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Martin Luther King Jr., 1929-1968

SEVEN DAYS IN APRIL

A Momentous Week Brings Hope for Peace—Then National Tragedy

In the space of seven days in April, the tides of history and the caprice of fate combined to shake the U.S. with two mighty convulsions. They came with such stunning swiftness that the nation had scarcely time to react to the bright promise of the first before the second was upon it—and this one was full of such dread, shame and outrage that it touched off flash fires of violence in some 40 cities, brought Regular Army troops into Washington and sent the smoke of mindless arson and rioting drifting over the White House.

By the end of the week, the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the

man believed to have been King's assassin—a troubled nation turned to search its soul and inquire just what had happened and why.

The first shock of the week, of course, had been designed as a therapeutic one. It came when Lyndon B. Johnson proclaimed a bombing pause over most of North Vietnam—a move that many instantly interpreted as a blatantly cynical political stratagem designed to enhance his prospects for renomination in Chicago. But then Mr. Johnson spoke the twenty words that shook the world: "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as

applauded, and he seemed genuinely more at ease than at any time since he came to office.

In the first days after Mr. Johnson's announcement of the bombing pause and withdrawal from the Presidential race, the Democratic nomination seemed to become a prize that any of the major candidates might reasonably expect to win. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy heralded Mr. Johnson's decision as "truly magnanimous" and telegraphed the White House requesting an interview so that he and the President might discuss "how we might work together in the interest of national unity." Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey at once loomed large as Mr. Johnson's personal choice to succeed him, and coincidentally or not, the President saw both Kennedy and Humphrey on the same day. For his part, Humphrey seemed on the verge of formally announcing his candidacy, but had not done so at the end of the week.

Conviction: At the White House, aides stressed that their Chief's decision to leave the stage he so long had dominated was based essentially on his conviction that only by so doing could he heal the divisions that were rending both his party and the country and provide the kind of effective leadership the nation must have between now and the time a new President is chosen. But it was a telling commentary on the chronic conditions afflicting the United States that the country scarcely experienced the exhilaration of hope before the President again had to appeal for an end to divisiveness in the land.

Not the least of the week's ironies, perhaps, was that the bullet ending the life of Martin Luther King once more thrust Mr. Johnson back to the center of the political stage. After meeting with Negro leaders at the White House, he went on television to deplore domestic racial violence and issue a fresh call for unity. The prospect that he just might succeed in his quest for a new national consensus touched off speculation that the Democrats might finally turn to him and ask him to reconsider his decision to withdraw. In the light of the events that shook the U.S. last week, even such a contingency as this could not be dismissed as impossible.



Reveille in Washington: U.S. troops on guard in Capitol Plaza

tragic consequences it set in train had all but obscured the earlier developments toward possible peace in Vietnam. The President had canceled his trip to Honolulu for a conference with Far East military commanders (instead, Gen. William Westmoreland flew to Washington), and was scheduled to go before a joint session of Congress with a special message on civil rights. Throughout the nation, flags flew at half-staff in honor of the martyred Negro leader, and dignitaries from all over the U.S. and abroad were arriving in Atlanta for his funeral.

Thus ended a week as cataclysmic as any the U.S. has known in a quarter of a century, and as the initial shock waves subsided—and the FBI and Memphis police pressed the search for the white

your President." With that, the bombing pause became an earnest gesture for peace, and touched off a wave of national relief and good feeling.

