



DETROIT: Aftermath

Cyrus Vance, the President's personal representative in Detroit during the crisis, congratulating the VISTA Volunteers on the outstanding job which they did: "They have won the respect and admiration of everyone."



of a Riot

BY CATHERINE MACKIN

Hearst White House Correspondent

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOAN LARSON

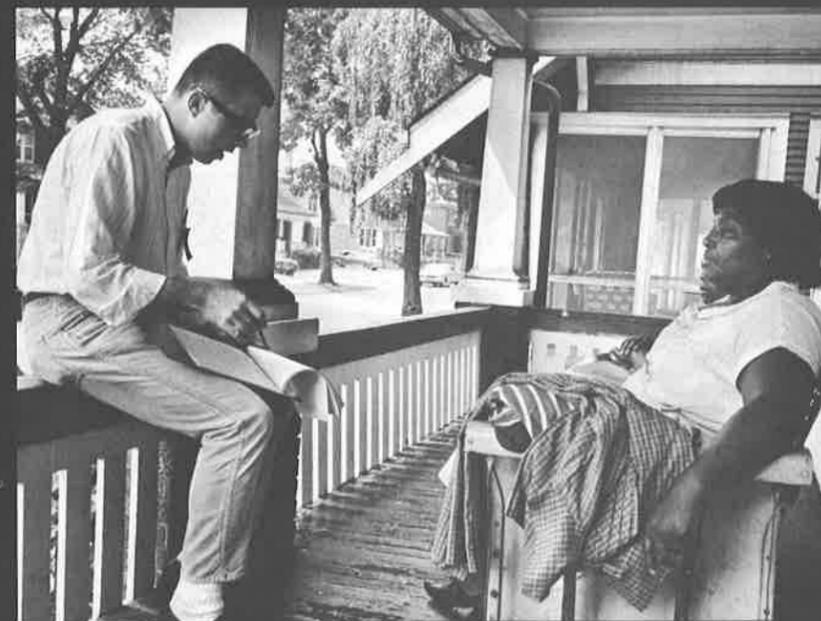
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Washington, D.C.—The Federal Government, acting without fanfare, has demonstrated that Uncle Sam's manpower and resources can zero in effectively on a local rat menace.

A poverty program "Rat Patrol," assigned recently to Detroit's riot area, used 4,550 pounds of poison, 25 pounds of cyanide gas and their hands to kill off a rat threat.

The "Rat Patrol," as it now is called, was composed of 13 VISTA Volunteers and Vista Associates who joined Detroit Health Department workers in the intense "search and destroy" operation.

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DETROIT: Aftermath of a Riot CONTINUED

The Johnson Administration, despite one setback in the House, expects Congress to approve a nationwide \$20 million rat eradication program next month.

At one point, the Detroit Rat Patrol forced cyanide gas up pipes and stood by with shovels, decapitating the rats as they ran for their lives.

The worst rat threat came from decaying food and burned-out supermarket sites and private homes. The supermarkets were the major area of concentration, however.

The work done by VISTA workers supplemented an ongoing rat extermination campaign which fell two weeks behind schedule because of the big riot.

The Rat Patrol functioned between August 1 and 4 and then disbanded, their job completed.

In all, 218 VISTA Volunteers and Associates were put to work in Detroit's riot area. VISTA Director Bill Crook personally went there to direct the operation.

Crook first received a request for Volunteers from Detroit Mayor Jerome Cavanaugh four days after the riot

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VISTA Director Bill Crook and Howard Brabson of the Chicago regional office brief newly arrived Volunteers. Some were sent to Bail Bond headquarters, others distributed emergency food



broke out on July 23. Within 48 hours, 50 new Volunteers were in the city and a day later, the VISTA operation was moving under full steam.

Crook's explicit orders were that the Volunteers should work with city officials and that there would be no announcement of the federal poverty workers in the city unless local political leaders chose to reveal their presence.

Of the 218 Volunteers, 35 had been previously assigned to the city. The recruits were brought in from Baltimore, Northern Michigan, Cincinnati, Nashville and Chicago.

Only 98 of the Volunteers still are there. The others have been sent to new assignments in other cities.

The emergency VISTA program for Detroit placed Volunteers in five main areas. They worked in neighborhood

centers, surveying, with city officials, the impact of the riot and the need of the people affected by the mob violence.

Again, in cooperation with the neighborhood centers, the Volunteers got three dump trucks, a bunch of shovels and proceeded to clean up the rubble and debris that lined the street.

Another group of Volunteers was sent to food warehouses where they loaded and unloaded trucks as part of an emergency food distribution program.

The Volunteers also worked in the out-patient section of the Detroit General Hospital and in the city attorney's office where they helped expedite some 4,000 bail bond cases.

City of Detroit

JEROME P. CAVANAGH
MAYOR

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

August 24, 1967

Mr. William Crook
National Director
Volunteers In Service To America
1111 - 18th Street
Room 800
Washington, D. C. 20506

Dear Mr. Crook:

The potential inherent in the Volunteers In Service to America program certainly was realized in Detroit following our recent riot.

Even before the rioting had ended, some of the almost 200 VISTA workers assigned to Detroit began arriving.

During the emergency, the volunteers helped in practically all phases of recovery. They assisted in emergency food distribution. They helped with the basic clean-up necessary throughout the inner city. They drove trucks removing rubble from the rioting and assisted in emergency supplies back into the troubled area. They helped with legal services provided for those involved in the disturbance. They gave emergency assistance at Detroit General Hospital where most riot injury cases were taken. And they formed a large part of the post-riot Rat Patrol, mixing and placing rat poison in areas of widespread destruction where the danger of rats had increased.

One of the most important post-riot tasks was handled almost exclusively by the VISTA workers. This was a door-to-door census of the riot area in an attempt to identify victims of the riot and their problems. This information was organized by Detroit's Community Action Agency, the Mayor's Committee for Human Resources Development (HRD), which sent its workers to assist those persons in need.

The volunteers were hard-working, energetic, dedicated and, without exception, they were a credit to their program.

Again I thank you and each of the volunteers who helped.

Sincerely,

Jerome P. Cavanagh
Mayor