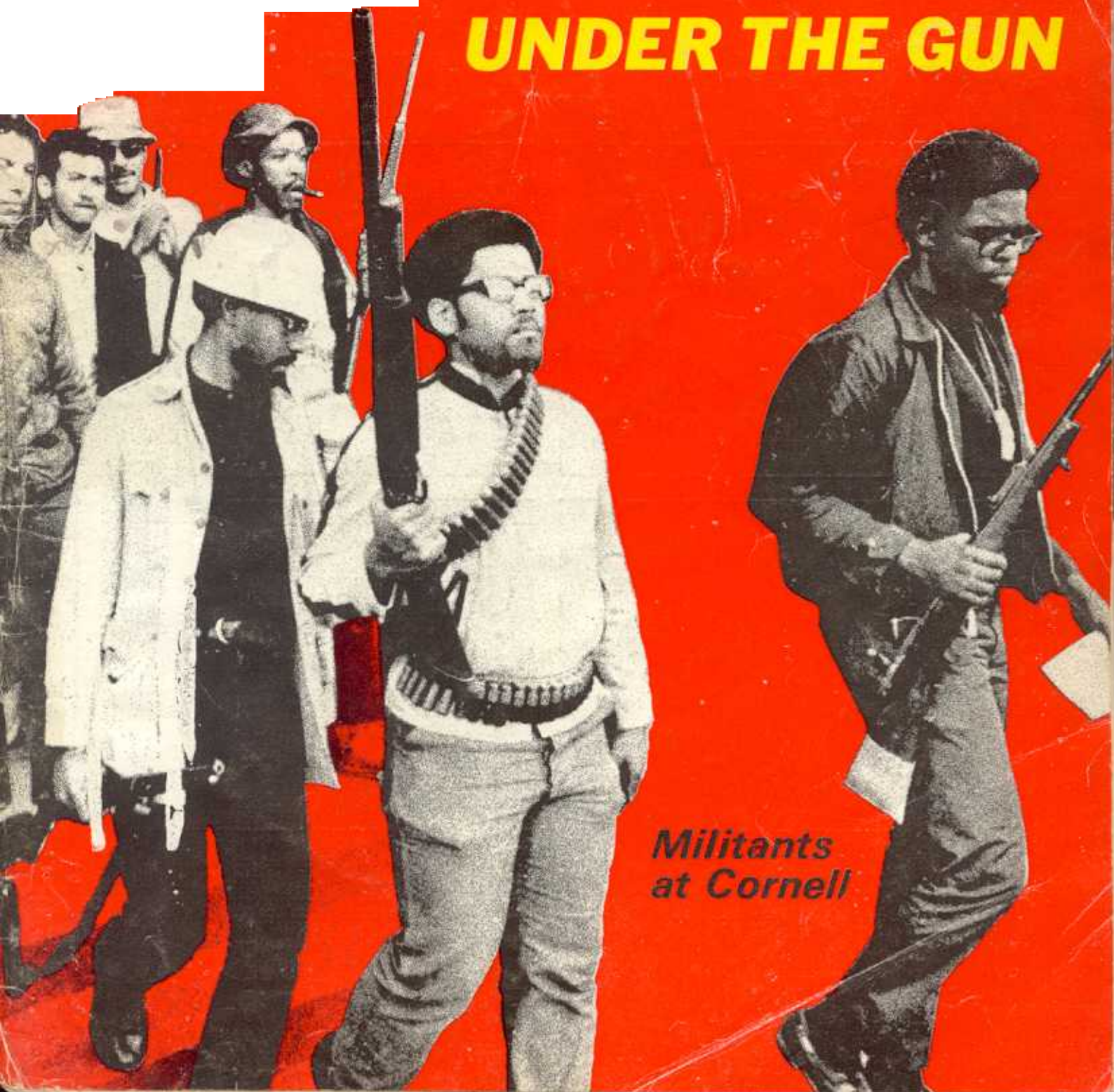


UNIVERSITIES UNDER THE GUN



*Militants
at Cornell*



Peter Walsh

SECOND DAY: Blacks leave the Straight

carefully and considered in a calm atmosphere." Astronomy Prof. Charles Whitney, also a member of the original Rosovsky committee, acknowledged that the move does establish a precedent that other students might use, but added: "We decided that if it is a department in which the students can bring to bear persuasive arguments, then maybe the precedent is not such a bad idea." Others at Harvard had at least one eye on Ithaca. "There was a lot of ordinary, garden-variety cowardice in the vote," commented one senior professor. "The incredible events at Cornell had some effect, of course, but people who voted yes, I feel, thought that there's bound to be violence eventually and they could buy 'peace in our time' by giving black students what they wanted."