For a brief moment there seemed no limit to the national euphoria. The tensions, the bitterness and the cumulative rancor in the land seemed somehow to find a final catharsis. The stock market traded more shares in one day than at any time in its history, and the Dow Jones average jumped a phenomenal 20 points. Hanoi responded favorably to the bombing pause, and Mr. Johnson, true to his word, agreed to send U.S. diplomats to meet with North Vietnamese envoys for talks everyone hoped would lead to peace negotiations. Everywhere he went, the President was cheered and

Chicago fire: As flames crackled, bystanders shouted 'King is dead'

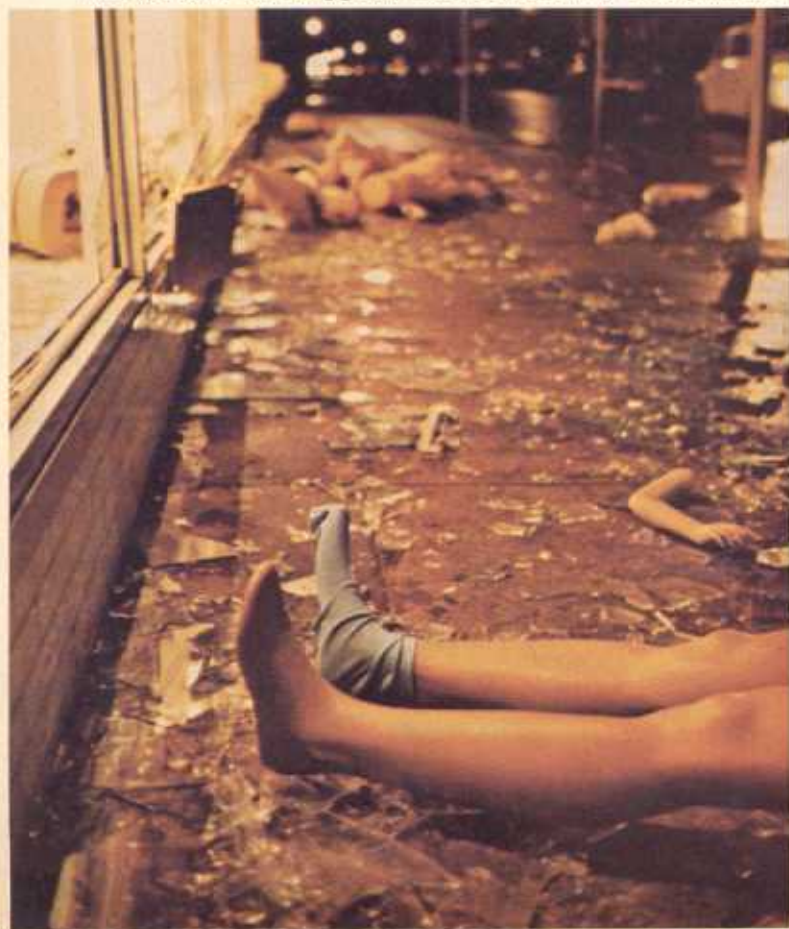
Newsweek photo by Jeff Lowenthal





Newweek photos by Dennis Brack (Black Star)

BARRAGE: Washington policemen fire tear-gas salvo during Thursday-night rioting. Nearby, a manikin's legs and arms (below) lie stripped amid the shards of a shopwindow



EARLY LIGHT: Dawn rises upon



LOOT: One plunderer abandons his boot



moldering ruin of a Washington street corner, while a fire truck (left) hoses down another smoking building
Newsweek photo by Phil MacMullan
Curt Barlow



chase. Another (right) calmly examines his prize



Newsweek photo by Dennis Brack (Black Star)



Newsweek photo by Matt Herron (Black Star)

Newsweek photos by Burk Uzzle (Magnum)



DREAM'S END: The casket bearing the body of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is borne from Memphis funeral home, while King's widow waits to accompany it on the final journey to Atlanta. The faces of women spectators (below) mirror the shock and grief of an anguished nation.





A Federal trooper stands guard in the rubble in Washington: 'Take a good look, baby'

'Take Everything You Need, Baby'

It was Pandora's box flung open—an apocalyptic act that loosed the furies brooding in the shadows of America's sullen ghettos. From Washington to Oakland, Tallahassee to Denver, the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis last week touched off a black rampage that subjected the U.S. to the most widespread spasm of racial disorder in its violent history.

