

Violence In San Francisco!

Last week's events brought San Francisco to a dangerous pitch of nervous tension.

There were, first of all, the wanton street shootings of innocent citizens, all of them white, reportedly by a team of black gunmen.



Raab

Murder is frightening, even when it falls in "expected" categories: for example, in armed robberies. Murder touches off a higher order of public fright when it seems "senseless"—for example, when it is not related to robbery, but is a random killing by some deranged person. That is what took place recently when a KGO employee was shot down. But a certain amount of that is still statistically expected, because a certain percentage of

the population is dangerously deranged at any given time.

However, an even higher order of public fright is touched off when such random killings are deliberate, . . . are done in the name of some "idea," religious or political, with or without drugs . . . are not the result of a single deranged mind. That is presumably the case when a group of people jointly commit a random murder. The killings are still insane, and the killers may be considered socially insane—but they are probably not clinically insane in the psychiatric sense.

When a racial element is added, — as it has been in this case by unconfirmed reports—it would supposedly be more frightening to those of the "target" race. For illustration: when bands of white men used to ride through black districts in Southern towns, shooting blacks at random, it was more frightening to the blacks than to the whites of those towns. But there is an important difference between that example, and what has happened in San Francisco—and it would be well for us to carefully note the difference.

What used to happen in those Southern towns was a reflection of a general state of warfare between whites in general and blacks in general. The white society did not prosecute the attackers, and generally had some complicity in the attacks. This is not the case in San Francisco. There is, despite continuing tensions and unmet aspirations, no such state of warfare in San Francisco between whites in general and blacks in general.

These latest San Francisco gunmen, whatever their color, are in the same category as the white Manson gang which murdered at random; and the white Symbionese Army which murdered at random; and the white Weathermen who bombed at random.

All social insanity has a superficial relationship to some social condition—but these people were all, primarily, socially insane; and only very secondarily, of this or that race, of this or that cause. They were not leading any social revolution, nor representing any body of people. In fact their social insanity is not today shared by any body of people (as it was, for example, in the Old South). They are finally just a handful of frightening criminals, whatever the particular genesis of their criminal tendencies, to be dealt with by the law enforcement agencies.

Indeed, the aspect of society which most directly stimulates such people is not some given social evil, as in the case of social protesters—but rather some general atmosphere of lawless violence. These latest vicious acts were coincidentally taking place at the same time that the city was somewhat aboil with the Nazi question. That band of Nazis was planning to attend future School Board meetings on integration; some other group was passing out leaflets urging people to come down and physically confront the Nazis.

An atmosphere of violence, whatever its causes, comes to have its own existence, like Frankenstein's monster. In and of itself, it spawns more social insanity and political extremism (institutionalized social insanity). Of all groups, the Jews and the Blacks have eventually suffered the most from this kind of social insanity. If there were any way of measuring it, it would be a good bet that, whatever the racial targets, the level of anxiety caused by these recent events was just a shade higher among Jews and Blacks than among the rest of the population.