

NEW YORK

Radical Chic: That Party at Lenny's

“... It's a tricky business, integrating new politics with tried and true social motifs...”

By Tom Wolfe



From the June 8, 1970 issue of New York Magazine.

At 2 or 3 or 4 a.m., somewhere along in there, on August 25, 1966, his 48th birthday, in fact, Leonard Bernstein woke up in the dark in a state of wild alarm. That had happened before. It was one of the forms his insomnia took. So he did the usual. He got up and walked around a bit. He felt groggy. Suddenly he had a vision, an inspiration. He could see himself, Leonard Bernstein, the **egregio maestro**, walking out on stage in white tie and tails in front of

a full orchestra. On one side of the conductor's podium is a piano. On the other is a chair with a guitar leaning against it. He sits in the chair and picks up the guitar. A guitar! One of those half-witted instruments, like the accordion, that are made for the Learn-To-Play-in-Eight-Days E-Z-Diagram 110-IQ 14-year-olds of Levittown! But there's a reason. He has an anti-war message to deliver to this great starched white-throated audience in the symphony hall. He announces to them: "I love." Just that. The effect is mortifying. All at once a Negro rises up from out of the curve of the grand piano and starts saying things like, "The audience is curiously embarrassed." Lenny tries to start again, plays some quick numbers on the piano, says, "I love. **Amo, ergo sum.**" The Negro rises again and says, "The audience thinks he ought to get up and walk out. The audience thinks, 'I am ashamed even to nudge my neighbor.'" Finally, Lenny gets off a heartfelt anti-war speech and exits.

For a moment, sitting there alone in his home in the small hours of the morning, Lenny thought it might just work and he jotted the idea down. Think of the headlines: BERNSTEIN ELECTRIFIES CONCERT AUDIENCE WITH ANTIWAR APPEAL. But then his enthusiasm collapsed. He lost heart. Who the hell was this Negro rising up from the piano and informing the world what an ass Leonard Bernstein was making of himself? It didn't make sense, this superego Negro by the concert grand.

mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm. These are nice. Little Roquefort cheese morsels rolled in crushed nuts. Very tasty. Very subtle. It's the way the **M**alkiness of the nuts tiptoes up against the dour savor of the cheese that is so nice, so subtle. Wonder what the Black Panthers eat here on the hors d'oeuvre trail? Do the Panthers like little Roquefort cheese morsels wrapped in crushed nuts this way, and asparagus tips in mayonnaise dabs, and **meatballs petites au Coq Hardi**, all of which are at this very moment being offered to them on gadrooned silver platters by maids in black uniforms with hand-ironed white aprons . . . The butler will bring them their drinks . . . Deny it if you wish to, but such are the **pensées métaphysiques** that rush through one's head on these Radical Chic evenings just now in New York. For example, does that huge Black Panther there in the hallway, the one shaking hands with Felicia Bernstein herself, the one with the black leather coat and the dark glasses and the absolutely unbelievable Afro, Fuzzy Wuzzy-scale in fact—is he, a Black Panther, going on to pick up a Roquefort cheese morsel rolled in crushed nuts from off the tray, from a maid in uniform, and just pop it down the gullet without so much as missing a beat of Felicia's perfect Mary Astor voice. . . .

Felicia is remarkable. She is beautiful, with that rare burnished beauty that lasts through the years. Her hair is pale blond and set just so. She has a voice that is “theatrical,” to use a term from her youth. She greets the Black Panthers with the same bend of the wrist, the same tilt of the head, the same perfect Mary Astor voice with which she greets people like Jason, D.D. Adolph, Betty, Gian Carlo, Schuyler, and Goddard, during those **après**-concert suppers she and Lenny are so famous for. What evenings! She lights the candles over the dining room table, and in the Gotham gloaming the little tremulous tips of flame are reflected in the mirrored surface of the table, a bottomless blackness with a thousand stars, and it is that moment that Lenny loves. There seem to be a thousand stars above and a thousand stars below, a room full of stars, a penthouse duplex full of stars, a Manhattan tower full of stars, with marvelous people drifting through the heavens, Jason Robards, John and D. D. Ryan, Gian Carlo Menotti, Schuyler Chapin, Goddard Lieberon, Mike Nichols, Lillian Hellman, Larry Rivers, Aaron Copland, Richard Avedon, Milton and Amy Greene, Lukas Foss, Jennie Tourel, Samuel Barber, Jerome Robbins, Steve Sondheim, Adolph and Phyllis Green, Betty Comden, and the Patrick O'Neals . . .