The fire this time made Washington look like the besieged capital of a banana republic with helmeted combat troops, bayoneted rifles at the ready, guarding the White House and a light-machine-gun post defending the steps of the Capitol. Huge sections of Chicago's West Side ghetto were put to the torch. The National Guard was called out there and in Detroit, Pittsburgh, Baltimore and in four Southern cities, and put on alert in Philadelphia and Boston. In New York, Mayor John V. Lindsay was heckled from a Harlem street by an angry crowd. In Minneapolis, a Negro vowed to kill the first honky he saw—and promptly shot his white neighbor to death. "My King is dead," he sobbed, after pumping half a dozen bullets into his victim.

Negro college campuses seethed with anger and sometimes harbored snipers. Dozens of high schools canceled classes after violence erupted between Negro and white students. Window-breaking, rock-throwing, looting and other acts of vandalism struck two score cities, large and small. Washington, Chicago, Detroit and Toledo tried to enforce dusk-to-dawn curfews. Bars, liquor stores and gun shops were closed in many places—but usually not before ghetto blacks had stocked up on alcohol and ammunition. Throughout the country, already-overburdened police and firemen went on emergency shifts. By the weekend, the

death toll around the U.S. stood at more than twenty and was rising, uncounted thousands were under arrest (more than 4,000 in Washington alone) and property damage was incalculable.

King's assassination was quite clearly the proximate cause of it all—but the rioters' anger and grief was often hard to detect. The Chicago mobs were ugly and obviously well schooled in the use of fire bombs. But in Washington the looters had a Mardi gras air about them. Around the country, whites were jeered, threatened and occasionally assaulted, but the crowds generally avoided confrontations with the police. The police, too, did their best to keep bloodshed at a minimum. Indeed, in city after city, the cops were under orders not to interfere with looting. And it was quite apparent that the rioters' main target was to loot, not shoot honkies. "Soul Brother" signs afforded Negro businessmen little of the protection they assured in past riots. The plunderers—led by black teen-agers—smashed and burned almost indiscriminately.

'Guns': Washington, which is 66 per cent Negro but which had been almost untouched by the last four riotous summers, was the hardest hit this time. Minutes after the news of King's death was broadcast, crowds began to gather on the edges of the Capital's sprawling ghettos. They did not have to wait long for a leader. Into the volatile mix swept black power-monger Stokely Carmichael spouting incendiary rhetoric. "Go home and get your guns," cried Carmichael. "When the white man comes he is coming to kill you. I don't want any black blood in the street. Go home and get you a gun and then come back because I got me a gun"—and he brandished what looked like a small pistol.

Roving bands of black teen-agers—un-

armed so far as anyone could tell—were already darting into Washington's downtown shopping district, fires were beginning to light the night sky and Washington's relatively small (2,900-man) police force went on the alert. The plundering and burning lasted until dawn, then subsided—only to resume with far greater intensity next day.

Friday was a crisp spring day in the Capital. The cherry blossoms were in bloom and the city was thronged with tourists who gawked in amazement through the tinted windows of their sight-seeing buses as the rampage resumed.

The Frisk: At his storefront headquarters, Stokely Carmichael helped feed the flames with more violent talk—all of it delivered in a soft, gentle voice to newsmen (who were frisked and relieved of such potential weapons as nail clippers before being admitted to his presence). "When white America killed Dr. King," said Carmichael, who bitterly opposed King's nonviolent stance, "she declared war on us . . . We have to retaliate for the deaths of our leaders. The executions of those deaths [are] going to be in the streets . . ." Did Carmichael, 27, fear for his own life? "The hell with my life," he snapped at a white reporter. "You should fear for yours. I know I'm going to die." Later, he turned up at a memorial service for King at Howard University, waving a gun on the platform.

