

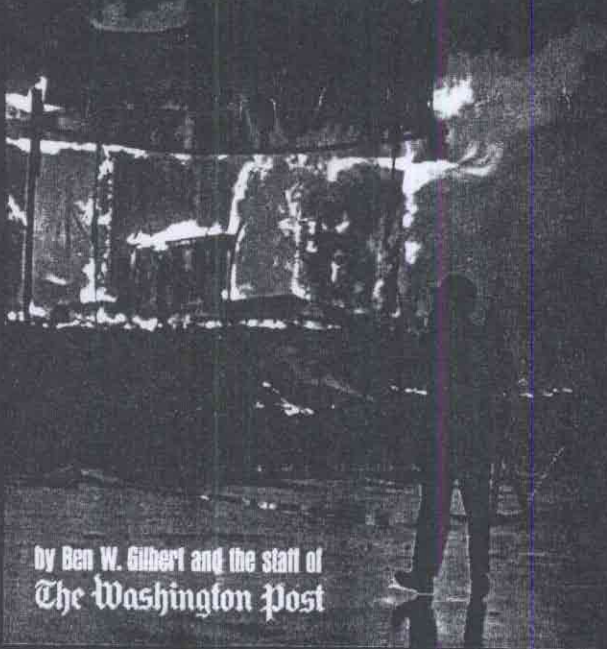
The Washington Post

Potomac

Sunday, October 13, 1968

TEN BLOCKS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

ANATOMY OF THE WASHINGTON RIOTS OF 1968



by Ben W. Gilbert and the staff of
The Washington Post

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
what's the greatest of them all?

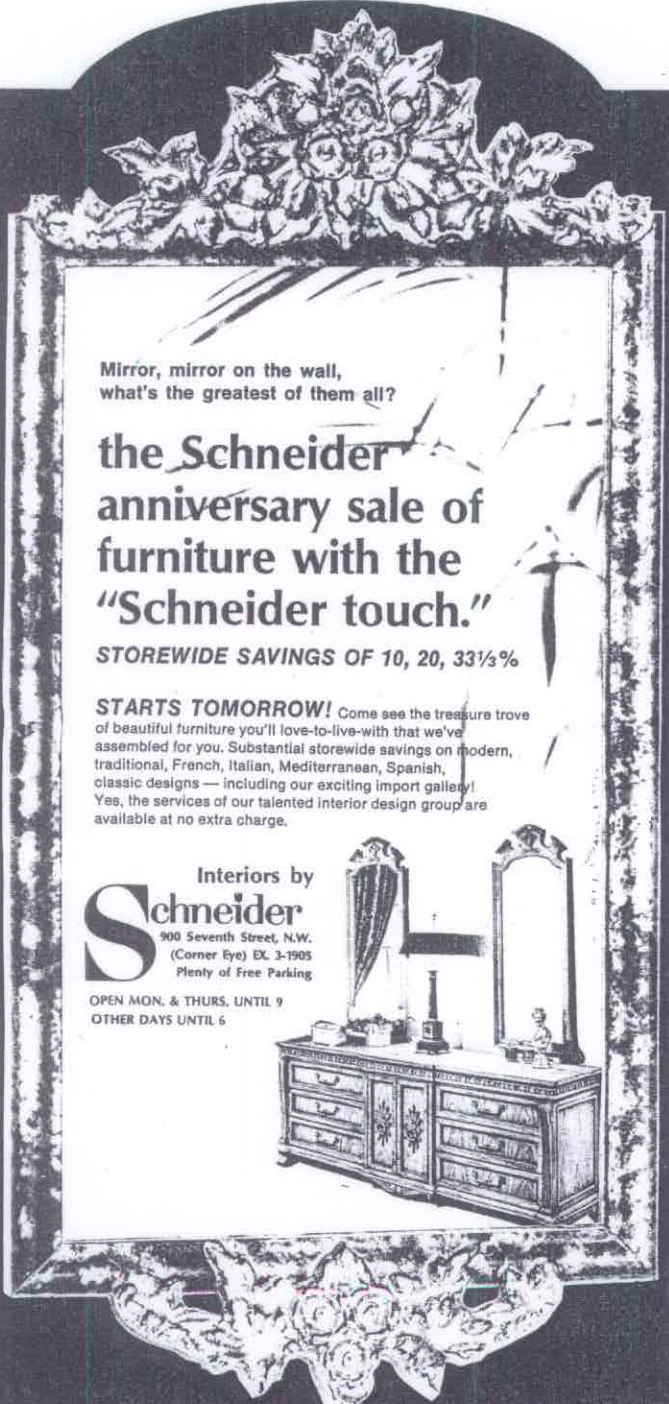
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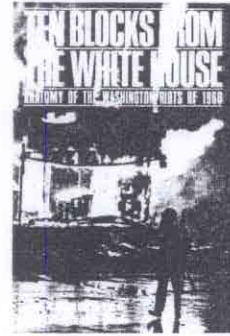
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Potomac

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Today's cover is based on a photograph by Frank Hey. It is the dustjacket of a book to be published later this month. This week's Potomac consists solely of excerpts from that book.

Ten Blocks From the White House: Anatomy of the Washington Riots of 1968 was based originally on The Washington Post's massive, on-deadline coverage of last April's civic upheaval — including more than 2000 staff photographs. Weeks later, reporters returned to the scene to interview in greater depth all concerned. The result is an astonishing hour-by-hour, day-by-day re-creation of what happened in Washington and why.

Supervising creation of the book was author-editor Ben W. Gilbert, deputy managing editor of The Washington Post and its city editor from 1945 to 1964. In his published acknowledgment to the dozens of staff members whose work makes up the book, Gilbert singles out "two writers whose contribution to the work was so large that, in fairness, their names should have been listed with mine on the cover"—Leonard Downie Jr. and Jesse W. Lewis Jr. Lewis obtained the tape-recorded interview with the three arsonists on which is based Chapter X of the book: "All You Need Is a Match, Man." That chapter is reprinted in full this week in Potomac. Also reprinted are short passages from other chapters throughout the book. All photographs are by the staff of The Washington Post, including color photographs by Steve Northup.

—JOE ANDERSON



Gilbert



Lewis

Chapter X

"All You Need Is a Match, Man"

A few days after the occupation of Washington ended, *The Washington Post* assigned a reporter to find and interview some arsonists to complete the picture of the April riot that was being assembled for this book. He began at once making contact with persons who might lead him to someone who would talk. At first, he was told that anyone who set fires would not agree to talk for publication. He persisted, suggesting that the interview be conducted with the arsonists wearing masks or hoods

so that their identities would not be known. For nearly four months, there was no response.

Then, on August 8, around noon, the telephone rang.

"About the meeting. Do you still want it?"

When the reporter said "yes," he was told to expect another call around 10:00 p.m.

At 10:15 p.m., the same voice on the telephone told him to appear in front of a specified room in a shabby old hotel, in the

heart of Washington's inner city. The reporter, who is black, said he would like to have another reporter accompany him.

"No, we don't want anybody else. Just you."

Armed with a tape recorder, the reporter appeared alone at the hotel room and knocked on the door. After he identified himself, he was made to wait two minutes. Then the door opened just a crack. A pair of eyes peered at him from two small holes in a black hood and he was allowed to enter.



Ten Blocks From the White House: Anatomy of the Washington Riots of 1968.

Ben W. Gilbert and the Staff of The Washington Post.

Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, New York.
Copyright, 1968, The Washington Post.
239 pages, plus 64 pages of photographs.
Hardback \$6.50. Paperback \$2.45.

The only light came from a lamp on the floor of an open closet. It cast a dull, eerie glow on three hooded figures in the small room. One was the black-hooded man who had opened the door. The other two wore improvised hoods, made from white hotel linen, with jagged holes torn out for eyes and mouths. One had also covered himself with a bedsheet, from his neck to his shoes.

Ground rules for the interview were quickly established. The reporter explained that the information was desired for use in this book and that he might be required to tell the authorities what he knew about the meeting. The trio balked at the idea of using a tape recorder, but agreed when the reporter promised to destroy the tape after the interview was transcribed. Presumably, they feared that their voices on the tape would provide clues to their identity. However, as the interview progressed, they began to warm up to the tape recorder and even orated into it. (The tape was destroyed as soon as the transcript was made.)

The interview proceeded for an hour and forty minutes. The room became stifling hot, and two of the men kept pulling their wet, sweaty hoods away from their faces. One man had a .45-cal. semiautomatic in his belt. Once, hearing a noise in the hallway outside the room, he nervously drew it. The reporter did not, as far as he could tell, know any of the three hooded men.

