

Hippies Heighten East Side Tensions

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The Puerto Ricans and Slavs living in the Tompkins Square Park area resent the hippies who congregate there, and the resulting conflicts have heightened old tensions among the many racial and ethnic groups that live in that Lower East Side neighborhood.

"We're sitting on a powder keg here," the Rev. Michael Allen of St. Mark's in the Bouweric Episcopal Church said yesterday. The church is two blocks west of Tompkins Square.

The clergyman had just been told by a long-haired youth that those who attacked hippies in the park late Thursday night were Puerto Ricans. A group of at least 20 Spanish-speaking young men tried to tear the clothes off a 29-year-old woman who they considered to be a hippy, according to witnesses.

Tompkins Square Park, the main recreation area for about 40 crowded blocks, is the meeting place of two communities, Father Allen explained. "Avenues C and D — Negro-Puerto Rican," he said. "First and Second Avenues — white with strong Italian and Ukrainian groups."

Hippies a New Element

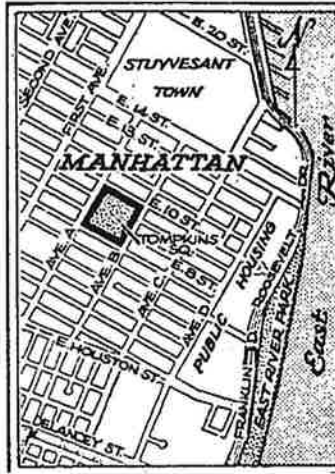
"Italian kids have been knifing Puerto Rican kids and vice versa," the clergyman said. "That sort of thing has been going on for quite some time. And now we have the new element, the hippies."

"They are mainly white, and they have given up privilege and status and economic security for voluntary poverty. Negroes and Puerto Ricans are poor, too, but not by choice. It is doubly irrational that both alienated groups, the Negroes and Puerto Ricans on the one side and the hippies on the other, should clash."

"It would make sense for the black community to fight it out with the Slavic group," Father Allen remarked.

Instead, it seems, many Negroes don't mind the white, hirsute bongo drummers in Tompkins Square Park, and some Lower East Side Slavs side with Puerto Ricans in harassing hippies.

Jacques Nevard, deputy police commissioner for press relations, last night declined to discuss the reported pattern of intergroup violence on the Lower East Side, but said: "The area, like all of New York, is known as a melting pot, but the trouble is there's precious little



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melting. There is at best a degree of suspicious toleration."

He said householders living off Tompkins Square had requested police protection because of the "odd" characters invading the area.

"These unwashed beatniks are terrible," said a middle-aged Ukrainian near Tompkins Square yesterday. "Don't mention my name because I have to live here. But don't be surprised when our people lose their patience with this dirty invasion. Nobody lets children into the park. Old men and women who want to rest are crowded off the benches."

"Those Poles, Czechs, Ruthenians and Ukrainians are stolid types who go in for law and order in a big way," said an intellectual in his forties who said he had been living in the neighborhood all his life.

"Over there in Europe they have been exposed to German methods, and maybe they have brought a reflection of this to the Lower East Side—they just hate the disorder of hippies, their noise, their contempt for authority."

Even before the recent hippy invasion, incidents between young Slavs in the neighborhood and bohemians and beatniks drifting eastward from Greenwich Village had been reported. In the process, some New York University students with unconventional hair styles or clothes were said to have been beaten up by blond youths with broad Slavic faces.

The Ukrainians are probably the most cohesive group of the Slavs around Tompkins Square. Most of them arrived after World War II, some fresh from concentration camps.

At the Ukrainian American

Youth Association, 315 East 10th Street, on the north side of Tompkins Square, an aide estimated that 4,000 Ukrainians lived in the neighborhood.

Eugene Hanowsky, the head of the 500-member association, suggested that the park should be used "for cultural programs, national dances, folklore" of the various ethnic communities of the Lower East Side.

As for other Slavic groups, many of the Polish families who used to cluster on East Seventh Street and some of the area's former Czech and Ruthenian residents have moved away during the last few years.

But newsstands in the area still display Slavic, Hungarian, Italian and Yiddish publications, together with the Spanish-language dailies.

"This neighborhood fascinates the hippies," remarked Rabbi Max Raiskin of the Eastside Hebrew Institute, a private school at 295 East Eighth Street. "Every runaway kid from East of the Mississippi seems to be here this summer. West of the Mississippi they run off to San Francisco."

2,000 Newcomers in Area

The rabbi said that the newcomers were not "a monolithic group—some are beatniks, some intellectuals and some are genuine intellectuals."

Rabbi Raiskin and other informed residents estimated that 2,000 hippies and kindred newcomers had moved into cheap lodgings around Tompkins Square during the last few months.

The rabbi remarked that his institute had become a Jewish "oasis" in an area where members of his faith had once been dominant. Most of the Jews who once lived around the park have moved away.

The rabbi noted what he called current episodes of anti-Semitism in the area. "Some kids shout 'Dirty Jews!' and other youngsters climbed our fire escape and broke windows with a crowbar," he said. "I didn't report this to the police — what good would it do?" The institute's entrance door and two second-floor windows show traces of recent attacks.

At St. Mark's, Father Allen said he didn't think anti-Semitism was a relevant factor in present tensions around Tompkins Square, although "an awful lot of hippies are Jewish." Rather, he suggested, the hippy experience is making the various ethnic groups conscious of differing social and cultural values.