

The New York Times

The Grave Threats Today Are Internal December 14, 1969

Washington – On June 5 1968, while Senator Robert F. Kennedy lay dying of an assassin's bullet in Los Angeles, President Johnson put in a telephone call to Milton S. Eisenhower, told him that in 40 minutes he was going on national television to announce he was appointing a commission on the causes and prevention of violence, and said he wanted Dr. Eisenhower, brother of the former President, as chairman.

Dr. Eisenhower, president emeritus of Johns Hopkins University, was well into retirement and was reluctant to take on the task; but he agreed to do so, telling a friend later, "I have never said no to a President." Mr. Johnson's move, nevertheless, met with almost universal skepticism. The National Advisory Commission on the Civil Disorders had just completed a voluminous study on urban riots and its recommendation that there be a reordering of national priorities had been rejected by the White House.

Further, the new Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence had such a diverse membership, with conservatives predominating, that it was difficult to see

how it could agree to any daring innovations.

Last week, after 18 months and many volumes of studies and recommendations, the Eisenhower Commission issued its final report and then disbanded. In its report the commission said:

"Our most serious challenges to date have been external – the kind this strong and resourceful country could unite against. While serious external dangers remain, the graver threats today are internal."

In view of this conclusion, the commission recommended that national priorities be reordered so that domestic needs are no longer subordinated to the military.

"When our participation in the Vietnam war is concluded, we recommend increasing annual general welfare expenditures by about \$20-billion (stated in 1968 dollars), partly by reducing military expenditures and partly by use of increased tax revenues resulting from the growth of the gross national product," the commission said.

The internal threats, the commission said, included haphazard urbanization, racial discrimination, disfiguring of the

environment and the dislocation of human identity and motivation – "all resulting in a rising tide of individual and group violence."

At a news conference after he presented the report to President Nixon, Dr. Eisenhower said he had told the President that the commission understood that little could be done about the recommendation until inflation was brought under control and the war ended, but that a commitment to that end should be made "for when the resources become available."

The President authorized me to say he is gravely concerned about the problems we studied," Dr. Eisenhower said.

Over the past several months, the commission published task force reports on riots in Miami and Cleveland and at San Francisco State College – all of which contained criticism of the authorities; on the history of violence in America – "we are a bloody-minded people"; and on the increasing politicalization of the police, among other things. It found that violence on television strengthens "a distorted, pathological view of society," it warned against legislation that would punish

students or colleges for campus disorders on ground such action would only spread the trouble, and it called for increased regulations against firearms and said that more resources should be poured into law enforcement and criminal justice.

Several studies by the commission painted a portrait of America as a restless land with a violent tradition in which individuals were inclined to take the law into their own hands and groups were accustomed to using violence for overcoming wrongs or gaining their ends, despite the high premium placed on freedom and justice for all.

The deep ideological division within the commission did not come to the surface until a week ago when a bare majority of the 13-member commission, led by Leon Jaworski, a Houston attorney, condemned massive civil disobedience, even when nonviolent and a matter of conscience. Six members, including Dr. Eisenhower, dissented, saying that disobedience of the law, when there is a willing acceptance of the penalty, might at times be the only means of disposing of unjust laws and policies.

There were several reasons why the commission turned out to have more of an impact than had been anticipated. One was that violence continued to rack and worry the nation. Another was that the commission improved its

credibility with a large segment of the population by issuing late in 1968 the highly controversial report on the disorder in Chicago during the Democratic National Convention, the work of a task force headed by Daniel Walker, a Chicago lawyer, which concluded that there had been a "police riot" in response to the misbehavior and obscene taunts of antiwar demonstrators. More than one million copies were sold.

"The Walker Report put us in business," a commission spokesman said.

Dr. Eisenhower and Lloyd N. Cutler a Washington attorney who was executive director, secured the assistance of competent scholars and kept the commission on a moderate course. Even though the commission had been appointed by President Johnson, it enjoyed the cooperation of the Nixon Administration, which took over in January, largely because an Eisenhower was chairman.

