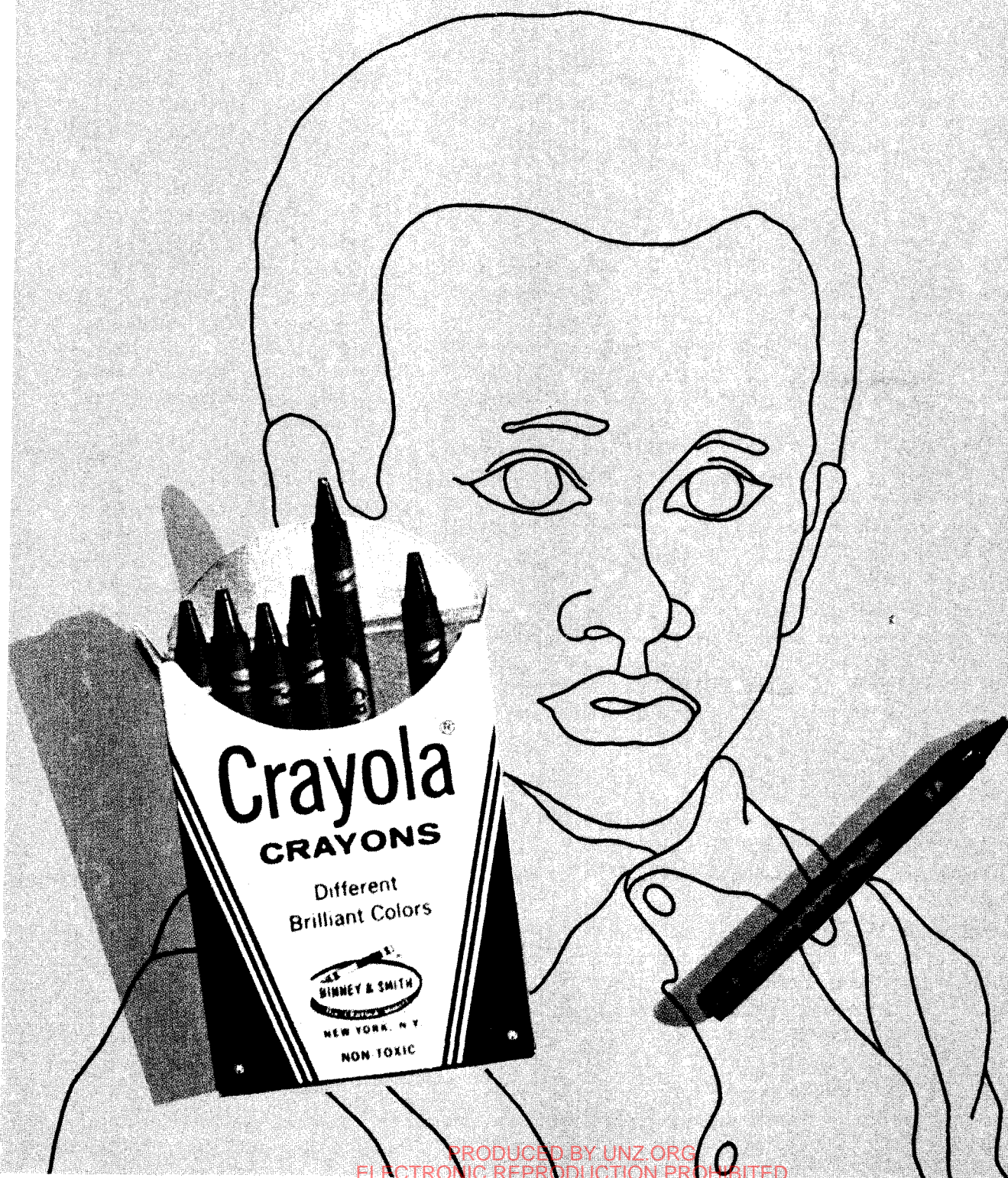


Color Black Gloomy



Whitney Young leaned back on the yellow vinyl couch in his seventh-floor, 52nd Street office, and stared thoughtfully at the ceiling. Then he said: "Maybe if Roy Wilkins and Martin Luther King and I gave up and got our guns out, the white people would listen."