As the day wore on, the turmoil increased. Looting and burning swept down 14th Street and 7th Street, two of the ghetto's main thoroughfares, then spread south to the shopping district just east of the White House. On the sidewalk in front of the Justice Department's headquarters on Pennsylvania Avenue, shirt-sleeved DOJ staffers watched helplessly as looters cleaned out Kaufman's

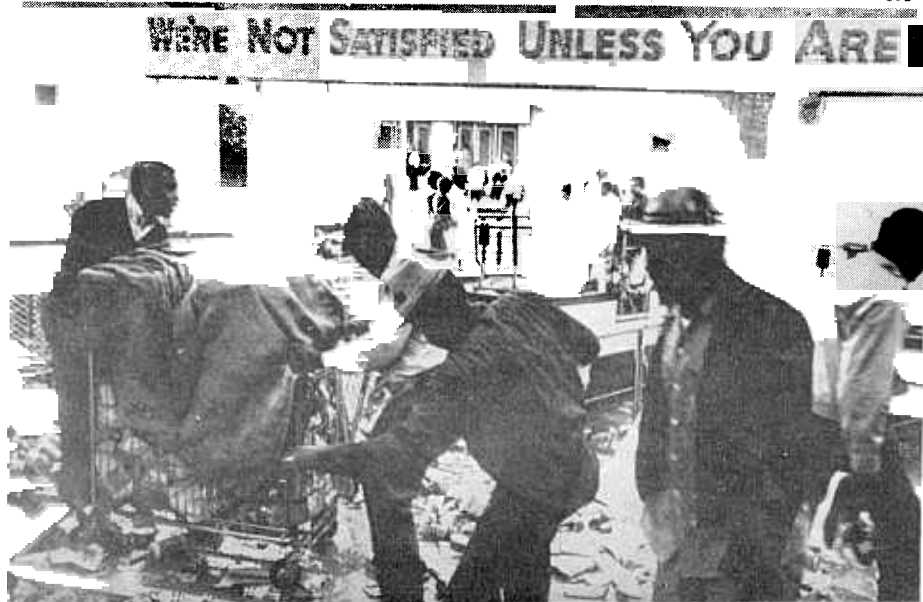


In memoriam An improvised placard in Chicago, bad blood in Harlem



Looters in Chicago (above) and Washington 'We're getting what we want'

UPI



clothing store. The story was the same all over. Without the force to control the situation, the cops let the looters run wild. The result was an eerie, carnival atmosphere. Jolly blacks dashed in and out of shattered shopwindows carrying their booty away in plain sight of the law. Others toolled through the shopping districts in late-model cars, pausing to fill them with loot and then speeding off—only to stop obediently for red lights.

Looters stopped on the sidewalks to try on new sports jackets and to doff their old shoes for stolen new ones. Only rarely did police interfere. At the corner of 14th and G Streets, police braced a Negro over a car. On the hood were several pairs of shoes. "They killed my brother, they killed Luther King," the culprit cried. "Was he stealing shoes when they killed him?" retorted a cop.

Marketing: White reporters moved among the plunderers with impunity. "Take a good look, baby," a looter cried to a carload of newsmen as he emerged from a liquor store on H Street. "In fact, have a bottle"—and he tossed a fifth of high-priced Scotch into the car. Young black girls and mothers, even 7- and 8-year-old children, roamed the streets with shopping carts, stocking up on groceries. "Cohen's is open," chirped one woman to friends as she headed for a sacked dry-goods store with the nonchalance of a matron going marketing. "Take everything you need, baby," Negroes called to each other from shattered store windows. Mingling with the crowds on Pennsylvania Avenue were observers from the German, French, Japanese, Norwegian and other embassies, taking notes to cable home. "It's a revolution," a French Embassy attaché remarked to his companion.