But the overall work of the commission was more harmonious and productive than anyone believed it would be at the beginning. Commission sources said this was due, in part, to the fact that once the facts were presented in a complete and dispassionate manner, differences among members were narrowed. Dr. Eisenhower said he has no illusions that the recommendations would be carried out any time soon.

But he said he believed this and other studies coming to the same conclusion were having an accumulative effect on the national conscience, and that within a few years he fully expected to see the reordering of priorities that had been recommended by this group of well-to-do, middle-of-the-road Americans. For the immediate future, perhaps the best hope for the country lay in the commission's own lesson – that deep divisions can be healed to some degree by simple enlightenment.

"If in five years nothing has happened," Dr. Eisenhower said, "I shall be the most disappointed man in America."

The New York Times

U.S. Panel Urges Handgun Seizure To Curb Violence

July 28, 1969

James M. Naughton

WASHINGTON, July 28 - If the nation is to transcend its history of domestic violence, the Federal Government and the states must act to confiscate 90 percent of the estimated total of 24 million handguns owned by private citizens, the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence declared today.

The commission called for Federal minimum standards under which the states would restrict ownership of handguns or pistols to those who could demonstrate reasonable need for the weapons.

Under the proposal, the Government would buy newly illegal weapons from their owners – at a cost that the panel says could amount to \$500-million. Should owners fail to turn in handguns, the Government would seek prosecution.

The commission recommendation – plus a thick volume of statistical support for it – was released just four days

after Nixon Administration spokesmen told a Senate Judiciary subcommittee there was no need for new gun control legislation.

Milton S. Eisenhower, the commission chairman, said in a news conference that Randolph W. Thrower, the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, and Donald E. Santarelli, an associate deputy attorney general, had testified without benefit of the commission report.

“This report will go to the President,” said Mr. Eisenhower. “The President will have to decide, on the basis of the evidence presented to him, what his position will be.”

Thus it appeared that Mr. Nixon, who personally has voiced on position on gun registration *since* campaigning for and winning the Presidency, would be placed squarely in the center of the latest national skirmish over gun control.

The report on firearms was the seventh issued by the commission since it

was established by a June 10, 1968, executive order of President Johnson to investigate and make recommendations on lawless acts of Violence in American society. President Nixon signed an executive order May 23 to extend the commission's life to next Dec. 10.

Although samples of public opinion have consistently demonstrated a national willingness to regulate firearms since the 1930's, Federal guns laws have been enacted only after episodes of sensational violence. The most recent example was the Gun Control Act of 1968, adopted after the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

There are some 100 measures before Congress now to further restrict the use of weapons, but nearly as many proposals to backtrack on existing law.

“Our studies have convinced us that the heart of any effective national firearms policy for the

United States must be to reduce the availability of the firearm that contributes the most to the violence,” the commission said in a nine-page printed statement. “This means restrictive licensing of the handgun.”

The commission also urged a Federal set of standards under which the states would require identification of the owners of the estimated total of 35 million rifles and 31 million shotguns in the United States.

But the thrust of the commission’s concern was directed at handguns, annual sales of which have quadrupled in five years to a 1968 total of 2.5 million. The commission appeared to be seeking support of such groups as the National Rifle Association by concentrating its recommendations on control of hand weapons, fewer of which are used for sporting purposes.

As the commission stated it: “The challenge for this commission – and for the nation as a whole – is to find ways to cope with illegitimate uses of guns without at the same time placing undue restrictions on legitimate uses. We believe this is possible if both the advocates and the opponents of gun control

legislation will put aside their suspicions and preconceptions, accept the fact of a common danger without exaggerating its dimensions and act for the common good.”

The policy statement was adopted by nine of the 13 commission members and released by its chairman, Milton S. Eisenhower.

Mr. Eisenhower said the policy statement was adopted “enthusiastically” by nine of the 13 commission members with a “mild” dissent from the four others. If Congress reacted along the same lines, said Mr. Eisenhower, such a proposal would have an excellent chance of being enacted.