He lowered his graying head and threw a wry grin toward his visitor, to underscore the fantasy of his image, and added quickly, "It won't happen that way, of course. But what could happen is that Roy will take one of those ambassadorships they're always offering him, and I could take one of those corporation vice-presidencies or something, and we'll tell you white people to go to hell."

Chances are that won't happen either—but it could, because behind the bizarre conjectures by the hard-working director of the National Urban League was a profound despair. This despair, a deep conviction that ten years of feverish activity have added up to nothing, is suddenly a pervasive gray mist that has permeated the Civil Rights Movement. It has spread because the American Negro is worse off today than he was in 1954.

White Movement activists, in the meantime, are left feeling helpless by the call for "Black Power." They regard as unrealistic Negro suggestions that they should organize among whites in the suburbs—and the Movement has nothing else for them to do. "A lot of students here would like to do something," says a white Movement veteran at Harvard, "but they don't know what to do. I think you could get as many volunteers out of here today for civil rights projects as you ever could. The problem is, nobody is asking for volunteers."

Hindsight makes it easy to criticize the Movement for what it has not done. Even Whitney Young admits that "the Movement has never really attacked" the overall problems of black Americans. But Young and others are quick to point out that the Movement since 1954 has not really failed. It has done what, despite its often overblown rhetoric and its simplistic appeal of "Freedom Now," it actually set out to do: it has erased most of the legal bases for segregation.

In addition, it has given millions of Negroes what Martin Luther King calls "a sense of somebodiness," a feeling of worth and dignity—and as a corollary, an insistent feeling of aspiration. The Movement gave thousands of Southern Negroes their first contact with whites who treated them as equal human beings. And the Movement has meant that middle-class Negroes, despite the scars of prejudice, now have an easier time getting jobs (Negro PhD's have it made); some visible integration these days is a sign that you run an enlightened business.

But when these accomplishments have been noted, the

bitter facts remain. After more than a decade of the Civil Rights Movement, the black American in Harlem and Haynieville, Baltimore and Bogalusa, is worse off today than he was ten years ago. There are more Negroes in segregated schools, more Negroes in segregated housing, and Negro unemployment is higher. The Movement's leaders know it, and it is the source of their despair.

[THE MYTH OF THE NEGRO REVOLUTION]

BECAUSE OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS, and because the declining economic position of the Negro, though more important, is less dramatic and consequently less well known, most of America thinks Negroes are winning. Whites in Chicago, Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles, Puerto Ricans in New York increasingly grumble that "the Negro is getting it all—what about us?" Liberals read about the War on Poverty and the Job Corps. Conservatives form kooky groups like New York's SPONGE—Society for the Prevention of the Negro Getting Everything—under the genuine delusion that the Negro is getting everything.

The Civil Rights Movement has failed to dent the Northern ghettos. It has failed to affect school segregation North or South. But the rest of America—with the same ease with which the antebellum white Southerner accepted the Myth of the Happy Slave—has blandly accepted the Myth of the Negro Revolution.

It feels good. We can sip our Gibsons and toast the Revolution, lead our normal lives without substantial change and think of ourselves as revolutionaries. The word has been everywhere since the Montgomery boycott: The New York Times subtitled a book on the Movement *The Second American Revolution*; another book is titled *The Negro Revolution*. Intellectuals, newspapers, and Movement leaders have eagerly snapped up the phrase.

The tenets of the Myth are simple: The black American since 1954 has steadily advanced toward equality, he still has some distance to go, and (usually voiced only in times of demonstrations or riots) he will get there faster if he doesn't push so hard.

Time magazine says, "The Negro has made spectacular progress in the past decade." Editor John Fischer of Harper's says, "The decisive battles have been won. No matter how stubbornly pockets of resistance in the Deep

South (and some Northern cities) may hold out, the result is no longer in question. The rest is a mopping up operation, like the war in Europe after Bastogne."

Though Mr. Fischer may think the Negroes have passed Bastogne, the facts put them back in Normandy and in danger of being pushed into the Channel.