But this specter of a Munich at Ithaca may be overdrawn. A careful chronology of the events at Cornell reveals a cautionary and ambiguous moral story. No party had a monopoly on virtue, courage or honest discourse.

Spread gracefully over 200 acres high above Lake Cayuga in mid-state New York, Cornell University could serve as a movie set for a peaceful American campus. Water gushes through gorges in the rolling hills; well-scrubbed coeds stroll to class. Cornell is an Ivy League school, but it is also New York State's land-grant college; it has a large College of Agriculture and a College of Home Economics—and its 14,000 students come from rural areas of the state as well as from the cities and suburbs. Social life is centered in the 51 fraternities and ten sororities; there is little to do in Ithaca (population: 31,000).

Cornell is governed by 49 trustees, including the speaker of the State Assembly, and a representative of the state Grange. But the real power resides in James A. Perkins, a 57-year-old, Philadelphia-born Quaker, the liberal president of a liberal institution. When Perkins



Brian W. Gray—Cornell Sun

Evans at the Afro house

came to Cornell six years ago from the Ford Foundation, he made up his mind to recruit Negroes—particularly bright students from the slums. Cornell today has 250 black students, and many of them feel they have been dropped into an enemy camp—condescending at best, actively hostile at worst, and geared to make them dark copies of middle-class whites.

Racial incidents have been growing on campus for more than a year. First, black students sat in the office of the economics department chairman to protest alleged racist remarks by a visiting professor. After the riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., anonymous whites telephoned threats to black students. This fall and winter members of Cornell's Afro-American Society staged a series of demonstrations for a separate black college. After each demonstration, the threatening calls from whites increased. "Rumors of black and white trouble were like a background noise," Perkins says.

Perkins himself was not safe from attack. In February, a black student grabbed his coat collar from the rear during a student meeting discussing the university's holdings in the Chase Manhattan Bank (accused of investing in South Africa). Some whites started carrying hunting knives when they were out late. Three weeks ago one member of Afro bought \$50 worth of ammunition in Ithaca—about the same time the trustees were voting to create a center for Afro-American studies to open in the fall.

Shortly after 2 a.m., Friday, April 18, the lid blew off Cornell's racial situation. It was Parents' Weekend and some 2,000 visitors were expected. Coincidentally, the board of student conduct (consisting of five students and four faculty members), after a six-hour meeting, announced it was dropping charges against blacks charged with stealing cushions from a girls' dorm. It gave mild reprimands to three others accused of being in demonstrations for the black college.



Larry Baum—Cornell Sun

Muller and Whitfield: An agreement

Less than an hour later a rock was thrown through a window of Wari (Swahili for "home") House, a cooperative residence for twelve black women, and a cross was burned on the front steps. Before dawn sixteen false alarms and two bomb threats were reported across the campus. No one is certain who was responsible. In any case, at dawn a day later 100 black students decided to seize Willard Straight Hall to protest the disciplinary decisions, mild as they were. Racing down halls shouting "fire," they routed 30 Parents' Weekend visitors from their beds and evicted 40 university employees. When one woman did not move out fast enough, the students ripped open her door with a crowbar. The blacks then chained Straight Hall's doors shut from the inside, pulled out fire hoses and pointed them at the entrances. No guns were inside at this time.

Fight: The first the campus knew of the seizure was at 6:03 when the student radio station WVBR, with studios in the basement of "the Straight," interrupted its programming for a "relevant political message." Edward L. Whitfield, 19-year-old sophomore chairman of Afro, announced that blacks had taken over the building to protest Cornell's "racist attitudes." Whitfield, who went to Central High in Little Rock (where he was sixth in his class), is enrolled in a six-year Ph.D. program. Outside, white members of SDS, who knew of Afro's plans in advance, formed a line. "We were supposed to set a defense perimeter," said bearded David Burak. "We would be fighting and taking the lumps they have taken for 300 years."

As the blacks and their white supporters saw the issue, the protest was a political act, and the university did not have jurisdiction over political dissent. They also said the conduct committee was incompetent to judge them since the committee was all white. Explained Tom Jones, another Afro leader and former president of Cornell's freshman class:

Newsweek

JUNE 23, 1969 50c



CLASS of '69
The Violent Years

Newsweek



JUNE 30, 1969 50c

Report From

BLACK AMERICA

A Newsweek Poll



Newsweek photos by Jeff Lowenthal

Chicago's West Madison Street: 'Some become convinced they don't exist because no one sees them'

