
MEMPHIS RIOTS AND MASSACRES.

JULY 25, 1866.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. E. B. WASHBURNE, from the Select Committee on the Memphis Riots, made the following

R E P O R T .

The special committee of the House, charged with an investigation into all matters connected with the riots at Memphis, which took place on the first days of May, 1866, and particularly to inquire into the origin, progress, and termination of the riotous proceedings; the names of parties engaged in it; the acts of atrocity perpetrated; the number of killed and wounded, and the amount and character of the property destroyed, having completed their labors, now beg leave to submit their report :

The committee reached Memphis on the 22d day of May last, and immediately proceeded with their investigations. They examined a hundred and seventy witnesses, whose testimony, with the various exhibits, is herewith submitted, and which will make a volume of, it is estimated, twelve hundred printed pages.

On their arrival the committee found that Major General Stoneman, commanding the department of Tennessee, headquarters at Memphis, had instituted a commission for the purpose of making substantially the same investigations in regard to the riotous proceedings your committee were directed to make. That commission consisted of Brevet Brigadier General B. P. Runkle, superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau for the district of Memphis; Captain A. W. Allyn, 16th United States infantry; Brevet Major W. J. Colburn, assistant quartermaster in the volunteer service; and M. J. Wright, a citizen of Memphis. This commission had nearly completed its labors, and its investigations seem to have been of the most thorough and searching character.

In order to insure a fair hearing on the part of the citizens of Memphis, Major General Stoneman, with great propriety, placed upon the commission, in addition to the military men, Marcus J. Wright, one of the most prominent citizens of that city, and a man who had held the position of brigadier general in the rebel army.

The committee also found that Brevet Major General Clinton B. Fisk, of the volunteer service, and assistant commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau for the States of Kentucky and Tennessee, had instituted a commission consisting of Colonel Charles F. Johnson, subsequently uniting with him Major Gilbraith, who had been sent out by Major General O. O. Howard, of the Freedmen's Bureau at Washington, for the purpose of instituting an investigation into matters connected with the riots. This commission also prosecuted its labors with great zeal, thoroughness, and fidelity. The committee desire to state that they received from Major General Stoneman, Brevet Major General Fisk, and Brevet Brigadier General Runkle every assistance possible for them to render in the discharge of their duties. They were greatly aided in their labors by the records of the investigations made by the respective commissions, embracing

the testimony of very many witnesses whom it was impossible for the committee to examine, both for want of sufficient time, and from the fact that many of them had scattered off and were not to be found. The testimony of all witnesses bearing upon the subject, taken by those commissions, except where the same witnesses were examined by the committee, was verified as being such testimony, made a part of the record, and is submitted to the House with the testimony taken by the committee.

MAJOR GENERAL STONEMAN'S TESTIMONY.

The testimony first taken was that of Major General George Stoneman, from which it appears that the whole military force stationed at Memphis consisted of a detachment of the 16th United States infantry, not more than one hundred and fifty strong, and that this force was not more than sufficient to guard the large amount of government property at Memphis against the large numbers of thieves, robbers, incendiaries, and the Irish police of that city.

Previous to this time the people of Memphis had been clamoring for a withdrawal of all the United States troops, boasting that they were perfectly competent to take care of themselves. General Stoneman had, therefore, turned the city and that section of country over to the civil authorities, as far as it was practicable, holding them responsible for good order, peace, and quiet. At the first breaking out of the riotous proceedings, on the afternoon of Tuesday, the 1st day of May, General Stoneman was called upon by the sheriff of the county, and requested to use the United States troops under his command for quelling them. As there had theretofore been so urgent a demand upon the part of the people to have the troops withdrawn, General Stoneman desired to know what means the city authorities had taken to quell the disturbances; and he further desired that the question should be tested whether the civil authorities could take care of themselves, and preserve order as it had been claimed they could and would do. Subsequent to this, irresponsible parties, representing themselves as coming from the mayor and aldermen of the city, made application to the general for the use of the troops. His reply was, that if the mayor wanted the use of the troops, or wanted assistance, and would address him a communication to that effect, it should receive due attention. Shortly after, and on the same day, the mayor requested General Stoneman to order a force of troops to co-operate with the constabulary force of the city in case of any further continued lawlessness; to which General Stoneman replied immediately that he had but a small force at his command, which was in camp at Fort Pickering, and the mayor could communicate with the commanding officer at the fort in case he should find need of assistance. He would, however, prefer that the troops should be called upon only in case of extreme necessity, as he desired to see whether they could keep peace and order themselves without the intervention of the military authorities, as they had asserted they could in a communication previously made.