Cornell Professor Robin M. Williams Jr. told the American Sociological Association's 1966 convention, "Not only the absolute numbers, but the proportion of Negro children going to segregated schools have increased since 1954." Every available statistic bears this out.

In the North, *de facto* school segregation is rapidly increasing as Negro ghettos expand (one-half of all black Americans now live in 15 urban centers). In Chicago, for instance, between 1963-64 and 1964-65, the percentage of Negro children in predominantly Negro schools rose from 87.8 to 89.2. For high schools, the figure jumped from 63.8 per cent to 68 per cent.

About the South, the Wall Street Journal said early this year that "only 6 to 7.5 per cent of the Negro students . . . are attending desegregated schools; in some states, such as Mississippi and Louisiana, the figure is less than one per cent." Nor is that the whole story.

In Taliaferro County, Georgia, for example, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the NAACP won a court decision in October, 1965, "integrating" 87 Negro students; by November, half had been driven back to the Negro school by intimidation, and the others were in an integrated school—but in segregated classrooms. After another legal intervention, the classrooms were integrated, with white pupils in the front and, behind a six-foot gap, the Negro pupils in the rear.

Yet the Myth goes on. The Atlantic, in a "Report from Alabama," in May, 1966, cheerfully told its readers that "gradually, the integration of the South's public facilities and schools [our emphasis] is becoming a habit."

Only children go to school; but everybody needs money. Last year, President Johnson said that "between 1949 and 1959, the income of Negro men relative to white men declined in every section of this country. From 1952 to 1963, the median income of Negro families compared to whites actually dropped from 57 per cent to 53 per cent." In some places it's worse; in Watts, for instance, both comparative and actual Negro income levels steadily declined between 1960 and 1965.

Arthur Ross, commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, held a press conference in September at which he reported that between April and August of this year, while the unemployment rate for whites remained about 3.4 per cent, it increased among Negroes from 7 per cent to 8.2 per cent (among young Negroes entering the labor force the rise was much greater). Ross said that his Bureau

had avoided playing up the difference until it knew whether the difference was "a mere month-to-month variation or something more serious. Unfortunately," he added, "it seems to be the latter."

Just how much "more serious" is Negro joblessness is suggested in a drab-looking mimeographed manuscript in thin green cardboard covers that was presented to the President and Congress early this year. It was the official report of the elegantly named National Commission on Technology, Automation and Economic Progress; its 14 signatories include Walter Reuther, Edwin H. Land and Daniel Bell. Buried in a mass of charts and graphs and dry Federal prose is one explosive sentence:

"If nonwhites continue to hold the same proportion of jobs in each occupation as in 1964, the nonwhite unemployment rate in 1975 will be more than five times that for the labor force as a whole."

That's one hell of a forecast. The report does go on to say that the rate might not be so great (two and a half times instead of five) if Negroes continue "upgrading" jobs at their present rate. But that's a pretty tenuous "if," given the reluctance of labor unions to share a declining number of union jobs with Negroes.

[THE WIDENING GAP]

THE MIGRATION of Negroes which began as a trip to the land of promise in earlier days—when unskilled blue collar jobs were plentiful in the North—has now become forced and desperate. In the Mississippi Delta, where 27 per cent of the cotton was mechanically harvested as recently as 1958, the figure is now over 80 per cent. No Mississippi Freedom Labor Union can fight something like that.

Even the North isn't what it used to be. "No other immigrant group," writes Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "came upon the [urban] scene at a moment of declining employment opportunities." Thus the Negro is having a hard time working his way up from the bottom the way the Irish and the Italians did. "Increasingly," notes critic Tom Kahn, "There is no bottom to start at."

During the 1950's there were fewer blue collar jobs than white collar jobs for the first time in American history, a neat index of increasing automation. Yet during that same decade, the proportion of Negro men in blue collar jobs rose from 64 to 67 per cent. And within the category of blue collar jobs, Negroes are trapped in just the unskilled and semi-skilled positions automation is eating away.

