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Letters to the Editor

Genuine Grievances Caused the Riots

To the Herald Tribune:

The unrest in Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Rochester in New York among Negroes, while set off by the killing of a 15-year-old boy by an armed police lieutenant, results from longstanding and genuine grievances. The nation-wide effort in America for equal rights for Negro citizens is not restricted to securing a cup of coffee at all-white luncheon counters or the right to attend all-white schools. For the entire American Negro population, it is often a matter of life or death.

Thirty-five years ago, the infant mortality rate was twice as high for Negroes as for whites. Today it remains twice as high. Thirty-five years ago twice as many American Negroes died from pneumonia as did whites. Today twice as many still die. The rate of tuberculosis in Harlem today is 10 times that of the rate outside. In the South the Negro can be shot virtually at will. In the North police brutality is notorious and constant.

The Negro in America must observe that while thousands of Africans are securing freedom, his own modest efforts for some fair share of that which he has helped to produce in America are denied. To these efforts, live ammunition, night sticks, steel-helmeted white police officers, many of them bigots of the worst order, are no answer.

The request for an impartial civilian review board to investigate police brutality is sound and one wonders why New York City has resisted this. The insistence by the City Administration that the review board should be composed only of police officers indicates a refusal to understand the purpose of such an agency. It is a sad comment upon justice in New York that there is need for such a review board.

If the courts were fair and impartial in evaluating the testimony of police officers and those charging them with brutality, there would be no need for this agency. But, it is generally recognized, even by the City Administration, that the courts are notoriously prejudiced in favor of the police and that those seeking redress are denied justice.

The violence in the Negro communities of New York, in response to police violence, is a demand by Negroes for an end to subservience, brutality, economic misery—in short the status of a colonial people. American wealth should be directed to the tearing down of all America's Harlems and to the provision of decent living conditions. Only when the Negro rebellion is met by justice and by the prospect of effective political expression can the race problem end and America regain world respect.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

London

THE PRESS AS A WEAPON

SHOULD THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT decide to sterilize "subversives," "liberals" would be concerned to see that there was a proper right of appeal.

Lester Markel's article "The 'Management' of News" [SR, Feb. 9] is most astonishing for its lack of self-consciousness. The "news" is now acknowledged as that information which suits governmental convenience. Orwell would have admired Mr. Markel's subtlety of mind. Most American apologists for nuclear genocide are less frank than Mr. Markel. It would be well to examine what it is he assumes and asserts.

He assumes that the function of the press is to criticize the efficiency of governmental operations in the Cold War, which, he declares, is as crucial as any hot war and in which the press is a vital weapon.

The American government systematically lies about the consequences of nuclear fallout. It pursues policies the consequence of which can only be nuclear annihilation. The Cuban crisis is a primary example. Mr. Markel, however, would have us accept the totalitarian function of the press for simple reasons. He assumes that the Cold War is desirable, that the government should lie and suppress truth in the pursuit of it, and that criticism should never begin with the criminal assumptions of American policy.

I submit that the eager readiness to exterminate several hundred million human beings, the sublime conviction that American rockets are permissible but other rockets are wicked, the refusal to allow that sane men (including journalists) have a duty to tell the truth about the danger to mankind, establish once again the shameful betrayal of America by "liberals" who embrace the conception of the world prepared for the American public in the Pentagon and the exploitative centers of corporate capitalism.

BERTRAND RUSSELL.

Merioneth, Wales

LESTER MARKEL REPLIES

DESPITE MY "subtlety of mind" I am at a loss to answer Lord Russell's letter. We do not seem to be talking about the same article. Somehow, no matter what the subject under discussion, Lord Russell manages to inject into it the issue of "nuclear fallout." I do not see at all the relevance of that issue here.

With regard to my so-called assumptions, Lord Russell is wrong on all three counts.

1) I do not hold that "the Cold War is desirable." I feel we should make every effort to end it, in a peaceful manner. If Lord Russell can persuade Moscow toward the same end, he will indeed have made a monumental contribution.

2) I did not say that "the government

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should lie" in pursuit of the Cold War. I was arguing only that, if we are to engage in secret operations (which I believe to be necessary in this kind of war), you cannot expect the government to put out all the facts while these operations are in process.

3) As for the "criminal assumptions of American policy," those are Lord Russell's assumptions, not mine. I believe that American policy, the American people, and the Pentagon, too, are dedicated to the cause of peace.

LESTER MARKEL,
The New York Times

New York, N.Y.