The purpose of the interview was to learn about arson in the April riot, but, as the session went on, it became evident that the three men were purporting to describe an unknown aspect of the riot—the fact that a small group of revolutionary activists had worked to keep it going.

The three made no claim that they or their group were responsible for starting the disorder in Washington. To this extent, their story parallels the FBI's assessment that there was no plot or conspiracy to touch off a riot in Washington, in April, 1968.

They did claim, however, to have performed a catalytic role in the riot, by example and suggestion.

"A lot of areas we went into, man, there was nothing going on till we got there," one of them said.

The scope of their activity was limited, they said, by the relatively small size of their group and because Dr. King's assassination caught them by surprise. They took strong exception to the word "riot," preferring "rebellion" or "revolution" instead. They did not see what happened in Washington as a reaction to Dr. King's murder as much as an assault on a racist system, which, they believe, must be destroyed if black Americans are to survive.

The reporter felt that their basic story, told four months after the events of early April, was not inconsistent with what was known. This, too, was the judgment of senior reporters and editors who listened to the tape and examined the unedited transcript. It was decided that the interview should be published to help in understanding the reactions and attitudes held by some participants in the riot. The transcript was then edited for space and clarity, with less relevant portions omitted.

The reporter assigned numbers to the three men, who had spoken to him as follows:

No. 1: I guess that what you want to hear about is what happened after Dr. King got killed. Right?

Reporter: Right. But specifically about burning.

No. 1: We've had ourselves somewhat organized in this city alone, I'd say, since about February. We felt for quite some time that it has been necessary to protect ourselves, to arm ourselves, in case the beast does decide to come down on us. When Dr. King got killed, of course, it came as somewhat of a surprise to us—a hell of a surprise. It caught some of us off guard. But we still were able to do our thing. We had some of our equipment at

close hand, where we could get to it easily, even with the curfew being in effect.

Reporter: When you say equipment, what do you mean?

No. 1: Cocktails, even dynamite. There were a couple of places in this town that were dynamited. A&P at Benning Road, Cavalier's on 7th Street, were dynamited, and a couple of other places. But to get to burnings and things. We were preparing to make our own move with the slightest motivation, with the slightest incident that we could use to move with. We had the reasons, but, in order to move, you must have the people behind you, also.

Reporter: You used Dr. King's murder as an excuse?

No. 1: No. That's not the wording I used, brother man. I said we needed an incident that would make it justifiable even in the eyesight of the mass of the people that do not agree with the term "black power." With the mass of people that do not agree with protecting oneself with a piece (gun) such as I have on my side, you see. We had some people who still think that the white man is a good man and he will set us free. Jesus with blue eyes and blond hair. I see the white man as a beast, not only from anybody's terminology but from my own past experiences. I was raised in the South, man; I've dug on it there, you see.

Reporter: Thursday night, Dr. King was killed. What did you do?

No. 1: Thursday night, I was uptown when I heard the news. I was somewhere between U and Florida Avenue when we heard that Dr. King had been shot, and we were waiting news whether he would survive. Shortly afterwards, we heard that he had died from the gunshot. People were demonstrating, from the beginning of 14th and Florida, down 14th Street, to get the businessmen in that district to recognize Dr. King. This is to show our respect for the man, al-

Inside the Peoples Drug Store at 14th and U Streets nw., a dozen persons were huddled around a transistor radio on the camera counter, listening to the muted voice of President Johnson speaking from the White House:

"America is shocked and saddened by the brutal slaying tonight of Dr. Martin Luther King. I ask every citizen to reject the blind violence that has struck Dr. King, who lived by non-violence.

"I know every American of good will joins me in mourning the death of this outstanding leader and in praying for peace and understanding throughout this

land," he said.

"We can achieve nothing by lawlessness and divisiveness among the American people," he went on. "Only by joining together and only by working together can we continue to move toward equality and fulfillment for all of our people."

The President's cautious phrases seemed to anger his listeners around the crowded counter.

"Honkie," said one.

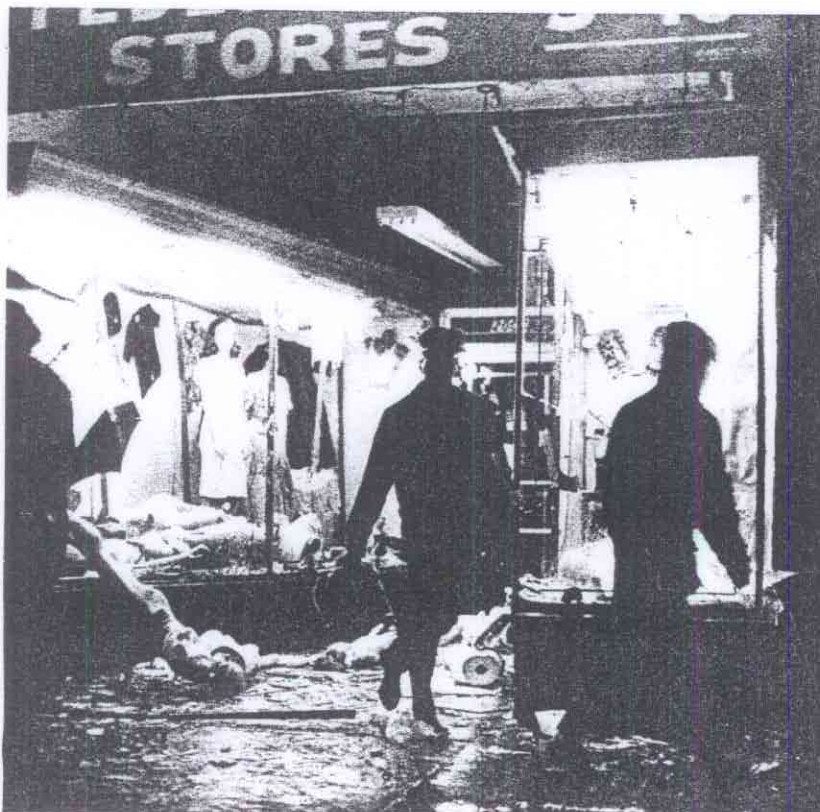
"He's a murderer himself."

"This will mean one thousand Detroit."

—Chapter I, Thursday Night



On the inside cover of the new training manual for the crack 82d Airborne Division, which was called to Washington for the April rioting, was this quotation from Greek military historian Thucydides: "Of all the manifestations of power, restraint impresses men most."
—Chapter II, The Police Problem



As firemen fought the blaze at Judd's Pharmacy, a looter emerged from Bud-dy's Beverage Store, a block away at 14th and Harvard Streets. He set down two liquor bottles on the sidewalk, smashed a gasoline-filled soda bottle on the window ledge, and lit a match. The gasoline burst into flames, and firemen extinguished the fire with difficulty. Then they moved to the vicinity of 14th and Columbia Road, where another building was ablaze.

"The company took a hose line," a thirty-three-year-old white fireman later told Senator Byrd, "and I was assisting the pumping man to make the connection. They were calling for water, when a gang of Negro males came across the street and pushed and shoved the pumper man and told him not to hook up the hose."

"We didn't build the goddamned fire for any white people to put out," one teenager shouted. "Don't worry, you will all be dead before the night is over."

—Chapter III, Friday



though our philosophies conflicted, you dig it. But the mass of people fell in behind them. And from that, I think the first window that was broken was at one of the theaters on U Street. And, man, when that broke, that was, like—the shot that was heard around the world when the honkies were fighting against their own people.

Reporter: What was the first thing? What did you do? You say you got to some equipment?

No. 1: I broke a window.

Reporter: You broke a window. With what?

No. 1: My foot, man. I put my foot through it. I wear combat boots most of the time.

Reporter: What was the first place you burned? Or threw a bomb?

No. 1: The first place that I personally burned? My first thing I did was not the part of burning, as such. I believe in a total type thing. So I just stuck the cap on, lit it, and threw it, you know.

Reporter: You put the cap on what?

No. 1: On a stick of 'mite.

Reporter: Where?

No. 1: A&P.

Reporter: What street?

No. 1: It's Benning Road, I forget the exact hundred block. These things don't register too well with me.

Reporter: How did you obtain the dynamite?

No. 3: Well, like in Maryland and Virginia, they have sites where they keep dynamite.

Reporter: Construction sites?

No. 3: Yeah. In the District, they take the dynamite back to the place that's doing that job, you know. But like, out in Maryland and Virginia, they keep it in shacks on the site in many instances.