Protesting liberals argue that the Cold War and Vietnam are holding back the massive attack on poverty that would help black Americans. Of course they're right—if Congress would put all those billions into the ghettos

instead of guns and missiles. But meanwhile (aside from the drastic anti-poverty measure known as selective service), the Vietnam war is raising Negroes' relative income for the first time in a decade, and may make more jobs available. If anything, Vietnam may become known as Johnson's boldest answer to the Negro "problem." But it is a difficult solution to argue, least of all publicly.

In the age of automation, black Americans are filling a new and curious role. Increasingly, it is not just the bad jobs they are absorbing, but the blankness of no jobs at all. By doing so, they are protecting the rest of us from facing the full implications of our galloping technology. They are a unique shock absorber, a thin margin of protection between the rest of America and the growing dislocation of automation. Because so many of the people in that layer of technological unemployment are black, it is a bit easier for the rest of us to accept.

Of course the plight of Negroes is caused by far more than automation and unemployment. The heritage of slavery, illiteracy and abject poverty would be there in any case, as would the deep and complicated white racism which so pervades our society. But attacking unemployment is easier than rubbing centuries of prejudice out of men's minds and in a rational society it would be the first order of business.

The Myth of the Negro Revolution is there, if you're white, to comfort you. The reality behind the Myth is a disturbing one indeed, and most disturbing of all is the scope of the social change necessary to cure what we so casually call "the Negro problem"—as if it were not that of whites as well. When Mayor Lindsay told a congressional committee it was going to take \$50 billion to attack the problems of New York City, he was beginning to delineate the disturbing outlines of that necessary change.

"The War on Poverty," John Hersey wrote, "waged for victory rather than lip service, will doubtless cost fully as much as the war against Nazism and Japanese militarism. We haven't yet even begun to think in terms adequate to the enemy." Thinking in those terms is going to make laws integrating restaurants seem as insignificant as a curfew ordinance.

[SO WHAT?]

THE MOVEMENT is in despair because it has been forced to recognize the Negro Revolution as a myth. Movement leaders, unfortunately, have accepted the Myth just as much as anyone else in American society. Dr. King said as recently as September that events in Chicago constitute "a social revolution," and Roy Wilkins said last year, "We've already won. I don't mean we're all through—sometimes a war isn't ended for years after the turning point. What I mean is we

are over the hill. The back of segregation is broken."

But the Movement is losing its innocence now, because unlike the rest of us, the black American in Harlem or Watts lives in a reality which myths cannot disguise. The Movement has solved most of the legal problems, but now it is face to face with the harsh economic ones—and it doesn't know what to do.

There are suggestions—but not only is there no consensus, there is nothing, even within any one organization, remotely resembling the inspired and inspiring hope one could feel in the Movement a few years ago.

Martin Luther King, Bayard Rustin and others continue to speak in moralistic terms of their "coalition of conscience." But it was clear in the Chicago marches last summer that even paper concessions were won, not because of the consciences of white Americans, but because of King's sophisticated political pressure movement—a kind of movement that will become increasingly less effective as white resentment grows.

Cleveland Robinson, president of the Negro American Labor Council, says that the key to the plight of the American Negro is unionization—unionization of both Negroes and whites—and a higher minimum wage for all workers. Adam Clayton Powell pins his hopes on the Manpower Development and Training Act ("Much more important," he says, "than the Civil Rights Bill"). A. Philip Randolph, Robinson's predecessor, has proposed a \$100 billion "freedom budget," and Whitney Young—who says that he criticizes SNCC and CORE not so much for their emphasis on "Black Power" as because "they don't have a program"—proposes a vast "Marshall Plan for Negroes."

Cleveland Robinson knows full well that unionization is proceeding in the United States at a creeping pace, if at all, and that recent minimum wage improvements, meager as they are, were about all that Congress is ready to give. Powell knows that MDTA barely scratches the surface of black poverty and lack of skills. Randolph knows he isn't going to see any \$100 billion "freedom budget," and Whitney Young's despair about the chances of the "Marshall Plan" he proposed nearly three years ago is what led to his facetious remark about "getting our guns out" and his not so facetious remark about ambassadorships and vice-presidencies.

