of Sidney Lens on Domestic Racial Situation
and the New Politics Convention

1. Sidney Lens was extremely pessimistic about the present political situation in the United States. He believed that the growing racial strife was bringing about the breakup of the American liberal consensus, revealing the "cynicism and hypocrisy" of the American power structure. He wondered whether liberal reforms to head off a violent domestic strife and inevitable repression of black militants and left liberals and radicals were even possible. He believed that some sort of vast conspiracy on the right might be already underway to destroy American democracy.
2. Lens' state of depression might in part be explained by the failure of the New Politics Convention, with which Lens was greatly involved. He said that the Black Caucus and the CPUSA had virtually wrecked the Convention, yet the Communists had failed to get the Convention's support for a King-Spock or some other third ticket in the 1968 presidential elections, which the Communists were very eager to obtain.
3. Lens said that relative racial peace had been maintained in Chicago during the summer by massive sums of money moving into the pockets of known black nationalist leaders, youth gang leaders and certain local politicians. This operation, to keep Chicago "cool", had been successful, but had also produced much cynicism among ordinary black people who were beginning to understand at last what went on and to feel abused by such treatment. Lens believed that conditions were such that Black people in Chicago could not fail to protest militantly in the future, and perhaps not only during hot weather. The black community, he maintained, showed great solidarity, despite its divisions. According to Lens, not one Negro sniper was caught or denounced during the summer.
4. Lens said he had been able to maintain fairly good contacts with many Negroes in the ghettos and with black intellectuals, and he seemed to have a fairly self-confident idea of what was going on within the black community.
5. He maintained that white radicals in general, however, had virtually no influence inside the ghettos and that the Daly machine was more influential than the Progressive Labor, the CPUSA or the Socialist Workers Party. He knew nothing about RAM's influence, if any, but said that the center of black nationalist activity seemed at present in the West Garfield area.

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6. Concerning any possible black conspiracy on a nationwide scale, Lens thought this was nonsense. Ties between groups and leaders had been reported to him as loose, with many feuds between them, Lens said. He added that he had heard of no international contacts by black nationalists, except the well-known trips abroad of SNCC leaders.

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

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

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

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

11. The Bureau may pass the above report to appropriate field offices for Background Use Only. It is requested no direct action be taken against the Subject on the basis of the contents of this report without prior consultation with this Agency. This restriction may be considered withdrawn one month after Source's departure from the United States, although the fact that these statements were made by Subject should continue to be considered restricted.

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Attachments: As stated above

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