Reporter: It was stolen from there?

No. 3: It was liberated.

Reporter: Where did you learn to make Molotov cocktails?

No. 1: I learned in the service. Uncle Sam taught me in Army basic training.

Reporter: How do you make them?

No. 2: Simply by depositing gasoline into a glass container or plastic container and putting some type of combustible material at the top—and ignite it.

Reporter: Are you selective about what type of Molotov cocktails you use against a certain surface?

No. 3: When we had time. I know one group of brothers I was with—we didn't have time to do nothing but just pick up and go.

Reporter: Why didn't you have time? The policemen were nearby?

No. 3: Yeah. Well, the police were in the whole area; they were saturating the area. All we had time to do, like one in-

Continued on page 12

stance, just drive up, hop out, hit it, and jump back in the car.

Reporter: Is there a place where Molotov cocktails are made? And are stored?

No. 3: Now there isn't so much—there was a semiplace that was used before to store some gasoline, kerosene, and Varsol, you know. We had a place—a couple of places—to store those things, and we would get it little by little. To build up. Because, like, the guns and everything—we didn't have the money we have now to buy guns off the street, so we had to store gasoline and things along with the few sticks of dynamite that we got and bullets and everything. We even were storing bullets we didn't have guns for before. But we have guns for them now.

Reporter: Why did you use fire, after Dr. King was killed?

No. 3: I think what you're trying to say—why did you use fire instead of bullets?

No. 2: Because fire is more destructive,

and it's much faster to destroy a building or the contents of most of the building with fire than any other means other than dynamite, and we had a limited amount of that. We had to hit special places with that.

Reporter: Why were they special places?

No. 2: Well, because, first of all, like they were the biggest Jews and the biggest exploiters in the community, and we wanted to make sure they never did get back.

Reporter: Why do you want to destroy in the first place?

No. 3: First of all, fire is the only thing that people could identify with. People are not ready for an armed thing right now. And we were not ready either—for an armed thing. We had been preparing for both fire and guns, but we didn't have enough and we didn't feel the people had enough guns. We knew the pulse of the whole city, because we worked in it,

we've lived in it, you know, we were block workers and everything. And, like, twenty-five of us knew that it wasn't time for that.

Reporter: Is that all there are of you, twenty-five?


No. 3: Back in February, when we first started to get together, we said there was a small knit group that was together, instead of a large group that wasn't together. Although we had a lot of mistakes, it was very good. And at the state we are now, we are very much together. That's why we have enlarged so much.

Reporter: You have more than twenty-five now?

No. 3: Oh, yes, many more than twenty-five.

Reporter: Can you give me an estimate?

No. 1: Those who know don't say; those who say don't know. But to reiterate, fire relates to the mass of people much more, because it is something they can use eas-



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ily. All you need is a match, man, a piece of paper, you dig it. Whereas if we got into a whole long thing of using carbines and M-1's and pieces, you see, they would say, "damn, we ain't got this—what you doing—like that," you see?

Reporter: Did the fact that the police didn't shoot generally have any influence on your not using guns?

No. 3: No. If they had shot more, we would have just kinda come on out, you know, for the protection of our people. But since they didn't use them, we had decided not to use them. We had said we weren't going to do this thing all the way. But we decided in the beginning, too many black people would get killed for our mistake—for our not being ready.

Reporter: There were seven people who died in fires. Does the fact that they died bother you? And they were blacks.

No. 3: No. I hate to see them go, but I came to the conclusion and to understand black people are going to have to die.

Reporter: Are you prepared to die yourself?

No. 3: I think I am. I can't say I am. I believe I am.

No. 2: As a matter of fact, one of my best friends and one of our members in Cleveland got killed—we look on it as a sacrifice and we hate to lose him but he had to go.*

Reporter: No. 2, what places did you burn?

No. 2: Well, I'll tell you, the first place that I burned was up at Barry-Pate.

Reporter: Barry-Pate Chevrolet?

No. 2: Right.

Reporter: How did you burn it, what did you do?

No. 2: I used a Molotov cocktail to start one of the cars. And from there, some of the younger brothers just came on over with gasoline. They saw the fire and

then they came on over, turning over cars and so forth, you know what I mean.

Reporter: What else did you do? Where else did you burn?

No. 2: We began to hit all along 14th Street. The Temple Grill and on up in that section.

Reporter: What went through your mind as you were burning the place? Did you get any satisfaction from doing it? Were you avenging Dr. King's death, or what?

No. 2: My thing wasn't because of Dr. King's death, to me, personally, you know. Yeah, I got a satisfaction. As long as I can destroy the beast in any form I can—you know, economically, physically or any other form. But I have to wait my time.

Reporter: The beast? Meaning who?

No. 2: The honkie, the whiteys.

Reporter: No. 1, what went through your mind when you burned A&P?

No. 1: You want to know what really went through my mind? I couldn't get through fast enough with one place to move on. Really! You have a realization in your mind that not everybody is there that you would like—every black person wasn't there—so you have to do more than you would normally do, if you follow me. I couldn't strike a match fast enough.

Reporter: Why did you want to burn?

No. 1: Well, I realize, myself, that the beast was our enemy.

Reporter: Where do you get this word "beast"? Is that just the latest thing for honkie?

No. 1: Well, it's not the latest thing. It is not a faddish word. It's a description, man, it's a reality. He is a beast. If you dig on his history you see he has done beastly things all his time. I mean, he walks different, smells different. He's a beast, baby. It's quite that simple. I wasn't completely satisfied because the

*In late July, 1968, in Cleveland, a four-hour gun battle between black nationalists and police ended with the death of ten persons, including at least two of the gunmen.

A carryout owner, still standing guard outside his store, watched the disorder grow. "I saw kids, five and six years old, come out of liquor stores with bottles in their hands and throw them at police cars and other cars driven by whites," he later reported.

"One of those kids came up to me and said, 'Look at those potato chips,' and I said, 'This is my store,' and he looked up and said, 'Oh, yes sir,' politely and walked away.

—Chapter V, Friday Afternoon



Inside the Safeway Store at 14th and Park Road, cash registers were overturned and the contents of shelves pulled down into 3 inches of water on the floor. Mustard and catsup oozed past burst boxes of cake mix. A well-dressed, matronly-looking woman was one of several who assured newspaperman Robert Maynard that they were not looting.

"Look," she said. "I come here to shop every Friday night. Where else am I to find food? All the stores are closed or looted. It's not that the food is free. It's just that there's not going to be much food around here for a long time."

—Chapter III, Friday



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"Now, life seemed to be standing still for them. They couldn't take even the short weekend trips that their friends could easily afford; they couldn't visit their children as often as they'd like.

"A pretty grim existence, I thought. But why? He'd had a good job. Then Nancy reminded me . . . they'd never planned ahead. During her uncle's working years, the money he brought in was spent almost as soon as the paycheck arrived.

"Fortunately, they had saved a little for a rainy day. But they hadn't saved enough to make those retirement days sunny!

"Not for me, I decided. When it's time for me to retire, I want to be able to do the things we've always dreamed of doing.

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come plan, telling how a man of 40 could retire in 15 years with a guaranteed income of \$300 or more for life!

"Nancy agreed it was a great idea. The thought of retiring at 55 didn't make her feel old at all! So I filled out the coupon that day and sent it right off.

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"Last month we moved down here to Florida, and we love it. Nancy looks great with her tan, and she's thrilled at the thought of keeping it all year long!

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revolution wasn't into a full-scale thing, because our people didn't think it was time for a full thing. In other words, a lot of people are still, what I say, in the Negro state of mind. The Negro state of mind being that of loving the white man or thinking that the white man is not all bad. I got some satisfaction, because I was doing something to hurt him. I know he's an exploiter of our people. Even they recognize the fact. They'll put on the news that in some stores in the ghetto areas, on the day that the people receive their welfare checks, the prices are hiked two and three cents on each item, so they can make a better profit on poor people who are living on welfare as it is.

Reporter: You want to destroy those stores?

No. I: I personally want to destroy the system. The system is what suppresses our people and oppresses our people. We have gone through this --- for 413 years. Dr. King, the king of love, got killed because he preached love for all, you dig it. And then, what happened to him? A honkie put a bullet through his head! The man is our enemy. His way of living is our enemy. We are fighting for survival. Not for recognition. If I wanted recognition, I'd take this --- off my head and let you see who I am, but I'm not going to do that.