RIOTOUS PROCEEDINGS.

The riotous proceedings continuing, the regular forces were called out on Tuesday night, and they scattered and dispersed the rioters, as will more fully appear by reference to the testimony of Captain Allyn, in command of regular troops, Captain Dornin, and Lieutenant Clifford. The next morning, May 2, General Stoneman was called on by Judge Leonard, judge of the county court, who, after stating that they were skirmishing down in South Memphis, made application to have arms turned over to a posse of citizens, then being formed. The general told him he had no arms to be used for that purpose; that all arms used must be under his control, and that in no event would he turn over arms to citizens, without being assured that they would be used for proper purposes, and placed in the hands of proper parties—of men who would

act under the direction of the military authorities. The reply of General Stoneman was a very proper one, for, as he states, this posse, when brought to him by Judge Leonard, proved to be a heterogeneous mass, some of them firemen, some ex-confederate soldiers, and some did not belong to anything but the rabble of the town. Judge Leonard said he thought he could vouch for these men, but after taking a look at them, General Stoneman became satisfied that if he, the judge, could vouch for them, he, the general, could not, and declined to put any arms into their hands.

The mob continuing its outrages through Wednesday and Wednesday night, on Thursday a meeting was held by a number of citizens, who resolved that the mayor of the city and sheriff of the county, together with the chairman of the meeting, be authorized to summon a force of sufficient number, to act in concert with the military, which should constitute a patrol for the protection of the city, &c. General Stoneman, on the same day, addressed a communication to the mayor and city council of Memphis, stating that circumstances compelled him to interfere with the civil affairs of the city, and forbidding any persons without his authority to assemble together any posse, armed or unarmed, white or colored. That, however, did not include the police force of the city, so long as it could be relied on to preserve the peace. This interference by the military authorities seems to have had an immediate and most salutary effect, for all parties who had been assembled together by the civil authorities for any purpose whatever immediately dispersed and went home. There were no more formidable riotous proceedings after this, although there were many isolated acts of murder, robbery, and maltreatment both of white and colored persons. There were apprehensions, however, as appears from the testimony of General Stoneman and others, on the part of a good many persons, that a general conflagration would take place, and that the town would be burned down. Several northern people came to him and expressed their fears that measures would be taken to drive all northern people out of the city, though the general does not seem to have shared in those fears. The teachers of colored schools and preachers for colored churches came to him and represented that their schools and churches had been burned down; that some of them had been threatened and others warned, asking him for protection and troops to guard their places. Not having troops enough for such purpose, he told them that if they would go to the troops they should have protection, or if they desired to leave the city they should have transportation to wherever they wanted to go. Many, and, in fact, nearly all of them, availed themselves of the opportunity and left the city.

The guards which were placed in the city on Thursday night, with strict orders to disperse any party assembling together for any purpose whatever, prevented the assembling of any such parties, if there was any intention of so doing, which the general thought, from information subsequently obtained, there was; that people had come over from Arkansas and different sections of the country, leading him to believe there would have been trouble on Thursday night if no precautions had been taken.

It was very natural, after the pertinacious demands of the people of Memphis to have the troops withdrawn, and their boastful pretences that they could take care of themselves, that General Stoneman should have been disinclined to interfere until it should be fully demonstrated to him that the public safety imperatively required it. It is to be regretted, however, that he had not at an earlier period of the lawless and murderous proceedings taken the same resolute steps that he subsequently adopted, as he, no doubt, would have done, had he comprehended the full proportions of the riots and the true character of the city government of Memphis, and of the controlling influences of that city.

MAJOR GENERAL STONEMAN AND THE CITY AUTHORITIES.

After the riotous proceedings were at an end, General Stoneman constituted a commission of investigation, as has been stated, and on the same day addressed the following communication to the mayor :

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF TENNESSEE,
Memphis, Tennessee, May 5, 1866.

SIR: I have the honor to request information upon the following points, viz :

1. What efforts have been made or steps taken by the city authorities of the city of Memphis to apprehend and bring to trial and punishment the perpetrators of the outrages which have disgraced the city of Memphis during the past week, and what assurances can be given me that the murderers and incendiaries will be arrested and punished ?

2. What steps or measures have been taken by the city authorities, or the citizens of Memphis, to remunerate individuals and the United States government for losses sustained and expenses incurred caused by the recent riotous proceedings of the people of this city, and are you able to assure me that all claims for such losses and expenses will be promptly paid by the city ?