. . . and now, in the season of Radical Chic, the Black Panthers. That huge Panther there, the one Felicia is smiling her tango smile at, is Robert Bay, who just 41 hours ago was arrested in an altercation with the police, supposedly over a .38-caliber revolver that someone had, in a parked car in Queens at Northern Boulevard and 104th Street or some such unbelievable place, and taken to jail on a most unusual charge called “criminal facilitation.” And now he is out on bail and walking into Leonard and Felicia Bernstein's 13-room penthouse duplex on Park Avenue. Harassment & Hassles, Guns & Pigs, Jail & Bail—they're **real**, these Black Panthers. The very idea of them, these real revolutionaries, who actually put their lives on the line, runs through Lenny's duplex like a rogue hormone. Everyone casts a glance, or stares, or tries a smile, and then sizes up the house for the somehow delicious counterpoint . . . Deny it if you want to! but one **does** end up making such sweet furtive comparisons in this season of Radical Chic . . . There's

Otto Preminger in the library and Jean vanden Heuvel in the hall, and Peter and Cheray Duchin in the living room, and Frank and Domna Stanton, Gail Lumet, Sheldon Harnick, Cynthia Phipps, Burton Lane, Mrs. August Heckscher, Roger Wilkins, Barbara Walters, Bob Silvers, Mrs. Richard Avedon, Mrs. Arthur Penn, Julie Belafonte, Harold Taylor, and scores more, including Charlotte Curtis, women's news editor of the **New York Times**, America's foremost chronicler of Society, a lean woman in black, with her notebook out, standing near Felicia and big Robert Bay, and talking to Cheray Duchin.

Cheray tells her: "I've never met a Panther—this is a first for me!" . . . never dreaming that within 48 hours her words will be on the desk of the President of the United States . . .

This is a first for me. But she is not alone in her thrill as the Black Panthers come trucking on in, into Lenny's house, Robert Bay, Don Cox the Panthers' Field Marshal from Oakland, Henry Miller the Harlem Panther defense captain, the Panther women—Christ, if the Panthers don't know how to get it all together, as they say, the tight pants, the tight black turtlenecks, the leather coats, Cuban shades, Afros. But real Afros, not the ones that have been shaped and trimmed like a topiary hedge and sprayed until they have a sheen like acrylic wall-to-wall—but like funky, natural, scraggly . . . wild . . .

These are no civil-rights Negroes **wearing gray suits three sizes too big—**

—no more interminable Urban League banquets in hotel ballrooms where they try to alternate the blacks and whites around the tables as if they were stringing Arapaho beads—

—**these are** real men!

Shootouts, revolutions, pictures in **Life** magazine of policemen grabbing Black Panthers like they were Viet Cong—somehow it all runs together in the head with the whole thing of how **beautiful** they are. **Sharp as a blade.** The Panther women—there are three or four of them on hand, wives of the Panther 21 defendants, and they are so lean, so **lithe**, as they say, with tight pants and Yoruba-style headdresses, almost like turbans, as if they'd stepped out of the pages of **Vogue**, although no doubt **Vogue** got it from them. All at once every woman in the room knows exactly what Amanda Burden meant when she said she was now anti-fashion because "the sophistication of the baby blacks made me rethink my attitudes." God knows the Panther women don't spend 30 minutes in front of the mirror in the morning shoring up their eye holes with contact lenses, eyeliner, eye shadow, eyebrow pencil, occipital rim brush, false eyelashes, mascara, Shadow-Ban for undereye and Eterna Creme for the corners . . . And here they are, right in front of you, trucking on into the Bernsteins' Chinese yellow duplex, amid the sconces, silver bowls full of white and lavender anemones, and uniformed servants serving drinks and Roquefort cheese morsels rolled in crushed nuts—

“. . . The very idea of them, revolutionaries who put their lives on the line, runs through Lenny's duplex like a rogue

hormone . . .”