One officer, Private David L. Tompkins, grabbed a looter and ordered him to stand facing the outside back wall of the store. Tompkins stood about three feet behind the man, guarding him with his revolver, the hammer cocked. As others came running out of the store, one empty-handed youth turned and ran blindly between Tompkins and his prisoner, striking the end of the barrel of the policeman's gun. It fired, and the youth, Thomas Williams, who would have been sixteen years old in eight more days, fell fatally wounded by a bullet that entered his body just below his left armpit. He was the sixth person to die in the riot.

After this incident, word was passed to the entire force to exercise particular care in the use of firearms. Pat Murphy later explained that the police department did not approve of the firing of weapons over the heads of rioters as a warning. "Any bullet travels many city blocks and can strike anything," he said. "No policeman should use his gun unless he is prepared—and justified—to shoot to kill."

—Chapter V, Friday Afternoon

No. 3: Dr. King wasn't only killed for the reason brother stated. He was also killed because he was one of the ones that attacked the militarism. Every man that attacks and has followers, the man who attacks colonization, is knocked off. They didn't start hating King until he started coming out against the war in Vietnam. Even white Southerners let him come down there for civil rights, but when he got international—when Malcolm (Malcolm X) got international, when Kennedy got international, all of them, you know—this country just can't stand that ----.

No. 1: Dig it. It was in the paper recently, man, that the economy of this country is so much based on the Vietnam war that, because of all their investments there, that if there was a halt to the war right now, that this country would be facing a depression.

No. 3: And so, if we can present Vietnam here, in the major cities over here, if all those were developed into Vietnams, like Oakland is becoming, you know, like Miami is going to be going like that for a while, and like Chicago is going to come, like Boston is getting with it. That brother we got up there—he's been working hard.

Reporter: This is to organize violence?

No. 3: If you want to call it that, that's what it is.

Reporter: What do you call it?

No. 3: We call it revolution—for freedom and liberation of black people.

Reporter: Do you object to the term "riot"?

No. 1: Yes.

Reporter: Why?

No. 1: Riot is spontaneous. Revolution is planned. It's as simple as that.

No. 2: I'm opposed to the terminology of

Continued on page 23

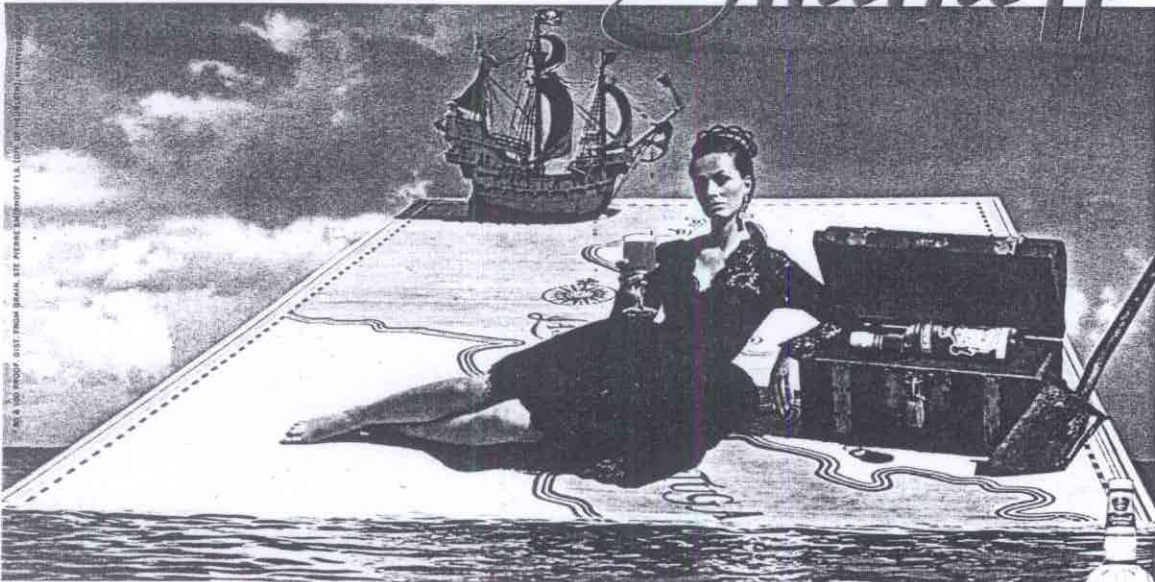
A black man in his twenties, wearing sunglasses, a jacket and slacks, was standing in the middle of 7th Street, between L and M.

"You don't want to get hurt, go home," he shouted at the crowds still moving south on 7th. "It ain't worth dying for. If you love Martin Luther King and all he stood for, please go back. At least let him get in the ground."

He was a plainclothesman, working as a "counterrioter" to keep the people from pushing down to the police roadblock at Mount Vernon Square. But no one paid any attention to him.

—Chapter V, Friday Afternoon

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riot because it's developed by the honkie. It's a term to say that it's something bad. It's just a term used to make us look wild, you know, like we're just a bunch of savages. We have our own terminology, because this is why we're rebelling.

No. 1: If you dig on the thing, I think Webster will tell you that a riot itself is a spontaneous, sporadic, I think, action. What we're doing is not spontaneous, sporadic ----.

Reporter: What do you do when somebody makes the allegation that it was a plot— was all planned?

No. 3: I don't think it's relevant. We took advantage of an incident. If it was planned, you see, there would be nothing left of the city. There would be very few white people around here, also.

Reporter: Why wasn't more burning done?

No. 3: Ah, why wasn't more burning done? I thought it was quite a lot myself.

No. 2: Like, I think that one of the reasons there was not more burning is that we realize the fact that our people were not prepared for the beast. And we know what a savage he is. We know that pretty soon he would begin to shoot them down, you know, like, we were the only protection that they had. Therefore, after we saw them move in, we, like, asked people to go home and get off the street.

Reporter: So at one point, in other words, you were burning, breaking windows, but at another point you were telling people to go inside?

No. 2: Well, we were asking some people to go inside.

No. 3: Sure. Children and old ladies.

No. 1: Yeah. At some point they were going through that looting thing, man, and the cop he come right up with that ----. Ain't no use in them getting hurt, man, when it's not necessary. Not just for that looting thing.

No. 3: And then, other times, we told them to go on because we were going to burn down, like, a complex or a building, which they would get caught up in.

Reporter: Were you ever afraid of being arrested by the police?

All: No.

A man walked into a furniture warehouse that had already been looted extensively.

"Sorry, fellow," the warehouse manager said. "There is nothing left. It's all gone. We're clean."

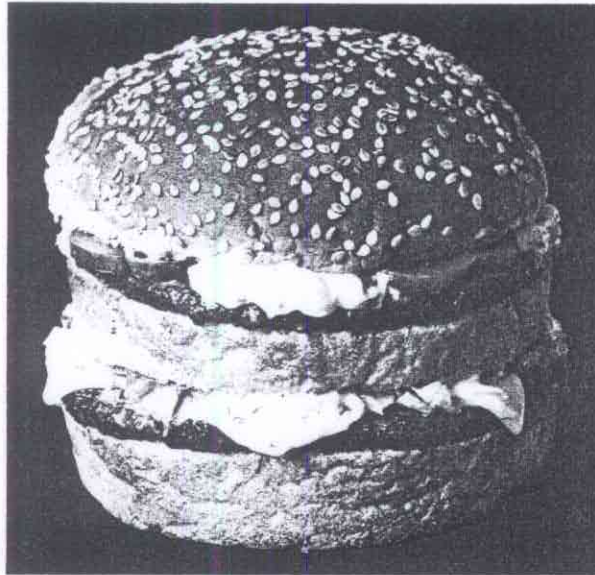
The man pushed the manager aside, saying, "I take my own inventory."

He finally found two rugs and carried them out.

—Chapter IX, The Looters

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE HORTLIP



Newsmen who covered both the April riot and the June 24 affair noticed a change in police demeanor. Police were more brusque and displayed a generally tougher attitude. Some black reporters who attempted to cover the police action said they were warned to leave the area after the curfew was imposed and they were jostled on their way.

Only twenty windows were broken and only three fires started throughout the city during the brief disturbance. All was quiet before midnight, and there was no further trouble during the days that fol-

lowed. The National Guard was withdrawn from the city the next day.

But in black Washington, along 14th Street and in other areas, the swift response left much bitterness. Oppressive tear gas, aggravated by the hot, humid weather, hung over the streets and pushed through open windows into crowded buildings, where residents were confined after the curfew went into effect. The police had detonated 1000 tear-gas grenades, mostly during a two-hour period, to break up crowds and answer youths tossing stones, bottles, and cans.

