

underground press, etc.), *strategy* (massive protest by “our jury” as a reply to Justice Department intimidation) and *flexible tactics* (people were told to invent their own actions but to make them both militant and broad-based). If it was true that this was “our generation on trial,” no more organization would be needed.

That is why, on TDA, there was a riot across state lines that shook the country. Young people who had not come to Chicago to “bring the war home” were striking back now, for a purpose they believed in, with a spontaneity flowing from legitimate outrage because their collective identity had been violated and they could stand it no longer. Weathermen had created the tactics, but the fight was about us.

Tens of thousands participated. The youth ghetto in Santa Barbara exploded and the Bank of America was burned down. Stores were trashed everywhere. Bombs were placed in buildings from California to New York. The trial, which had been designed to intimidate, had produced insurrection instead.

We didn’t “organize” it; we only called for our jury to



Photo: Alan Copeland/Photon West

reach its verdict in the streets. It erupted spontaneously. In Berkeley, the crowd wouldn’t even wait for the speakers to finish denouncing the trial. The form it took confirmed that more than eight were on trial. People riot when they themselves feel that they have been slammed against a wall.

We eight were not special men. We were just a reflection of the impulses of our generation. It was like riding the crest of a great wave, a wave made by the power of the people.

[X]

The Limits of the Conspiracy

The Stones are STARS—on tour if not elsewhere, automatically the center of attention and privilege. None insists on that status, but they accept its security with an equanimity both innocent and arrogant. . . . The Stones, and certainly Jagger, are the tour’s essential promise, and therefore, if not always right, never wrong.

All non-Stones are relatively insecure and in a constant struggle to maintain their own egos, and their own place, in the graded orbits around the Stones. While on the one hand there is an undercurrent of hostility to the Stones—why do they always get the dope first?—there is a stronger one of self-dramatization, a pressure to maximize one’s importance to the Stones. That, in turn, increases the Stones’ status, and everyone is more important if the Stones are more important.

—MICHAEL LYDON

“The Rolling Stones at Play in the Apocalypse”

(RAMPARTS, March 1970)

TOO MANY PEOPLE LOOKED UP to us, regarded us as a rock group, wanted posters and The Word. There were many good people who came to work on the trial with the hope that it would be a communal project with fantastic individual possibilities; but our personalities, and the structure of the trial itself, did not allow that. The truth is that although we served an important revolutionary purpose for six months, we discovered a lot that was wrong about ourselves. Even though our identity was on trial, even though our habits were truly radical compared to those of bourgeois society, that hardly meant that our identity and habits were revolutionary by our own standards. In different ways we all came to sense our own limitations.

Most of these limits stemmed from the fact that the seven of us are white middle-class males, accustomed to power and status in the Movement. The Youth International Party, all myth aside, is run by two persons, Jerry and Abbie. The National Mobilization, in its prime, existed as a coalition which revolved around Dave Dellinger. Rennie has functioned time and again as the brilliant director of an office-centered organizing project, and I have always been more of an independent catalyst than an equal member of any collective or group. Bill and Lenny too are accustomed to having a bevy of women and others working in a service capacity. We were not good about sharing power, rather than competing for it, among ourselves. We were even worse about sharing power with the hardworking staff that chose to labor in our shadow. The Conspiracy organization

pigeonholed people into roles, like any other business. Bob Lamb handled press relations; Dottie Palombo handled our financial affairs; Linda Miner handled all negotiations for funds; Sue Burns took care of the transcript; Stuart Ball and Micki Leaner handled legal research and preparations; and so on.

All of them did the grimy work that kept the Conspiracy rolling. They even purchased our airplane tickets and had them ready for us as we streaked out of the courtroom to keep our speaking engagements. People like Ron Kaufman and Nancy Kurshan acted almost as personal valets for Jerry and Abbie in particular. The Conspiracy as a whole never consulted with any of these people about fundamental trial strategy, and their growth as whole people was hardly allowed in the situation. We were particularly oppressive to women; most of us, though proclaiming to be part of the liberated culture, were involved in all-too-traditional relationships with our wives. The women on the Conspiracy staff—below the wives in order of rank—were nearly suffocated as a result.