It wasn't. But the sacking of Washington was ugly enough. By midafternoon—with an acrid pall of smoke hanging over the White House and looting going on less than two blocks away—frightened whites and Negro office workers tried desperately to get home, creating a massive traffic jam. Telephone lines were clogged, water pressure was running low and at least 70 fires were blazing. White House aide Joseph Califano set up a special command post to monitor the situation right on the Presidential doorstep. Finally, Lyndon Johnson declared that the Capital was caught up in "conditions of . . . violence and disorder" and as Commander in Chief he first called in some 6,500 Army and National Guard troops, including a contingent stationed on the grounds of the White House itself.

Stability: When looters and pillagers continued to roam the streets, the President ordered in 6,000 more Federal troops. And by late Saturday night, the combined forces finally restored some semblance of stability to the Capital.

If the Washington disorders had a bizarre gaiety to them, the scene in Chicago—where King had led an abortive "End Slums" campaign in 1966—was bittersweet. Deadly sniper fire crackled

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

in the South Side slums, and the West Side—the scene of two major riots since 1965—blazed with more fires than anyone could count. There was no mistaking the anger of the young blacks, who watched with solemn satisfaction as whole blocks went up in flames. "This is the only answer," said one studious-looking Negro youth as he peered at the flames through gold-framed spectacles. "It feels good," said another, munching a vanilla ice-cream cone. "I never felt so good before. When they bury King, we gonna bury Chicago."

With the tongues of flame dancing against the sky, the talk of the streets sounded like an invitation to Armageddon. "I thought I was dead until they killed the King," intoned a 24-year-old gang leader in a black leather coat. "They killed the King and I came to life. We gonna die fighting. We all gonna die fighting."

There was little fighting in Chicago. But at least nine Negroes were killed there, mostly in the act of looting. As elsewhere, the police who pegged shots at looters were the exceptions to the rule. And so the plundering went on almost unopposed. Along Kedzie Avenue on the West Side, Negroes carried armfuls and cartloads of booty from ravaged storefronts. "I'm a hard man and I want some revenge," explained one. "King's dead and he ain't ever gonna get what he wanted. But we're alive, man, and we're getting what we want."

'Bums': Nearby, a Negro woman begged the vandals to stop. "Come out of that store and leave that stuff," she shouted. "You all nothing but bums. Ain't we got enough trouble with our neighborhood burning down? Where are those people gonna live after you burn them down?" Unhearing—or uncaring—the looters ignored her.

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley had pleaded for peace on TV after King's murder, but his words, too, fell on deaf ears. Finally, with vast areas of the slums in chaos, the National Guard was ordered in. Three thousand guardsmen—many of them black—rolled into the ghetto, with 3,000 more held in reserve. The troops patrolled mostly in four-man Jeeps: a driver armed with a pistol, one man with a carbine and two armed with M-1 rifles. Unlike the green and trigger-happy guard units who performed so ineptly in Detroit and Newark last summer, the Illinois troops were poised enough to handle matters with a minimum of bloodshed. But when the situation heated up again the next day, state officials requested that 5,000 Federal soldiers be deployed to back up the guard. In the end, 12,500 troops were required to bring Chicago back under shaky control.

With disorder sweeping the country, New York, which suffered the nation's first major riot in 1964, braced for trouble. It came soon enough. The immediate post-assassination hours brought a spate of window-breaking and looting to Harlem and in the teeming Bedford-Stuyve-



Chemical warfare: Guardsmen disperse student demonstrators in Raleigh, N.C.



Carmichael: 'Get your guns'



Street scenes: Lindsay walked, Harlem (below) and Washington burned



sant slum in Brooklyn. Mayor John Lindsay, whose walking tours of the ghettos helped keep the city cool last summer, sped to Harlem to commiserate with the crowds over King's death and defuse the situation. He walked along 125th Street, patting passers-by on the back, then took a bullhorn to speak to the crowds. In a quivering, emotional voice, he began by addressing the Negroes as "Brothers"—a term soul-minded blacks like to use. The mayor barely got in another word. "You got some nerve using that word," one angry youth shouted at Lindsay. Others hurled obscenities at the mayor.