—Chapter XII, Resurrection City

Reporter: Why not?

No. 3: It was easy to get away. See, like, man, like if I was arrested, see, I could give them some story—like, if I was arrested on the spot, I would make it seem like it was just out there. And I just be another looter. Dig what I'm saying?

No. 2: It's no big thing. And if I was arrested, we have attorneys. We have money and attorneys to get us out. Like during the April thing, man, just a couple brothers out of the twenty-five got arrested. And they were just called, like, breaking curfew. In all three cases.

No. 3: And there's no reason to act bad when you get caught like that. You just act cool, just act cool. Say, "damn, man, I was going home," or some ----, like that.

Reporter: Why not be more hostile?

No. 3: Oh, then you get a real rap. You get your --- beat, you know, if you ain't going to get it beat already. You see, when the odds are against you, there is no reason to act the fool and die. We realize there's going to come a time the man ain't going to stop you, and arrest you for looting or curfew, but we going to be up-tight, and we expect that, by then, the majority of the black population in all the cities are going to be up-tight too.

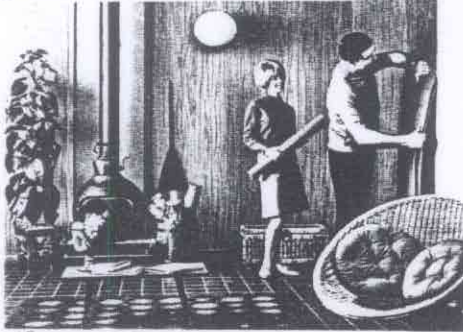
No. 1: You want to hear something that make my bust (arrest for curfew violation) sound a little more funny?

Reporter: Yeah.

No. 1: They asked me all kinds of questions. They called me a Communist, man. You see, what happened was I went past the National Guard check-point. Dude asked me, "Where you going?" I said, "Well, sir, I'm going home, I just got off of work." I got past about five of them, man, then here come the rollers, you dig it, with, I think it was six or seven whiteys and one poor soul brother who had to be the one act most hostile towards us, you see. They saw the

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walkie-talkies and they busted us. What could they do? The walkie-talkies was not stolen, you see; they wasn't even copped in this city. So they bust us, man.

No. 1: Another thing, too, it's a disadvantage of these honkie cops that move out to the suburbs, 'cause nobody knows the city better than the city-dwellers. There are alleys the cops don't know about. And rooftops can take you plenty of places.

No. 3: Yeah. Since you're talking about that, we are finding that the city is really a jungle in more respects than the people in the past, when they refer to it as a jungle, what they mean. This is really like a real jungle, man, a jungle where you have forts. Each block is like a fort in some areas. And, you can survive within those blocks, you know, square blocks, for a long time without the man ever finding you. You can, really.

Reporter: No. 3, tell me what you did during Friday afternoon.

No. 3: Friday afternoon? Was that the first night?

Reporter: That's the day after.

No. 3: Oh, yeah. The day after. I went over to Northeast. There were a couple of brothers there. And then a couple of brothers from Southeast came over, too. One main project that I had, mission that I had over there, was the American Ice Company. That thing was, I don't know how many stories high, and we were in the process—me and a couple of other brothers that came over—before this. We were going to try to get that, anyway, at, you know, a convenient time. The King thing came and everything and so we say, okay, we going to go on and get it now. It turned out to be a demonstration of power, man. See, I'll tell you how it turned out. We used dynamite and gasoline to that place, man. When it was all over, the walls had caved in and everything. I want you to go over there and look at it. I don't know if they have cleared the land or not, but they pushed in the walls. The fire was so great, the firemen couldn't do nothing. After we

burned it, we watched.* After it started burning good and we went out and the firemen came after a while and everybody was out there watching it—clapping and having a lot of fun, man. From old ladies to little kids. Everybody. The complete spectrum of black people. They were just happy. And the heat from the building spread at least a block. I mean just natural heat. Raw heat.

Reporter: How did you feel when you watched it burn?

No. 3: Oh, man, I was just so free.

Reporter: Why?

No. 3: Fire—it brings everything out of me and it's like a cleansing agent.

No. 1: The Bible says fire is a purifier.

No. 3: But let me say one thing. When the fire got going real good, it was feared that the flames were going to shoot over to the street in back of it. And we helped a lot of people move out of the apartments in back of it.

Reporter: What did you do after that? Where else did you go?

No. 3: Well, I went out to Southeast. Some brothers were out there that we had been working with. And they wanted to try some sniping that night. But not where it would be detrimental to masses of black people.

Reporter: Do you have any automatic weapons?

No. 3: Yes.

Reporter: What kind?

No. 1: M-14's.

No. 3: I don't know how much we should say. I don't know how it could be used. Okay?

Reporter: No. 3, tell me about some of the fires you set.

No. 3: 14th and Park Road.

Reporter: What specific places?

No. 3: Across from the Tivoli, where the liquor store is. Not across 14th, but across Park Road. And, you know, the Peoples Drug Store—and the Hahn's store there and that Wings-N-Things—that grease pot.

Reporter: Why did you set Wings-N-Things?

*No. 3's story of how the unused American Ice Company warehouse was burned could not be checked. There are no detailed fire-department records on this fire, but it is the prevailing belief of the authorities and persons in the neighborhood that the smoldering remains of an adjacent supermarket ignited the cork insulation of the building's walls, as already described in Chapter VII. The 70-foot high, windowless brick building had only two doorway entrances, both of which were boarded up before the fire. No. 3's account of what happened after the fire started would suggest, however, that he actually saw the structure burn. It should be noted that No. 3's account is off by one day, since the ice house fire was on Saturday. He took note of this inconsistency later in the interview and corrected himself.—B.W.G.

No. 3: Oh, man. That honkie been taking black people's money for all—for a long time. Ride down there in Cadillacs and pick up the money. Black man was slaving there, man.

Reporter: Where else did you burn, No. 3?

No. 3: That day, those were the two main areas I covered. The other days—what I more or less did was help coordinate some brothers that were doing some things like jumping honkies, getting their I.D. (identity card). We were going to some places and getting money orders, like liquor stores and things, out of the money order machines, things like that—that would help us build. We wanted some things that would be lasting, and we got I.D.'s from white people that came in the area that we beat up.

Reporter: No. 2, tell me about what you did. Starting Friday morning, when you got up.

No. 2: First of all, I never went to bed. On Friday morning, I got myself in the area of 7th Street. There were quite a few burnings going on.

Reporter: Set by whom?

No. 2: Set by the people.

Reporter: You mean just ordinary people?

No. 2: The black masses, yes. There were like a few stores on 7th Street, particularly between the blocks of Florida Avenue and T Street, there were a few of the Jews that we really wanted to get.

Reporter: Why do you mention Jews in particular?

No. 2: Because they're the biggest exploiters in the black community. I'm just saying that these were.

No. 3: A batch of hypocrites. They say they want to give us civil rights because they went through the same thing, and then take all the money.

No. 2: Anyway, like the fire started from one of the Jew clothing stores, and it, like, it was a lot of gasoline put into that area and it just destroyed, like, the whole block.

A white photographer reported an encounter with a liquor-store looter, whom he started to photograph in the act.

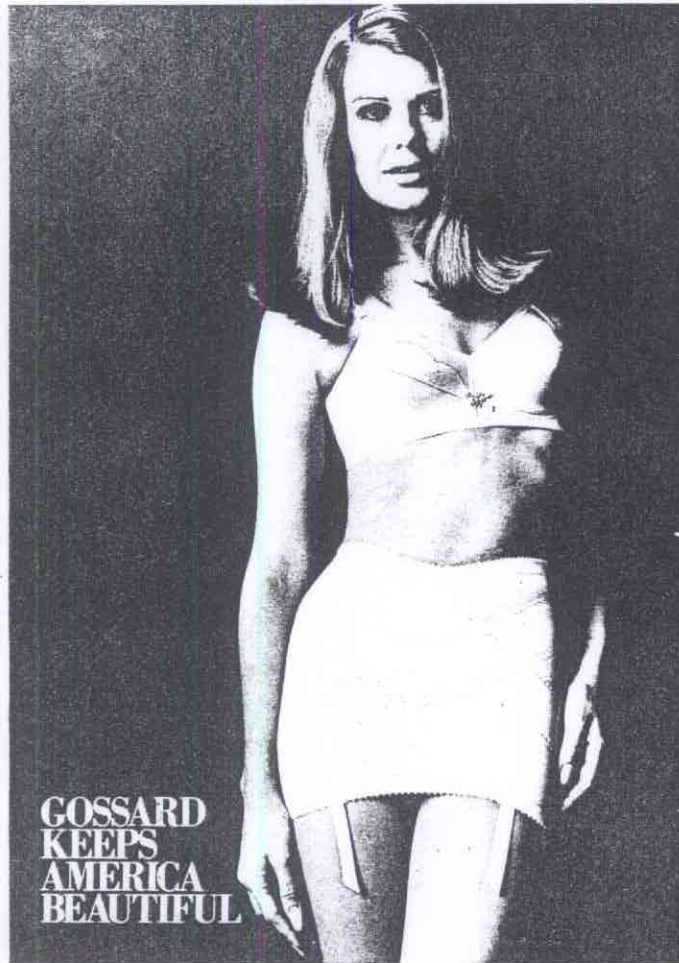
"Don't you go taking my picture," the looter told him. "Or I'll bash your head in."