The eight members voting with Mr. Eisenhower to adopt the report were Judge A. Leon Higginbotham, vice chairman; Terence Cardinal Cooke of New York; Mrs. Patricia Roberts Harris, the educator; Senator Phillip A. Hart, Democrat of Michigan; Eric Hoffer, the writer; Albert E. Jenner, Jr., Chicago lawyer; Representative William M. McCulloch, Republican of Ohio, and Dr. W. Walter Menninger, the psychiatrist.

The four dissenting members – Senator Roman

L. Hruska, Republican of Nebraska; Representative Hale Boggs, Democrat of Louisiana; Judge Ernest W. McFarland, presiding member of the Arizona Supreme Court, and Leon Jaworski, the Houston lawyer – agreed with much of the report but found the plan for Federal restrictions on the states distasteful.

They said they believed that “each state should be permitted to determine for itself without additional restrictions from the Federal Government the system which best meets its needs.”

The majority members concluded, however, that national standards were needed to overcome the lack of uniformity among more than 20,000 separate state and local laws on firearms.

A 268-page staff report prepared for the commission and released without comment says that “serious efforts at state and local regulation have consistently been frustrated by the flow of firearms from one state to another.”

The report concluded that the most effective way to reduce gun violence would be a nationwide system that would eliminate 90 percent or more of the 24 million

privately held handguns in the United States.

All but five states (Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi and Tennessee) place some restriction on ownership of handguns, but only 21 states supplement their laws by screening persons owning hand weapons. New York and Massachusetts are the only two states with restrictive licensing of handguns such as the commission proposes for the nation as a whole.

The commission declared that the individual who keeps a hand weapon in his home for self-defense purposes – a reason that has greatly spurred sales of guns amid the urban unrest of the 1960's – may actually be placing himself in greater danger.

“In only a relatively small number of instances do home robberies or burglaries result in the death of the victims. Examination shows that in the great majority of cases, the householder had no warning and thus no chance to arm himself with a gun,” the commission found.

But the presence of a weapon in the home was said to contribute to the greater risk of becoming a statistic in 23,000 annual firearms accidents

occurring in homes or the 8,000 annual firearms homicides.

“From the standpoint of the individual householder, then, the self-defense firearm appears to be a dangerous investment,” the report said.

Though the commission said it could not determine the “net usefulness” of businessmen's keeping firearms handy for self-defense, it noted there was less chance of accident – and greatly diminished risk that the weapons would be used in an argument between family members or friends - if no weapon was handy.

Under the commission proposal the states would have four years in which to adopt acceptable handgun licensing systems and procedures for identifying owners of rifles and shotguns. Should the states fail to act the Federal standards would apply.

Besides its two key recommendations for new law, the commission urged broadening of the Gun Control Act of 1968, which was the first major firearms control legislation in 30 years.

That legislation barred the interstate mail order sale of guns, most sales in one state to residents of

another state, and sales to felons and narcotics addicts. It also barred the sale of rifles to persons under 18 and the sale of hand guns to persons under 21.

The New York Times

Curbing the Handgun
July 30, 1969

President Nixon now has a splendid opportunity to undo the harm caused by two spokesmen for his Administration who only last week told Congress there was no need for gun-control legislation at this session.

They took their position without awaiting the report on this subject just issued by the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, of which Milton S. Eisenhower is chairman. Now, only four days later, the commission has made clear, with massive documentation and irrefutable logic, how astonishingly wrong they were.

The rising tide of firearms violence in this country calls for legislative action now. The commission recommends establishment of a nationwide control system that would result in the elimination of 90 percent of the 24 million handguns now privately owned, with compensation for the owners of weapons that had been legitimately acquired.

Handguns account for about half of all homicide and three-quarters of all firearm homicides, the commission found. It debunked

the argument that a handgun in the home is a useful weapon of defense against burglars. In the great majority of cases, a householder has no warning and no chance to arm himself against an intruder.