But it's all right. They're **white** servants, not Claude and Maude, but white South Americans. Lenny and Felicia are geniuses. After a while, it all comes down to servants. They are the cutting edge in Radical Chic. Obviously, if you are giving a party for the Black Panthers, as Lenny and Felicia are this evening, or as Sidney and Gail Lumet did last week, or as John Simon of Random House and Richard Baron, the publisher, did before that; or for the Chicago Eight, such as the party Jean vanden Heuvel gave; or for the grape workers or Bernadette Devlin, such as the parties Andrew Stein gave; or for the Young Lords, such as the party Ellie Guggenheimer is giving next week in **her** Park Avenue duplex; or for the Indians or the SDS or the G.I. Coffee Shops or even for the Friends of the Earth—well, then, obviously you can't have a Negro butler and maid, Claude and Maude, in uniform, circulating through the living room, the library and the main hall serving drinks and canapés. Plenty of people have tried to think it out. They try to picture the Panthers or whoever walking in bristling with electric hair and Cuban shades and leather pieces and the rest of it, and they try to picture Claude and Maude with the black uniforms coming up and saying, “Would you care for a drink, sir?” They close their eyes and try to picture it **some way**, but there **is** no way. One simply cannot see that moment. So the current wave of Radical Chic has touched off the most desperate search for white servants. Carter and Amanda Burden have white servants. Sidney Lumet and his wife Gail, who is Lena Horne's daughter, have three white servants, including a Scottish nurse. Everybody has white servants. And Lenny and Felicia—they had it worked out before Radical Chic even started. Felicia grew up in Chile. Her father, Roy Elwood Cohn, an engineer from San Francisco, worked for the American Smelting and Refining Co. in Santiago. As Felicia Montealegre (her mother's maiden name), she became an actress in New York and won the **Motion Picture Daily** critics' award as the best new television actress of 1949. Anyway, they have a house staff of three white South American servants, including a Chilean cook, plus Lenny's English chauffeur and dresser, who is also white, of course. Can one comprehend how perfect that is, given . . . the times? Well, many of their friends can, and they ring up the Bernsteins and ask them to get South American servants for them, and the Bernsteins are so generous about it, so obliging, that people refer to them, good-naturedly and gratefully, as “the Spic and Span Employment Agency,” with an easygoing ethnic humor, of course.

The only other thing to do is what Ellie Guggenheimer is doing next week with her party for the Young Lords in her duplex on Park Avenue at 89th Street, just 10 blocks up from Lenny and Felicia. She is giving her party on a Sunday, which is the day off for the maid and the cleaning woman. “Two friends of mine”—she confides on the telephone—“two friends of mine who happen to be . . . not white—that's what I hate about the times we live in, the **terms**—well, they've agreed to be butler and maid . . . and I'm going to be a maid myself!”

Just at this point some well-meaning soul is going to say, Why not do without servants altogether if the matter creates such unbearable tension and one truly believes in equality? Well, even to raise the question is to reveal the most

fundamental ignorance of life in the great co-ops and townhouses of the East Side in the age of Radical Chic. Why, my God! servants are not a mere convenience, they're an absolute psychological necessity. Once one is into that life, truly into it, with the morning workout on the velvet swings at Kounovsky's and the late mornings on the telephone, and lunch at the Running Footman, which is now regarded as really better than La Grenouille, Lutèce, Lafayette, La Caravelle and the rest of the general Frog Pond, less ostentatious, more of the David Hicks feeling, less of the Parish-Hadley look, and then—well, then, the idea of not having servants is unthinkable. But even that does not say it all. It makes it sound like a matter of convenience, when actually it is a sheer and fundamental matter of—**having servants**. Does one comprehend?

God, what a flood of taboo thoughts runs through one's head at these Radical Chic events . . . But it's delicious. It is as if one's nerve-endings were on red alert to the most intimate nuances of status. Deny it if you want to! Nevertheless, it runs through every soul here. It is the matter of the marvelous contradictions on all sides. It is like the delicious shudder you get when you try to force the prongs of two horseshoe magnets together . . . **them** and **us** . . .