The photographer removed his hands from the camera, which was suspended from his neck, and held his empty hands out.

"I'm not taking your picture. See."

"You're a good guy," the looter said, and handed him a fifth of whisky through the shattered window.

—Chapter IX, The Looters



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Reporter: What did you do specifically?
 No. 2: I went behind the stores on 7th Street and—
 Reporter: In the alleys?
 No. 2: Yes. I wanted to get it in the most effective place I could. So, you know, it started from the alley.
 Reporter: What hundred block was this?
 No. 2: I guess that's about 1900 block.
 Reporter: On what side of the street?
 No. 2: We were on the west side. After the fire got started, there was another explosion. Which I assume was a gas line. However, there was so many other members with some dynamite who, I understand, has set a couple sticks of dynamite in that area, too.
 Reporter: How do you use dynamite?
 No. 2: Well, we have different means of using dynamite. We have the cap and we, you know, like, have it set from gasoline.
 Reporter: What do you mean, set from gasoline?
 No. 2: Well, you know, we'll put it in a deposit of gasoline or soak it around with gasoline and set it from a distance, or we might use a Molotov cocktail to ignite it. And it goes off.
 No. 1: One way, you can just set a fire and toss it into it. In other words, the fire be set by ordinary means, paper and matches, get back and toss the 'mite.
 Reporter: Just an ordinary stick and it'll go off? It will explode?
 No. 1: Yeah. Hell, yes. It'll go off by contact, man, by impact, I mean. You can detonate it by firing into it, if you don't have caps.
 Reporter: Where did you learn to use dynamite?
 All Three: Brothers.
 Reporter: Where this was taught—was a school conducted?
 No. 3: Never a formal school. Instructions are going on every day, you might say. Brothers that want to help us out, that want to help themselves out, that want to share their knowledge with other brothers that they found they could communicate with and let this information, you know, share this information. Some brothers have been in the war.
 Reporter: Are there many brothers that are involved in your group that are veterans?
 No. 3: Yes.
 Reporter: Are there many that are Vietnam veterans?
 No. 3: Well, let's say it this way. The new recruits more or less have been—are just coming out of the war.

"The west side of the 1900 block of 7th Street, N.W., between Florida Avenue and T Street, was completely burned out by fires, Friday afternoon and Saturday morning.



Reporter: How many fires, No. 2, do you think you are responsible for?
 No. 2: Oh, man, I get carried away so much, I can't really say how many I set. I would say at least fifteen.
 Reporter: What about you, No. 1?
 No. 1: Fires, per se? I don't know, around ten or twelve—about three different 'mites. In other words, I'd say about ten fires. See, my district is Northeast and Southeast.
 Reporter: You say district. In other words, that means there was some organization?
 No. 1: Some? There is organization, brother baby. There is organization. Don't you realize that, as I said, there's a

One liquor-store owner, David Bayer, forty, a German immigrant who says he escaped numerous times from prison camps and later joined the Israeli army, asserts that he lost \$38,000 to looters during the riot. He claims to be a good friend to his customers and says that several have apologized for looting his store. He also says he understands the mood that struck looters.

"I did the same kind of thing a hundred times," he told a reporter, explaining that during the war he led raids on warehouses "because we needed food." He believes "it's just a matter of one kid saying 'Let's go' to several others."

—Chapter XI, The Merchants

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revolution going on; there must be organization! That's the reason that it was not a riot but a rebellion! There is organization. You have your assigned districts that you work with.

Reporter: How much did *The Battle of Algiers*, that movie, influence your organization?

(Numbers 1 and 2 said they saw it once after the April disorder. Number 3 said he had seen it once in December and three times since.)

Reporter: No. 3, why did you go so often?

No. 3: Because I wanted to distinguish in my mind what's particular to this country and black people and what's particular between the Algerian people and the black people there. Because, you see, I know what it means, but now I want to know how to implement this.*

Reporter: How many fires do you think you were responsible for, No. 3?

No. 3: I couldn't tell you, because see—

Reporter: How about an estimate?

No. 3: Because see, let me tell you, my job is more or less as a coordinator of groups now. Like I was a floater: I did do certain things like I told you in Northwest. I just have the times wrong. But, anyway,

Build Black, Incorporated, held a series of neighborhood meetings about rebuilding the devastated areas. At these meetings individuals in the neighborhood were encouraged to tell what was on their minds. Complaints about the practices of some ghetto businessmen were voiced with considerable heat. Those who were Jewish were generally described as "jew-merchant" or "jew-dealer" or "that Jew."

"I am sure glad that damn Jew got burned out," was one ghetto comment.

Some Jews felt that these were pejorative references. But thoughtful analysts, both black and white, have pointed out that the Jew was often singled out simply because of his presence in the ghetto—and that many blacks used "Jew" as a synonym for "whitey." There was a complete absence of swastika painting and other overt manifestations of anti-Semitism.

—Chapter XI, *The Merchants*

*The *Battle of Algiers*, a vivid cinematic re-creation of the beginnings of the Algerian struggle for independence, is the story of how a strong sense of nationalism redeems a young man from years of petty crime and leads him to become a revolutionary guerrilla fighter. It was a hit among black militants, many of whom saw it several times and took notes on the structure of revolutionary cadres and their use of violence. Black militants insist there are parallels between Algeria's struggle against the French and the black man's quest for freedom in America.

after that I was a floater, to more or less give the brothers direction to what they should do next. And that's why the whole thing was shifted from more or less burning and looting. Brothers didn't do that much looting. They just burned. From that they went to taking checks and things like that. Breaking honkies over the head, when they came through the sites, to get their identification, so that you could use it when everything was over downtown. Now, what we did on that second phase like that was really prosperous, because like the merchandise we got we sold and put back into guns and bullets.

(The reporter asked him to elaborate on the purchase of guns and it was explained that they were bought "off the street.")

Reporter: But you can get only hand pieces like that.

No. 3: No. That's a lie. No. We had hand pieces then. We don't concentrate on hand pieces that much, anymore. We concentrate on bigger guns.

No. 2: Long guns.

No. 3: And you can get them right on the block. Cats that are in the war, right in this country, at their camps. The brothers take them off the base, piece by piece, man. They doing a good job.

Reporter: Tell me, what do you think about liquor stores, for instance. Did you burn any liquor stores?

No. 3: Can't stand them. Yeah, I did.

Reporter: Why?

No. 2: It's in the picture, man. If you seen *The Battle of Algiers*, you seen why.

No. 1: Well, see, whisky has a bad effect on our people's minds. Like when I saw a brother, I'm going to tell you the truth, when I saw a brother breaking into whisky stores to take the whisky, I tried to discourage him. I just set the thing on fire and leave the whisky and let it burn, too, 'cause it's combustible. It burns. But, to loot for whisky, man, it's like a useless thing, because you can't use the whisky against the beast. You see, I hit one whisky store, and the thing burned up and didn't suit me, so I went back and burned it again.

Reporter: Where was that whisky store?

No. 1: 14th and W.

Reporter: What time did you set that on fire?

No. 1: I think it was on Saturday. Afternoon. No, it burned on Friday, they got busted again on Saturday.

Reporter: Who got busted?

No. 1: Some whiteys. You know, whitey's got the nerve to drive through and stuff and see what's going on in the poor stricken ghetto. Well, he was driving through.

No. 3: One thing that I'm mad about because, in terms of the symbol and being

relevant to black people, the news didn't report how many white people got -----over. The news didn't do a good job. They report a good job on how many niggers got ----- over, but they didn't report on how many white people crawled back to Maryland and Virginia. How many white people got busted and got all the ---- stolen from them. We wanted that reported, man, so it could really mean something to black people.