Moreover, the presence of a handgun in the home is a dangerous investment for the householder. A substantial number of the 23,000 annual firearm accidents occur in the home, and many of the 8,000 annual firearm homicides also take place there.

The need for action now is emphasized by the fact that sales of handguns have quadrupled since 1963. As the commission points out, handguns are not sporting guns and are seldom used for hunting or sport.

This report should convince the President and the Congress alike of the necessity for gun-control legislation during the present session. "The heart of any effective national firearms policy" is, as the commission says, "restrictive licensing of the handgun."

The New York Times

Eisenhower Sees A Ban On Pistols

December 16, 1969

Baltimore, Dec. 15 – Milton S. Eisenhower, who headed an 18-month study of violence in the United States, said today that the nation eventually would have to take pistols from private citizens.

“The day is coming – it ought to be here today, but it isn’t – when we are going to have to have a system of restrictive licensing so that those guns must be taken away from everyone except those who need them,” he said.

Mr. Eisenhower, chairman of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, gave his personal views on gun control, the causes of violence and student unrest in an interview with United Press International for publication after the panel’s final report. That report came out last weekend.

The commission, on a split vote, recommended similar gun control measures in its report. Mr. Eisenhower, giving his own opinion, said private ownership of handguns should be outlawed both to reduce blood shed caused by anger and to facilitate police detection of illegal firearms. He did not include rifles and shotguns in the category of weapons that should be outlawed.

He also urged a national commitment to rebuilding the nation’s

cities, upgrading law enforcement and criminal justice and continuing the curtailment of television violence.

At the same time, Mr. Eisenhower, president emeritus of Johns Hopkins University here, said that student protest arose from affluence and “deep Christian involvement” and described today’s college students as “the best we’ve ever had.”

While strongly endorsing the right to peaceful protest and dissent, Mr. Eisenhower suggested ways in which student activism could be channeled into more constructive directions. He proposed lowering the voting age to 18, establishing codes of college conduct and setting the penalties for violators.

“My one criticism of the mass news media,” Mr. Eisenhower said in the interview, “is that for a long, long time it has given greater news value to conflict than it has to the fundamental knowledge that the people need in order to make wise, democratic decisions.”

“If the citizen, who still possesses the basic power, is to help make intelligent, right decisions to overcome our problems, he needs more information and in greater depth than he has ever needed before,” he said.

The New York Times

Earlier Proposals of Violence Panel December 13, 1969

WASHINGTON, Dec 12
– Following are the subjects covered by previous statements of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence and the chief recommendation under each:

Campus Disorders – There is a need for a Federal law that would permit universities or individuals to obtain a Federal court injunction against denial of the First Amendment rights of free speech, peaceable assembly and petition for the redress of grievances.

Firearms – The rising tide of violence by firearms points up the need for stricter gun control legislation, both nationally and on the state level.

Television Entertainment – The broadcasting industry should recognize the strong probability that violence in entertainment programs is contributing to undesirable attitudes and to violence and should take steps to reduce the violence.

Law Enforcement – Basic reforms should be made in police departments and the system of justice.

The amount spent in this area should be at least doubled.

Assassination – The President and Presidential candidates should significantly reduce the number of “risky public appearances,” and the television industry should make more time available to them at less cost.

Violent crime – A national urban policy aimed at reducing poverty and increasing law enforcement should be enacted in order to stem the rapid growth of murder, rape, robbery and assault.

Challenging Youth - The voting age should be lowered to 18 and a variety of steps should be taken to open responsibility for young people.

Group Violence – The President should seek legislation authorizing Federal courts to grant injunctions, on the request of the Attorney General or private persons against the threatened or actual interference of persons engaged in peaceful, lawful pursuits.

Civil Disobedience – A bare majority of the

commission, seven of the 13 members, said even nonviolent civil disobedience should be rejected as an erosion of the legal processes and that test cases against laws considered unjust should be pressed by individuals or small groups. Six members dissented, saying that nonviolence, the kind inspired by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ghandi, was at times necessary to overcome unjust policies.