The late Malcolm X had no illusions to start with: "It is the system itself that is incapable of producing freedom for the 22 million Afro-Americans. It is like a chicken can't lay a duck egg. A chicken can't lay a duck egg because the system of the chicken isn't constructed in a way to produce a duck egg; and the political and economic system of this country is absolutely incapable of producing freedom and justice and equality and human dignity for the 22 million Afro-Americans."

Taken by some as an argument for socialism, and by Robert Penn Warren—to whom Malcolm made the statement in 1964—as an argument for black separatism, Malcolm's statement is increasingly echoed by younger Negroes and their sympathizers. Obviously he had a special appeal even for Negroes who disagreed with his ideas—Dr. King said that “when he starts talking about all that's been done to us, I get a twinge of hate, of identification with him”—and it is partly in an attempt to capture some of this appeal that Stokely Carmichael and Floyd McKissick have snapped up the idea of Black Power.

Out of despair, black America may welcome a black demagogue—or a black Messiah. There is an almost mystical feeling that another charismatic ghetto leader could somehow arise and change everything. At the moment, this—like the older Movement's “coalition of conscience”—is only a dream.

The Movement's despair is all the more poignant be-

cause it is justified: the lot of the Negro in America is not likely to improve for some time. Whitney Young, like so many older generation Movement leaders, says the change will come once the white man sees that Negro advancement is “in his own interest.” In a sense he's right, but given the way the American economy is organized now, and in particular its shortage of jobs, Negro advancement is clearly *not* in the white man's “own interest.” The white bricklayer, afraid that a Negro entering his union may mean no apprenticeship for his son and the white homeowner afraid for his property values both know Negro advancement will hurt them, and no amount of talk about equality and justice will convince them otherwise.

Little will be done to alleviate the Negro's economic plight until America once again feels the sense of urgency and the willingness to break with traditions that produced the New Deal. Only today it is 30 years later, and the New Deal's are the traditions we must move beyond.



Making South America safe for U.S. tourists

by James Petras

THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION is containing Latin American radicalism—just like it is doing with the home grown version—by combining a seductive ability to co-opt indigenous leaders into the establishment with a coercive repression whenever that becomes necessary. During a year of postgraduate study in Latin America recently, I was amazed by the victories that LBJ is scoring. All around me I saw the effects of the American presence. The Latin American revolutionary movement is profoundly demoralized. Its leadership is in disarray, hunted down by the U.S. supported and trained counter-insurgency forces, or as is more usually the case, bought out by the lure of middle class careerism.

Despite the growing economic stagnation of Latin America, there is greater opportunity today for middle class individuals than ever before, especially if they are university educated. As the social distance between the middle and bottom has widened, the older “popular front” reform alliances are becoming less feasible—the old partners no longer share common interests and outlooks. Many of the former revolutionary middle class intellectuals, because of recent openings in the new international institutions, the research foundations or the new U.S. sponsored planning agencies, have become inactive or have cut themselves off from radical political movements. They aspire to achieve a successful professional career—just as many of their counterparts in the U.S.

Not infrequently I visited with accommodated middle class families. Many of the leaders of the Chilean left, for example, live in the affluent *Las Condes* area. One afternoon a spokesman for the “insurrectionary” wing of the Chilean left invited me to dinner. Walking to his place I noted all the streets were named after the States: Virginia, California, etc. This whole area was financed by a joint U.S. private and governmental group. The sequel of course was that we had a barbecue cook-out in a patio not much different from those in U.S. suburbs. Yet within five minutes riding distance is a shanty-town where there is neither electricity, potable water nor a paved road. This contrast in life style is matched by the “insularity” of the middle class intellectuals.

While in Peru I met with an intellectual who had been a leader in the recent armed revolutionary ferment. He discussed the perspectives of his group: the question of guerrilla warfare, the problems of creating cadres, etc. He spoke as one who had been involved with considerable personal risk in a number of “actions.” He seemed to be a committed revolutionary. One month later I received word that he had a scholarship and was off to Europe for two years, leaving the organization and the members disoriented by his sudden departure.

In Argentina I met an economist whom I knew quite well as a graduate student in Berkeley. We spent considerable time discussing and criticizing the current state of