Reporter: Well, did a lot of white people who were beat up, did they go to the hospitals or to the police or did they just go home?

No. 1: Now, for instance, I kicked that honkie in the head. To get his wallet. I know he had to go to the hospital. He had a hole in his head.

Reporter: How much of the burning. You said about ten, you said about, what, fifteen? You said you don't know. But just say, all lumped together, maybe fifty places—fifty places that you were responsible, personally?

No. 3: Let me tell you, I think, man, the majority of the places that were burned were burned by the mass of black people. I don't think the twenty-five of us set all of those fires.

No. 2: Hell, no.

No. 3: But I tell you this. If we didn't set a lot of those fires, a lot of black people wouldn't have went on to burn some other places.

No. 2: That gave them an incentive.

No. 3: We were like an igniting spark in a lot of instances across the city. Like in Southeast, nothing was going on, like that first day out there, man, that first night and the next day, it was nothing going on out there. At all. Hey, listen, that ice house was Saturday, wasn't it. A lot of areas we went into, man, there was nothing going on till we got there. But once we started our thing, man, people just took up. A lot of places we went to, we told them what's going on in a different part of town or a different street or something like that and they say, yeah? And we say, yeah, brothers you better get your ---- together, 'cause we going to do something right now.

Reporter: Tell me more about liquor stores, No. 2. What's wrong with liquor stores?

No. 2: Well, I feel that as a revolutionary person, that being that alcohol has an effect on the mind of humans. I don't indulge in alcohol at all.

Reporter: Did you ever drink before?

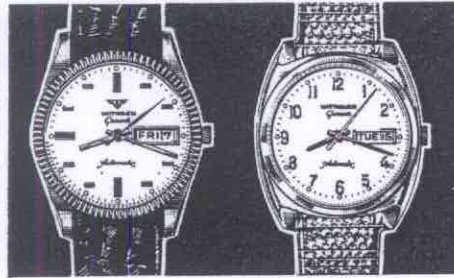
No. 2: Yes. I have.

Reporter: When did you stop? And why?

No. 2: One year, I really began to find the effects of swine and wine. When I say swine, I'm talking about oink; when I say wine, I'm talking about wine, you

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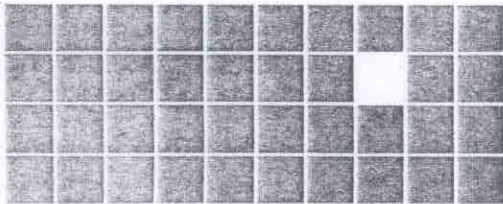
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The Washington Post POTOMAC Sunday, October 12, 1968 31

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know, I'm talking about alcoholic beverages.

Reporter: When you say oink, you talking about what?

No. 2: Pig, pork. I learned the harmful effects of it.

Reporter: No. 1, what happened to you to take the jump to go on the other side of the line, to become a revolutionary?

No. 1: You recall past experiences, as far as encounters with the beast, you realize what's going on, and, if your mind is open, it's not as easily subjected to propaganda issued by the whitey. Because you weigh everything. And when I weighed it, man, it came out blackness was the only way. And that revolution is the only way to save our people from genocide.

Reporter: Where are you going to take us? How much of a revolution can black people mount in this country?

No. 1: I think I can answer your question with a quote. "In a revolution, you either win or die." That's Che Guevara.

Reporter: Well, Che Guevara, he got messed up.

No. 3: He's just one man that died.

Reporter: Well, let's talk about the revolution. And how far can you push it in this country?

No. 3: Okay. Well, let's look at it this way. The honkie, the white man, is pushing it far enough for us. Because if you look, like from '60, when the Movement started, and now, look how much more black people are arming themselves and going toward that direction. In context of the world—what's going on in the world—because I think what you were saying is a lot of hangups that Negroes got hung up in and what white papers try to portray, we are a minority in this country, but in the world, we are a majority and in the world, that's what's going on. South America. Latin America. Vietnam, Asia, and Africa.

Several black leaders have said since the riot that they see the resolution of the question of the role of whites in the Negro community, whether they be store owners, policemen, organizers or economic developers, as the big hurdle that has to be surmounted in Washington's postriot period.

"Look," said one, "I guess if we want to have a black community with no whites in it at all, we probably could. But that would mean we had decided to completely isolate ourselves, with damn few resources. I don't think that's what the black community of Washington wants."

—Epilogue in August: The City's Voices

Reporter: Why do you want to destroy the white man?

No. 3: Why do I want to destroy the white man? Not only for what he has done to us in this country. He has oppressed us, he told us he made us free 100 years ago, we still slaves.

No. 2: He brutalizes us.

Reporter: How does he do it today, in Washington, in 1968?

No. 3: He does it. Wings-N-Things—he does it there. He does it by employing us in all them government jobs and not paying us. He does it in Washington here today by not giving us home rule. He does it here in this country by not letting us have nothing to do with who we want to govern at all.

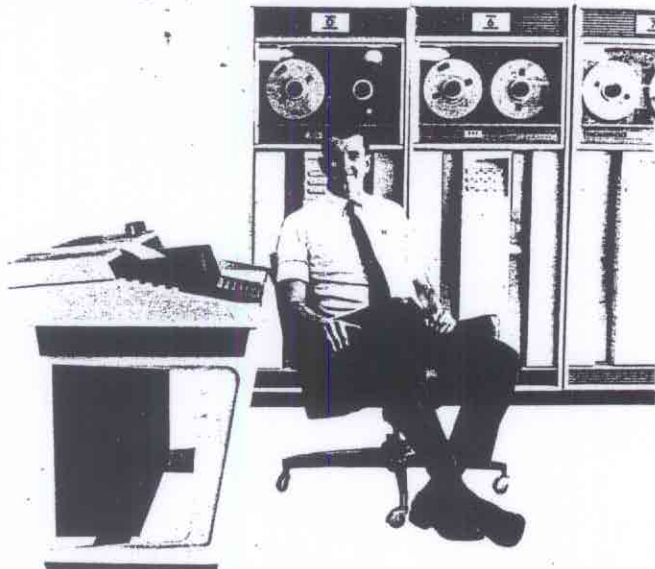
Reporter: What happened in Washington before April that made you go out and burn places? What did the white man do to you and other black people in Washington, D.C.?

No. 3: It wasn't only in Washington, he did it in a few other places. Let me tell you about some other things. Loan companies. They're rotten—, boy.

Reporter: They don't have any of those in Washington.

No. 3: They have them on the edge, on the borderline.

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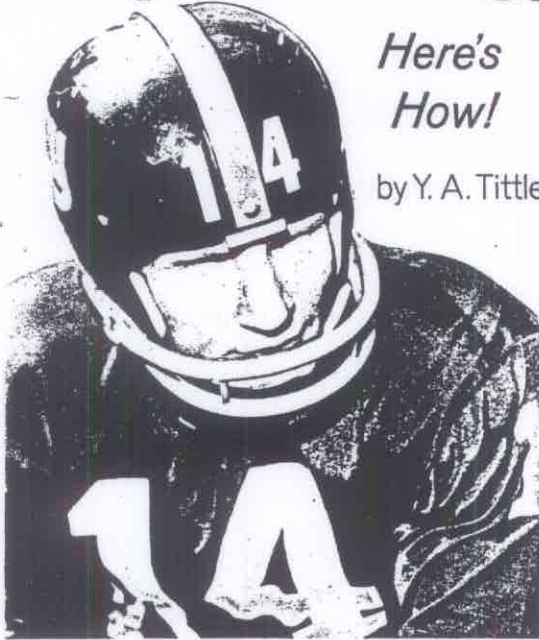
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I've learned that clinical evidence has established that Bantron is more than 80% effective in helping chronic chain smokers give up smoking completely. Extensive research work at a great American University has shown that 4 out of 5 patients who had a desire to stop smoking were able to do so within one week with

the help of Bantron. Even those who didn't stop completely cut down drastically.

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Bantron is easy and pleasant to take; doesn't affect your taste for food or anything else. It really worked wonders for me. Even now, when I think of smoking, I just take Bantron instead. I recommend Bantron to everyone who wants to stop smoking quickly and easily. Try it. You'll be amazed with the results, just as I was. It really works!