Even if we had been able and willing to improve these relationships, the structure of the trial made it difficult, perhaps impossible. None of us had ever been required to appear on time every morning for six months anywhere—much less at a trial where we were worked over for seven hours a day. The trial necessitated discipline—we had to produce our witnesses, our motions and our bodies—or else. This crowded out time for democratic decision-making or the non-exploitative relationships we are supposed to be building. In addition, our staff and friends had to deal with more than the usual intimidation in the presence of our powerful personalities. We were the center of the drama because our lives were at stake, they felt, which made it even more difficult to raise criticisms or questions about the direction the trial was taking.

FOR THE FEW OF US who worked on the defense, these pressures were incredible. It was an 18-hour day: worrying about the next stage of testimony, settling disputes with other defendants, calling and readying witnesses, worrying about their travel difficulties, getting our trial lawyers prepared to take them through their questioning, fighting with the mass media to obtain cameramen and films. The situation required arbitrary and often instantaneous decisions. When the other defendants asked me to “coordinate” this work I had no idea it would be the worst organizational ordeal of my life.

Working within that structure of trial discipline made me into a high-pressure machine. It seemed necessary to push aside anyone who could not work efficiently and compatibly, and it was impossible to tolerate hang-ups, identity problems, or even demands for a full discussion of what we were doing. My personal relationships shriveled to nothing in Chicago. I compartmentalized my personal life, left it in Berkeley and went there whenever possible on exhausting overnight flights. I would drop a pill on Monday morning to turn on the production machine again. It always seemed necessary, for a revolution is not a Be-In; it requires periods of discipline and painful work.

Our male chauvinism, elitism and egoism were merely symptoms of the original problem—the Movement did not choose us to be their symbols; the press and government

did. The entire process by which known leaders become known is almost fatally corrupting. Only males with driving egos have been able to “rise” in the Movement or the rock culture and be accepted by the media and dealt with seriously by the Establishment. (There are a few isolated women who as exceptions prove the rule: Bernadine Dohrn and Bernadette Devlin are seen as revolutionary sex objects, Janis Joplin and Grace Slick as musical ones, Joan Baez and Judy Collins as “beautiful and pure.”)

The first step in this power syndrome is to become a “personality.” You begin to monopolize contacts and contracts. You begin making \$1000 per speech. With few real friends and no real organization, you become dependent on the mass media and travel in orbit only with similar “stars.”

The media interest in Yuppies illustrates this process frighteningly. Random House not only publishes *Woodstock Nation* but takes part in the put-on with a cover illustration in which their own Madison Avenue building is shown being blown up. Simon and Schuster is pleased to advertise Jerry’s book, with his approval, as “a Molotov cocktail in your very hands,” “the *Communist Manifesto* of our era” and “comparable to Che Guevara’s *Guerrilla Warfare*.” Who is using whom? Publishing a book with revolutionary content is certainly possible under capitalism, but what does it mean when a corporation joins in an advertising ‘put-on about the destruction of its own system? It could only mean that the corporate executives and advertisers sense something familiar and manageable in this revolution. In Jerry’s book especially what must seem familiar is the marketing of a personality. The book consists mainly of interesting episodes from Jerry’s life. Jerry becomes the Important Person as his history of the Movement unfolds; other people disappear. Women are unmentioned (although a photo of his wife Nancy’s smiling face bobs across two full pages of Quentin Fiore’s “medium-is-the-massage” layout). The content is in contradiction with its own Yippie philosophy. Leadership ideally is supposed to be shared, or even to be “non-leadership,” but here it is embarrassingly self-centered, deliberately and consciously marketed.

There is much of value in this book, just as there is in the music of the Rolling Stones. But there is finally something unreal. For the Rolling Stones, “street fighting” is a lyric, not a reality which they support or participate in themselves. The irony will be if Jerry—or any of us, since we all are like him in one way or another—ends up like the Stones and other rock celebrities. In the Yippie world, toy guns are carried around for media effect and books are the only Molotov cocktails. But will they really “do it”? If not, then the theatre of personality finally will become acceptable to the weird appetite of American culture. Impossible? At the trial’s end, we were seriously planning to sell movie rights to big commercial producers, and Abbie (whose *Revolution for the Hell of It* was sold to MGM) was declaring, “Let them have Washington, D.C.; we’re going to take over Hollywood.”

[WE ARE PRODUCTS OF THE SIXTIES]

DURING AND AFTER THE TRIAL, we argued over the future of the Conspiracy. Differences emerged around whether we should become a permanent leadership group in the Movement.