3. Can and will you furnish me with a statement, showing the sources from which the city derives its revenue, with the amount or amounts derivable from each source ?

4. Are the city authorities able and competent to prohibit and prevent persons, under whatever pretext, from carrying and using arms ? I am reliably informed that the city recorder has assured the people of Memphis that they will not hereafter be prohibited from carrying and using fire-arms.

5. What security can you give me that the rights and privileges of the colored population of this city and surroundings shall be respected and protected ; and what disposition has been made of the large number of negroes who have been arrested by the police during the past week ?

I have to request that you will do me the favor to give me all the information possible, and such assurances as circumstances warrant, as future action will be based upon your reply to this communication.

In conclusion, I have to assure you, and, through you, the people of Memphis, that if they cannot govern themselves as a law-abiding and Christian community, they will be governed, and that hereafter it will be my duty and privilege to see that there are no more riotous proceedings or conduct, either on the part of whites or blacks, or city authorities.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. STONEMAN,
Major General, Commanding.

His Honor JOHN PARK,
Mayor of the City of Memphis.

The committee desire to say that, in their judgment, General Stoneman is deserving of the highest commendation for his prompt and determined action in demanding this information, and in warning the mayor and people of Memphis that if they could not govern themselves as a "law abiding and Christian community," *they would be governed*, and that it would be his duty and privilege to put a stop to further riotous proceedings. The answer of the mayor is of a very unsatisfactory and discreditable character, and too long to be inserted in this report. It is, however, set out in the testimony of General Stoneman. It will be seen that the mayor states that the city authorities have taken no steps or measures to remunerate individuals or the United States government for losses sustained by the riotous proceedings, and that he is advised of no law or statute authorizing any such appropriation of money ; and takes it for granted

that no action will be had. He is also advised that no claim for such losses had been or would be entertained or recognized by any tribunal of competent jurisdiction as constituting a meritorious claim against the civil authorities.

Order having been restored in the city, and the excitement of the community consequent upon the riot having abated, shortly afterwards the military control of the city was withdrawn, though without formal public notice, and the civil authorities exercised their functions as before the riot. The further testimony of General Stoneman is particularly referred to, as entitled to great weight, coming from a military man, not complicated with the political or other questions of the day.

THE CHARACTER OF THE ATROCITIES.

The proportions of what is called the "riot," but in reality the massacre, proved to be far more extended, and the circumstances surrounding it of much greater significance, than the committee had any conception of before they entered upon their investigation.

Most of the newspapers in the city had grossly misrepresented nearly everything connected with it, while great efforts had been made by the citizens to belittle it into a simple row between some discharged negro soldiers and the Irish police. It was called in derision the "nigger riot," while, in fact, in the language of General Stoneman, the negroes had nothing to do with it after the first day, except to be killed and abused. "They assembled in no bodies, and were engaged in no riotous proceedings."

Nothing could be more false and malicious than the charge that the riotous proceedings grew out of the teachings of the Freedmen's Bureau officers and of the teachers of the colored schools and the preachers in the churches of the colored people. From the observation of your committee the affairs of the Freedmen's Bureau in Tennessee have been most admirably managed by Major General Fisk and his subordinates, and the best possible influence has been exercised on the colored people.

The outbreak of the disturbance resulting from collision between some policemen and discharged colored soldiers was seized upon as a pretext for an organized and bloody massacre of the colored people of Memphis, regardless of age, sex, or condition, inspired by the teachings of the press, and led on by sworn officers of the law composing the city government, and others. The mob, finding itself under the protection and guidance of official authority, and sustained by a powerful public sentiment behind, actuated by feelings of the most deadly hatred to the colored race, and particularly those who wore the uniform of the republic, proceeded with deliberation to the commission of crimes and the perpetration of horrors which can scarcely find a parallel in the history of civilized or barbarous nations, and must inspire the most profound emotions of horror among all civilized people. The testimony taken in this regard is very full, and is believed by the committee, as a general thing, to be entitled to the fullest confidence. The story of the shocking events of those terrible days, the 1st and 2d of May, told by colored witnesses who escaped the fury of the mob, was simple, affecting, and, no doubt, truthful. The whole evidence discloses the killing of men, women, and children—the innocent, unarmed, and defenceless pleading for their lives and crying for mercy; the wounding, beating, and maltreating of a still greater number; burning, pillaging, and robbing; the consuming of dead bodies in the flames, the burning of dwellings, the attempts to burn up whole families in their houses, and the brutal and revolting ravishings of defenceless and terror-stricken women.