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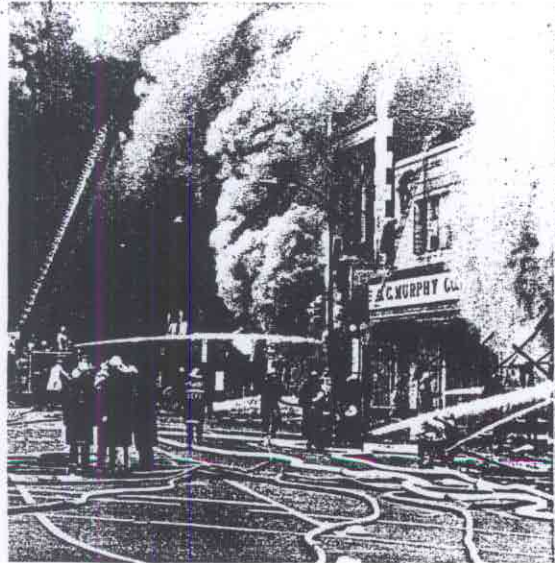
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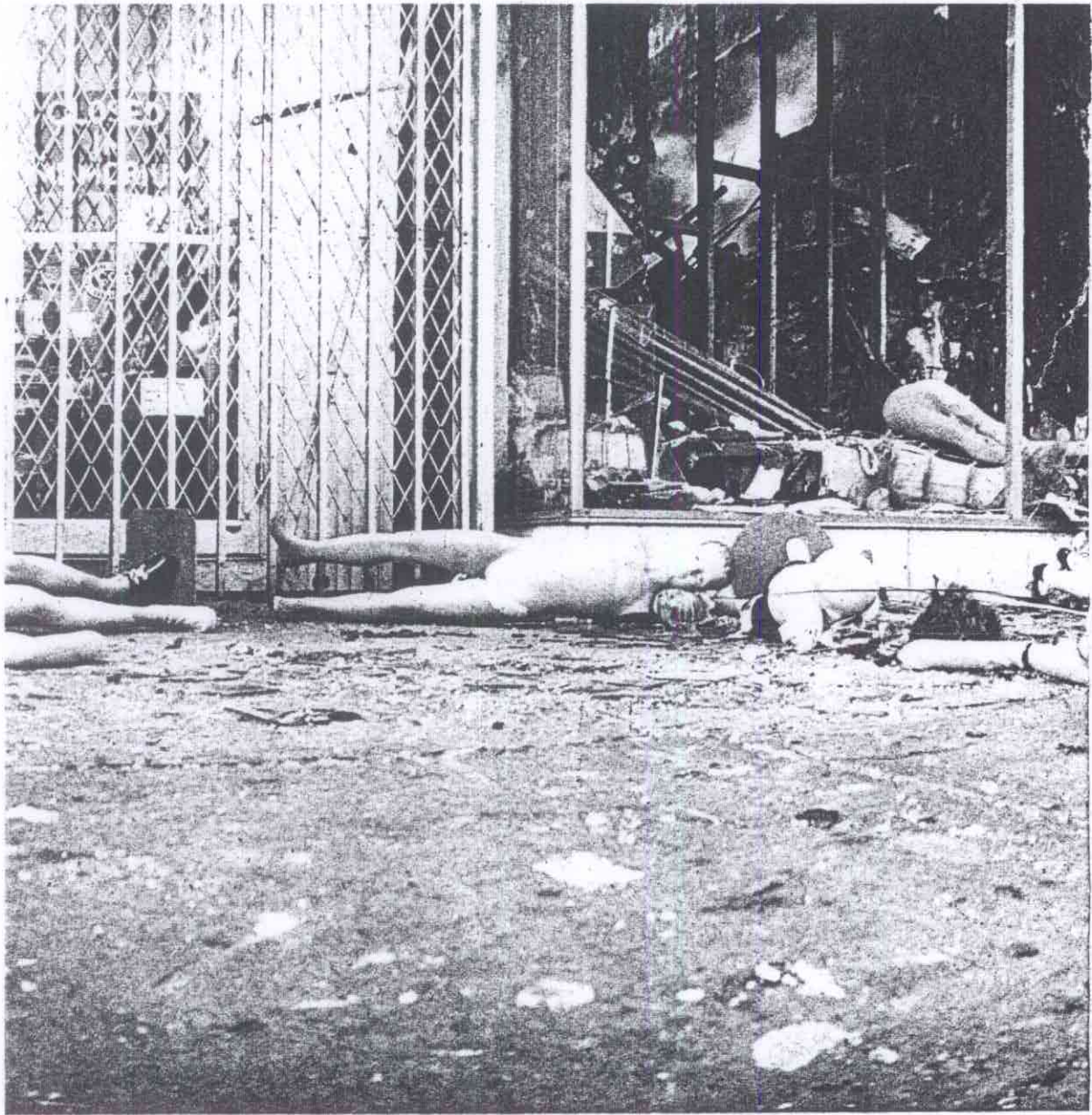
Reporter: You didn't burn any of them.

No. 3: They going to burn. They going to go, don't worry. See, like brother mentioned in the beginning, it kind of caught us by surprise. We not making excuses, now dig it. Of course, we are at a stage where we are building and getting ready for something that we would plan and we would react to, not something that the honkie would make us react to. And that's the way it's going to be from now on.

Reporter: What about the boys with the pastel pants and the \$40 shoes?

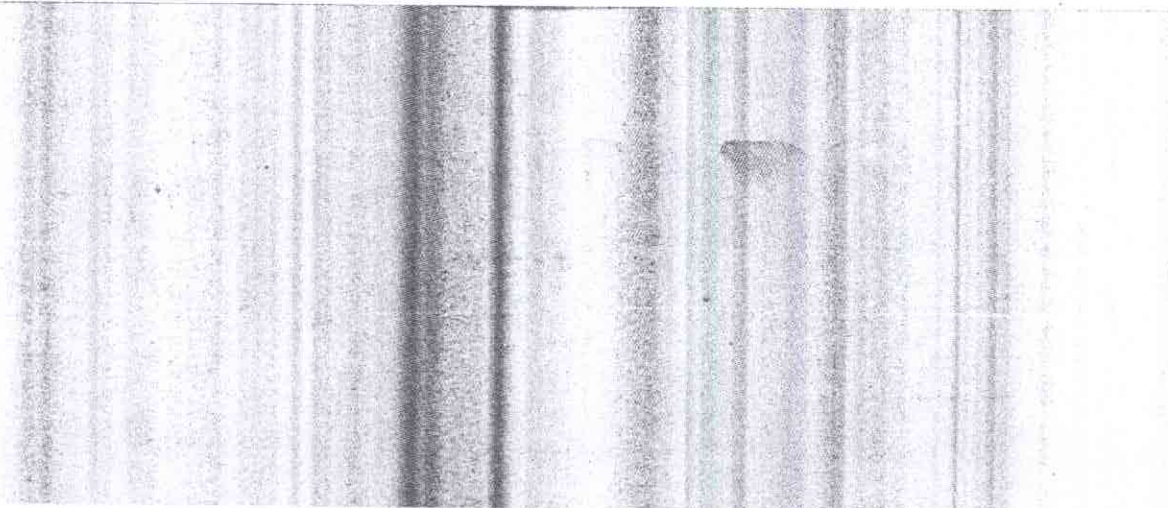
No. 3: They just been denied that all their lives. And if they can wear it now, well, that's beautiful. It's what's in their minds. Like a lot of brothers have to stick their head out whether they know it or not. They consciously or subconsciously do that to survive. So that they can hustle, so they can put on a white game. Like sisters have to put on wigs, man, so they can pass in the white world, so they can sell their bodies or get their gig (job) or whatever. 'Cause the man don't dig that natural thing. We find a brother that's a Negro, well, we going to try to influence that brother and tell him to get a natural. And tell him the reason why, so he can identify. Like there are brothers right down on U Street, now, man, that got some fine suits and some slick hair, but brother what they got now. They're ready. They get out there at night so they can eat and put something in their house and keep their roof over their head, but they're with us now.







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No. 2: For example, I know a few of the brothers out there. One of them specifically is so black, you know, he is a part of our group. He also had his woman out on the block. And when he came to this stage of blackness, like, he took his woman off the block and he got a white woman and he put her out there, using her, you know, and gave his woman respect. Now, I understand that there are a lot of the hustlers in the process of taking their women off the block and finding white women.

Reporter: There are a lot of women down there at 14th and T tonight.

No. 3: There is a lot of them out there, but listen, brother, you'd be surprised how many we've been able to reach. There used to be none out there, man, that you could even communicate with, man, but now you can communicate with a whole bunch of them.

To the city's distress, a generation of children will grow up in Washington remembering the searing picture of the riot. One of them wrote:

"I saw a house burn down. I felt sad. I hope I won't never see it again."

—Epilogue in August: The City's Voices



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