Plea: Next night, Negro youths rode subways to midtown, breaking windows in shops near Central Park and dogtrotting through Times Square. But the police were ready for them, deftly breaking up the roving bands and maintaining order without firing a shot. At the weekend, the mayor was back on the city's slum streets for the third night in a row—and, in the end, he prevailed as an effective force in keeping the racial lid from blowing off in New York. Amidst rising tensions, Lindsay had gone on television to plead for continued calm. "It especially depends on the determination of the young men of this city to respect our laws and the teachings of the martyr, Martin Luther King" and to promise better days ahead. "We can work together again for progress and peace in this city and this nation," he said, "for now I believe we are ready to scale the mountain from which Dr. King saw the promised land."

Perhaps he was right. But the convulsions unleashed by a sniper in Memphis left the nation with ominous questions still to be answered. Were last week's riots a final paroxysm that might purge angry emotions and clear the way for reconciliation? Or were the pictures of the machine gun on the Capitol steps and Chicago in flames only premonitions of an America without Martin Luther King?



King at the 1963 March on Washington: 'I have a dream'

'King Is the Man, Oh Lord'

He was, more than any single man, the voice and the instrument of the second American revolution. He materialized out of the streets and the Jim Crow churches of the South a dozen years ago, preaching brotherhood and nonviolence to a divided and violent land. For a time, incredibly, it worked—until the very forces he had helped set in motion swept past him and turned the black ghettos of America into battlegrounds. Yet the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. never gave up, and he was trying to prove his way would work again when a white assassin cut him down last week in Memphis—and dealt a parlous wound to the American soul.

For King's martyrdom on a motel balcony did far more than rob Negroes of their most compelling spokesman and whites of their most effective bridge to black America. His murder, for too many blacks, could only be read as a judgment upon his nonviolent philosophy—and a license for retaliatory violence. Extremists who scorned King as "De Lawd" in life now exalted him in death, and they found fertile ground for their whiplash anger. Ghetto after ghetto blew up, more than twenty persons died and the nation edged to the brink of a racial war.

Memorial: It was all in King's name, and there could have been no crueler memorial. The assassination—and its instant transmission over the broadcast networks—laid bare once again a dark undercurrent in American life and so stunned the nation as no event had since John F. Kennedy's death. But the outbreak of violence that flowed in its aftermath was a repudiation of everything that King's life—and death—had stood for.

He had gone to Memphis, in fact, with his whole pacific creed under deep-

ening challenge after four riotous summers in America's black slums. Just a week before the end, the 39-year-old civil-rights leader had tried to mount a nonviolent protest march there in support of striking Negro garbage workers—only to see a crowd of harum-scarum teen-age militants seize the day and turn it into a window-smashing blowup. The event, like everything King did, had far more than local significance. It cast a shadow on his upcoming squat-in by 3,000 of the black and white poor among the monuments of Washington—and, indeed, on the future of nonviolent protest. Memphis had been an embarrassment for King and the thought of going back last week depressed him. But the idea of not going back—and thus conceding the hour to the violent ones—depressed him even more. "Nonviolence," he told friends, "is on trial in Memphis." So he decided on a second attempt, sent his advance men in to try to talk the young hotbloods into line, then followed them to town to conduct a series of pep rallies.

'Out of Egypt': The first session seemed a rousing success, the militants and moderates sitting together at Mason Street Temple in happy unity. "That's why it's so important that nothing happen to King," a Negro minister whispered to a companion behind the lectern. "Memphis would be smoking right now if it weren't for King." At the mike, another preacher, bulky and bald-headed, droned through the unchanging warm-up: "King is the man, oh Lord, you have sent to lead us out of Egypt." And finally, under a blazing, yellow neon cross lettered "Sunshine Band," King stood at the altar, his voice heavy, his eyes faintly liquid, his frame compact and sur-



Washington: The fire this time