THE NORTH: HUSTLER, PREACHER, PANTHER



Beyond the statistics and the latest black rhetoric, millions of American Negroes play out their lives in the inhospitable streets of the nation's big-city ghettos. What is the real texture of ghetto life today and how much does it reflect the headlines? Is there any change or only the changelessness of despair? Newsweek assistant editor Johnathan Rodgers, 23, melted into the life of one Chicago slum street to find out. His report:

BY JOHNATHAN RODGERS

The poster, taped to the window of the Soulville pool hall on Chicago's West Side, shows a black man with a rifle and an ominous message: "Your God better have a rod. Mine does." A few doors away is another placard, this one with a picture of Illinois Black Panther Fred Hampton and a poetic but solemn caption: "He came down into the valley so he could keep saying—I am a revolutionary." And on nearly every other building along West Madison Street as it runs through the ghetto there is some political slogan from "Don't Vote" to "All Power to the People." The signs of the times are on the walls and windows, but the scars of summers past are still in the community and on the minds of its people.

There has been a war along West Madison as there has been a war along every other main street in nearly every black ghetto in the country. Burnt-out, boarded-up and abandoned storefronts stand out against the thriving businesses of the day—the pool hall, the flophouse, the bar. And it is in the street that the people really live. The dirty, littered thoroughfare is the PTA, the bridge club and the playground—where, for want of anything else to do or any place to go, blacks stand and watch America pass them by.

The people of Chicago's West Side are typical of black people in other urban ghettos across the nation: they are mostly the poor, uneducated, day-labor force—individuals caught in a web of despair they did not spin. They are dared to escape from it. Some cop out. They become disillusioned, and the day becomes too long to drink it all away. Others find that there are not enough hours left to plot the restructure of Western civilization. Some become Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, convinced that they don't exist because no one sees them. Some evolve into Richard Wright's Bigger Thomas, ready to lash out at anything white that moves. And others are like some of the people I lived with on West Madison Street on the eve of summer 1969:

Tyrone Jackson (not his real name) adjusted his green "pimp" shades as the morning sun broke out from behind a cloud. He walked down the street in a rhythmic slouch, snapping his fingers to the beat of an unheard drummer. At every opportunity he glanced into store windows looking for his reflection. But he didn't need to. He was immaculate from the pointed toes of his imitation green alligator shoes to the lime-green silk scarf tied rakishly around his neck. "See that car over there?" he asked, pointing at a 1969 white Cadillac Eldorado parked nearby. "Well, that's all mine and I paid cash for it. You see, there is this disease going around called W-O-R-K that I will have no part of. Man, I'm a hustler and I'm doing all right."

Before getting in his car, Jackson, 23, stuck his head into a crowded pool hall and shouted: "What's happening with all you junior hustlers?"

"You got it all," they shouted back in near-unison.

"Want to shoot some 'bank' for a dollar?" asked one who looked to be about 17.

"Nigger," said Jackson. "I wouldn't spit for a dollar. Why don't you go out and learn something useful—like how to dress and gamble?" The poolroom broke into laughter and Jackson strutted over to his car.

The hustler has always been the most admired man in ghetto areas because he is the only black man "making it" who lives there. Jackson is no exception. As he drove along West Madison on his rounds, collecting money for today's number and paying off for yesterday's, he talked about himself.

"It's really funny," he said with a sly smile, his eyes darting back and forth across the street, "but when I was in high school the teachers and counselors tried to f--- over you and make you take shop courses so you could become a carpenter. Well, me and some other dudes revolted and said 'we're going to study hard, go to college and beat the white man at his own game.' That was bull---. The white man is just like the nigger—crooked. The best way to beat him is to be more crooked, and you learn that by watching the white man when he comes around to pick up the rent, or sells you rotten meat.

'Well, me, I don't take no money from no dude who can't afford it—I figure better me than J&B'

"Well, I went to college anyway," he continued. "Man, I had never seen so many crackers in my life. I split after one semester. I had to get home to my people. Now I'm in the numbers game and I know the white man is controlling that, too. But it's

to my advantage. He also controls the white cop downtown." Jackson stopped the car and, pointing his finger to emphasize his point, said: "I know white people say black people are in trouble because they are always gambling. Well, me, I don't take no money from no dude who can't afford to lose it. Sure, I may take money from a wino, but I figure better me than J&B."

By the time he finished his rounds, Jackson had collected more than \$500 and paid out \$76. He turned off Madison and drove slowly past a couple of large churches. "Man," he said, "You think I got a hustle. You ought to go in there sometime."

It was a rainy Sunday morning and at the Mozart Baptist Church on Francisco and Adams, two blocks from West Madison, the congregation of 500 filed quickly into the main auditorium. They were mostly old people; men with bent bodies and wooden canes and ladies with wrinkled faces and flowered hats. The church is Establishment, and most young people know it and avoid it. When a free-breakfast-for-kids program was initiated, it was the Black Panthers who organized it. The church followed meekly with offers of aid. "We looked bad on that occasion," confessed Mozart's Rev. Arthur D. Griffin, "but I still think black people should stay with the church. It was faith in it that brought us through slavery and the other hard times."