For example, one's own servants, although white, are generally no problem. A discreet, euphemistic word about what sort of party it is going to be, and they will generally be models of correctness. The euphemisms are not always an easy matter, however. When talking to one's white servants, one doesn't really know whether to refer to blacks as **blacks**, **Negroes**, or **colored people**. When talking to other . . . well, **cultivated** persons, one says **blacks**, of course. It is the only word, currently, that implicitly shows one's awareness of the dignity of the black race. But somehow when you start to say the word to your own white servants, you hesitate. You can't get it out of your throat. Why? **Counter-guilt!** You realize that you are about to utter one of those touchstone words that divide the cultivated from the uncultivated, the attuned from the unattuned, the **hip** from the dreary. As soon as the word comes out of your mouth—you know it before the first vocable pops on your lips—your own servant is going to size you up as one of those **limousine liberals**, or whatever epithet they use, who are busy pouring white soul all over the black movement, and would you do as much for the white lower class, for the domestics of the East Side, for example, fat chance, sahib. Deny it if you want to! but such are the delicious little agonies of Radical Chic. So one settles for **Negro**, with the hope that the great god Culturatus has laid the ledger aside for the moment. . . . In any case, if one is able to make that small compromise, one's own servants are no real problem. But the elevator man and the doorman—the death rays they begin projecting, the curt responses, as soon as they see it is going to be one of **those** parties! Of course, they're all from Queens, and so forth, and one has to allow for that. For some reason the elevator men tend to be worse about it than the doormen, even; less sense of **politesse**, perhaps.

Or—what does one wear to these parties for the Panthers or the Young Lords or the grape workers? What does a woman wear? Obviously one does not want to wear something frivolously and pompously expensive, such as a Gerard Pipart party dress. On the other hand one does not want to arrive “poor-mouthing it” in some outrageous turtleneck and West Eighth Street bell-jean combination, as if

one is “funky” and of “the people.” Frankly, Jean vanden Heuvel—that’s Jean there in the hallway giving everyone her famous smile, in which her eyes narrow down to f/16—frankly, Jean tends too much toward the funky fallacy. Jean, who is the daughter of Jules Stein, one of the wealthiest men in the country, is wearing some sort of rust-red snap-around suede skirt, the sort that English working girls pick up on Saturday afternoons in those absolutely **berserk** London boutiques like Bus Stop or Biba, where everything looks chic and yet skimpy and raw and vital. Felicia Bernstein seems to understand the whole thing better. Look at Felicia. She is wearing the simplest little black frock imaginable, with absolutely no ornamentation save for a plain gold necklace. It is perfect. It has dignity without any overt class symbolism.

Lenny? Lenny himself has been in the living room all this time, talking to old friends like the Duchins and the Stantons and the Lanes. Lenny is wearing a black turtleneck, navy blazer, Black Watch plaid trousers and a necklace with a pendant hanging down to his sternum. His tailor comes here to the apartment to take the measurements and do the fittings. Lenny is a short, trim man, and yet he always seems tall. It is his head. He has a noble head, with a face that is at once sensitive and rugged, and a full stand of iron-gray hair, with sideburns, all set off nicely by the Chinese yellow of the room. His success radiates from his eyes and his smile with a charm that illustrates Lord Jersey’s adage that “contrary to what the Methodists tell us, money and success are good for the soul.” Lenny may be 51, but he is still the **Wunderkind** of American music. Everyone says so. He is not only one of the world’s outstanding conductors, but a more than competent composer and pianist as well. He is the man who more than any other has broken down the wall between elite music and popular tastes, with **West Side Story** and his children’s concerts on television. How natural that he should stand here in his own home radiating the charm and grace that make him an easy host for leaders of the oppressed. How ironic that the next hour should prove so shattering for this **egregio maestro!** How curious that the Negro by the piano should emerge tonight!

A bell rang, a dinner table bell, by the sound of it, the sort one summons the maid out of the kitchen with, and the party shifted from out of the hall and into the living room. Felicia led the way, Felicia and a small gray man, with gray hair, a gray face, a gray suit, and a pair of Groovy but gray sideburns. A little gray man, in short, who would be popping up at key moments . . . to keep the freight train of history on the track, as it were . . .

Felicia was down at the far end of the living room trying to coax everybody in.

“Lenny!” she said. “Tell the fringes to come on in!” Lenny was still in the back of the living room, near the hall. “Fringes!” said Lenny. “Come on in!”

