

# Democratic Convention Is Showtime For Everyone

BY LEE KOLB

The western sky glowed deep red Monday evening over the Omni, the beautiful end of a brutally hot Atlanta summer day.

Orderly swarms of people hurried in and out of the CNN Center, the World Congress Center and the Omni as darkness fell, with credentials designating their proper places flapping "round their necks."

Democratic king-making ceremonies were beginning in the Omni and those privileged enough to have entrance certificates were eager to go in and get a good view. Others, with varied credentials, remained outside, hoping their presence might in some way influence the goings-on within.

**BLACK-HELMETED** riot police lounged over steel barricades encircling an adjacent parking lot, half-listening to the soap-box orators inside.

Today's demonstrators are a pale reflection of their 1968 counterparts. Empty rhetoric

prevails where a genuine desire for social change once fueled meaningful protest. Independent Rainbow Party Presidential Candidate Lenora B. Fulani called Democratic Presidential nominee Michael Dukakis "a white supremacist" for refusing Jesse Jackson the number two spot on the Democratic ticket; The Rev. Hosea Williams led the gathering in singing anti-Dukakis, pro-Jesse Jackson hymns.

A theme recurrent throughout the many speeches and parking lot conversations was that Democrats and Republicans both belong to the moneyed, white-power aristocracy, which fosters institutionalized racism to maintain its exclusive hold on the government and cares little about America's oppressed and down-trodden.

The Ku Klux Klan is merely the extreme outward manifestation of power-structure policy, said "Alice," a young demonstrator sporting a Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade T-shirt.

"Racism is being directed and promoted by the people in power," said Alice, citing the rise of racism on college campuses, the growing numbers of Skinheads and ugly racial incidents throughout the country as evidence.

About 20 members of The Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade passed out leaflets and sold copies of their publication, *Bandera Roja* (Red Flag) at the gathering.

Their aim is to "expose the lies coming out of the convention" and promote the rebellion — "if that's what it takes" — necessary if the common people, the majority, are to become self-determining. Alice was unsure exactly how or when the rebellion would take place.

**INSIDE THE OMNI**, past the batteries of police, security men, metal detectors and guards, those targeted for Communist overthrow pushed their way through swarms of reporters, delegates, honored guests and more security men to the con-

vention floor.

Blue and white Dukakis placards only slightly outnumbered the Jesse! signs, which turned the Omni into a sea of red whenever their namesake was mentioned by any of the many officials occupying the podium that night.

Famous faces could be seen everywhere — Georgia's U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn and U.S. Rep. John Lewis on the floor, New York Gov. Mario Cuomo surrounded by a knot of microphone stalks and cameras in the hall, Kitty Dukakis being hustled quickly through the throngs to her seat. The movers and shakers of the Democratic world, known to most of the country only through television and newsprint, were up close and visible.

**OVERPRICED HOT DOGS** and drinks were available to journalists and visitors alike in the World Congress Center. The vast display halls were honey-

(See DEMO, pg. 4-A)

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(Continued from pg. 1-A)

combed with the offices of the media — most of the world's major print, broadcast and radio media were present.

Coverage of this opening night was beamed, teletyped and relayed across the globe. Cameras were everywhere, perched like vultures atop the Omni's ledges and cliffs, coldly

appraising their prey behind the speaker's podium below. Roaming reporters in the hall sought out the prominent and the influential, hoping to eke from them a few words to pla-

cate editors half a block or half a world away. Like the security men whose mere numbers insured order and safety, the

media presence insured thought-out and tactful replies from the powerful.

A sudden rush of footsteps and microphone stalks and shoulder cameras through the hall — a congressman, senator, who was it, who was being cornered? Blinking hard behind CBS or ABC lights, barely

glimpsed through a wall of shoulders a Famous Face would dispense quiet wisdom to somebody's inaudible questions.

Then it would be over, back down to the forbidden convention floor where the banners waved, the camaraderie flowed over and everyone believed 1988 might be the year.