Mozart's morning service was redolent with the traditional faith. As a brown-faced Jesus on the stained-glass window looked down, the services began when a group of bright-eyed, flag-carrying Girl Scouts marched in and led the congregation in the Pledge of Allegiance and The Star-Spangled Banner. An assistant minister delivered the invocation praying, "Thank Thee Lord for everything." The choir sang, "Thank you, Jesus, for setting me free." And then Reverend Griffin delivered the sermon, chastising the congregation for crucifying Jesus and then salving them with the promise that God would forgive. The congregation, whose members had little to be thankful for, were not free, and surely were not guilty of killing Christ, said, "Amen."

'Sometimes I would steal 'cause I was hungry, but mostly I would steal because there was nothing to do'

"I don't like to go to church," said Marlo Stewart, 13, as he sat on the hood of a deserted pickup truck in a vacant lot on the corner of West Madison and Francisco. "What they say there I already know. People just go there to be seen, and the preacher acts ignorant, jumping around and hollering."

This afternoon, like most afternoons, he was just walking aimlessly down the street until a friend asked Marlo to join him on the red truck's hood. "I have to go to court on Wednesday," said the friend, whose name was Elijah Brooks. "They caught me stealing some stuff from Mary's restaurant."

Marlo had a distant look on his round, black face and his eyes told, already, of a lost childhood. He was interested, but he really didn't care what his 10-year-old friend had to say. Marlo was a veteran of the ghetto. He had already been through everything, including three years in assorted reform schools. He began to talk about his life, which is very similar to the life of thousands of ghetto kids around him.

"I was 9 when I first got in trouble," he said as he lay back on the hood, looking skyward. "I was throwing rocks on the roof and one missed and broke a window. The cops came. They took me to the station and called my mother. She didn't give me a whipping. I wish I could go back to that year and get that whipping. 'Cause from then on I thought I could get away with anything."

Jumping off the hood, Marlo picked up a handful of pebbles and started throwing them into the air one by one. "Later I started stealing. Sometimes I would steal 'cause I was hungry," he said, "but mostly I would steal because there was nothing else to do. They locked me up. First they sent me to Audy House which is like a jail. Then I was sent to Herrick House in Bartlett, Ill. which was like an orphanage. But it was fun. They had girls. Finally, I was sent to Mount Alverno in Cincinnati. It was an adjustment school."

Elijah, much smaller and darker than Marlo, looked up at his older friend with both envy and fear. "I don't know if I want to go to jail," he said. "The police slap you and everything. But when I grow up I want to be one—a policeman. That is the only way not to be bad."

Marlo looked at his friend and joined him in playing the most popular game in the ghetto—daydreaming about the day you free yourself from the grasp of a bleak world you didn't create. "Well, when I grow up," Marlo mused, "I want to be a train engineer and then go on a ship and then go on a plane. And then I want to buy a big grocery store so anytime I'm hungry I can get my own food and don't have to pay high prices or taxes. But most of all, I want to get out of Chicago. It ain't hitting on nothing."

One of the few times the ghetto seems benign is early in the morning before the sun rises and the stench of another day fills the air. But on this morning the tranquillity of the dawn was violated. It was 5:30 and the 2300 block of West Madison already was the scene of frantic activity. City police blocked off the street. Two Federal agents, one with a shotgun and the other with a machine gun, patrolled the rooftops. Down on the sidewalk a squad of FBI men, wearing bulletproof vests, pounded at the black plywood door of the Black Panther headquarters with sledgehammers. Finally the door splintered and the G-men sprinted in looking for their man. He wasn't there. Nevertheless, the agents arrested everybody in the room—six men and two girls—and charged them with harboring a fugitive and illegal possession of weapons.

The raid was just another incident in the continuing battle between authorities and Panthers, which seems to be accelerating as the Panthers gain influence in the community. In only a year, the Illinois Panthers have become the most dynamic force on the West Side of Chicago. Their free-breakfast program feeds 500 kids every day. They have made a political alliance with some young white and Puerto Rican militants. And 1,000 youngsters have flocked to their office ready to join. "We have a rule," explained one Panther, "that you have to have two guns to be in the organization. So what 1,000 members really means is 2,000 guns."

It is now summer. The hustler, the preacher and the Panther continue to make their pitches. And kids like Marlo and Elijah continue to dream about a world they are unlikely to know.



'Caught in a web of despair they did not spin'