The Yippies wanted kind of an American Apple Corporation: Conspiracy books, posters, records, sweatshirts, etc. They and Rennie wanted the Conspiracy to be a kind of institutionalized High Command of the Revolution, leading national campaigns and building a local organizational structure. The Conspiracy had the popular base, the moral authority and the fund-raising capability, they argued, to become a major outpost of radical opposition just at a time when other organizations were folding or fragmenting. Not to do this was to cop out on a rare opportunity.

We were all in agreement on the priority of organizing around the Connecticut, New York and Chicago trials of Bobby Seale and other Panthers, and campaigning against the Justice Department's repression of black revolutionaries. We were in agreement too on the necessity of continuing education about the issues of our trial during the appeal. And we would speak to raise money wherever local people were facing political trials without support.

In my view, to go further—towards becoming a High Command—would be forgetting our limits and perpetuating our worst tendencies. We are just the kind of individualists around whom a movement should not be consolidated. We are valuable perhaps as a resource to draw upon, but not as a leadership to unite behind. Our power interests and our male chauvinism would be a drag on the growth of revolutionary energy.

In addition, we had no common politics. We were united against repression, but not united *for* anything in particular. Dave is hardly a native of Woodstock Nation, Rennie is hardly into revolution “for the hell of it” and, as Abbie himself testified, “we couldn’t agree on lunch.” The Conspiracy was only a compound of two outmoded organizations: the Mobilization and the Yippies. The program of periodic national mobilizations demanding a Vietnam policy change has certainly reached a point of uselessness, and the Mobe has shown no capacity since Chicago to create continuous local resistance or more militant tactics. Since the Chicago Convention it has become more and more a bureaucracy, older and more moderate than its base of young anti-war militants. The Yippies are also victims of

legitimacy; their “cultural revolution” has become respectable since Woodstock. The politics of dope, sex and spontaneous expression, while still persecuted, is also more and more able to find protection behind liberal opinion. The edge of the cultural revolution that has not been co-opted is moving beyond Yippie theatre into the concrete areas of local organizing, self-defense, and drastic changes in the relationships between men and women. Mobe and Yippie can be seen as forms suitable for creating issues in the ’60s which must be solved in the ’70s by a movement that combines cultural revolution and internationalism, goes from symbolic protest to deeper levels of struggle, and replaces media leaders with collective leadership forms.

We are, after all, products of the ’60s. The styles and forms of that time were perhaps as necessary as they were problematic. In a white movement that arose from the nothingness of the ’50s, it was no accident that leadership went to articulate, aggressive males, and no doubt this pattern will continue for some time. But forms die, or at least change, and the test of a revolutionary may be how well he or she adapts to new possibilities. Among these possibilities are the growth of a radical feminism which is justifiably enraged at male political power; and new, younger radicals (both men and women) like the Weathermen and White Panthers whose political attitudes stem from a much deeper alienation than what we experienced in the early ’60s. From women comes the insight that our power is “male” in origin, a power that involves conquering and subduing others, as opposed to a power that is collective and respectful of people. From the younger revolutionaries in general comes the insight that our pressure politics, our peace mobilizations and our theatrics, legitimate in raising issues in the ’60s, are inadequate to the task of surviving and making revolutionary changes in the ’70s.

To continue as revolutionaries we will have to abandon the old forms and become part of the new possibilities. One of the most revolutionary decisions possible is for leadership to refuse to consolidate its own power and to choose instead to follow new vanguards. Only by making such a decision will we be relevant to the future.

From Resistance to Liberation

[XI]

The Eighth Conspirator Is a Prisoner of War

[1]

BOBBY SEALE, LIKE OTHER Panthers now in jail, is not a political prisoner. He is a prisoner of war.

While the white Conspiracy defendants were at least able to speak, write and freely prepare their defense, Bobby was seized on the Berkeley streets, indicted on a Connecticut murder charge, secretly driven in chains to Chicago, denied his right to representation, chained,

gagged and severed from the case, shipped back to California and then off to Connecticut, where he now faces the electric chair.

If ours was the “political trial of the century,” Bobby’s Long Trial is becoming the definitive trial of black people in America. His facing the electric chair is symbolic of black people facing genocide.

Bobby’s case is not unique. Nearly 30 Panthers have been killed since the Party was founded; in the first year of the Nixon administration, over 400 have been arrested on various charges: Panther offices in Los Angeles, Oakland, Chicago, Des Moines and 15 other cities have been attacked by police. Nearly all members of their original Central Committee have been suppressed: killed, jailed or forced into exile. The Justice Department has a special task force on