In the living room most of the furniture, the couches, easy chairs, side tables, side chairs, and so on, had been pushed toward the walls, and 30 or 40 folding chairs were set up in the middle of the floor. It was a big, wide room with Chinese yellow walls and white moldings, sconces, pier-glass mirrors, a portrait of Felicia reclining on a summer chaise, and at the far end, where Felicia was standing, a

pair of grand pianos. A pair of them; the two pianos were standing back to back, with the tops down and their bellies swooping out. On top of both pianos was a regular flotilla of family photographs in silver frames, the kind of pictures that stand straight up thanks to little velvet- or moiré-covered buttresses in the back, the kind that decorators in New York recommend to give a living room a homelike, lived-in touch. “The million-dollar **chatchka** look,” they call it. In a way it was perfect for Radical Chic. The nice part was that with Lenny it was instinctive; with Felicia, too. The whole place looked as if the inspiration had been to spend a couple of hundred thousand on the interior without looking pretentious, although that is no great sum for a 13-room co-op, of course . . . Imagine explaining all that to the Black Panthers. It was another delicious thought . . . The sofas, for example, were covered in the fashionable splashy prints on a white background covering deep downy cushions, in the Billy Baldwin or Margaret Owen tradition — without it looking like Billy or Margaret had been in there fussing about with teapots and japanned chairs. **Gemütlich** . . . Old Vienna when grandpa was alive . . . That was the ticket . . .

Once Lenny got “the fringes” moving in, the room filled up rapidly. It was jammed, in fact. People were sitting on sofas and easy chairs along the sides, as well as on the folding chairs, and were standing in the back, where Lenny was. Otto Preminger was sitting on a sofa down by the pianos, where the speakers were going to stand. The Panther wives were sitting in the first two rows with their Yoruba headdresses on, along with Henry Mitchell and Julie Belafonte, Harry Belafonte’s wife. Julie is white, but they all greeted her warmly as “Sister.” Behind her was sitting Barbara Walters, hostess of the **Today Show** on television, wearing a checked pants suit with a great fluffy fur collar on the coat. Harold Taylor, the former “Boy President” of Sarah Lawrence, now 55 and silver-haired, but still youthful looking, came walking down toward the front and gave a hug and a big social kiss to Gail Lumet. Robert Bay settled down in the middle of the folding chairs. Jean vanden Heuvel stood in the back and sought to focus . . . f/16 . . . on the pianos . . . Charlotte Curtis stood beside the door, taking notes. And then Felicia stood up beside the pianos and said:

“I want to thank you all very, very much for coming. I’m very, very glad to see so many of you here.” Everything was fine. Her voice was rich as a woodwind. She introduced a man named Leon Quat, one of the lawyers for the “Panther 21,” 21 Black Panthers who had been arrested on a charge of conspiring to blow up five New York department stores, New Haven Railroad facilities, a police station and the Bronx Botanical Gardens.

Leon Quat, oddly enough, had the general look of those 52-year-old men who run a combination law office, real estate and insurance operation on the second floor of a two-story taxpayer out on Queens Boulevard. And yet that wasn’t the kind of man Leon Quat really was. He had the sideburns. Quite a pair. They didn’t come down just to the incisura intertragica, which is that little notch in the lower rim of the ear, and which so many tentative Swingers aim their sideburns toward. No, on top of this complete Queens Boulevard insurance agent look, he had real sideburns, to the bottom of the lobe, virtual muttonchops, which somehow have become the mark of the Movement. Leon Quat rose up smiling:

“We are very grateful to Mrs. Bernstein”—only he pronounced it “steen.”

“STEIN!”—a great smoke-cured voice booming out from the rear of the room! It’s Lenny! Leon Quat and the Black Panthers will have a chance to hear from Lenny. That much is sure. He is on the case. Leon Quat must be the only man in the room who does not know about Lenny and the Mental Jotto at 3 a.m. . . . For years, 20 at the least, Lenny has insisted on **-stein** not **-steen**, as if to say, I am not one of those 1921 Jews who try to tone down their Jewishness by watering their names down with a bad soft English pronunciation. Lenny has made such a point of **-stein** not **-steen**, in fact, that some people in this room think at once of the story of how someone approached Larry Rivers, the artist, and said, “What’s this I hear about you and Leonard Bernstein”—**-steen**, he pronounced it — “not speaking to each other anymore?”—to which Rivers said, “**STEIN!**”

“We are very grateful . . . for her marvelous hospitality,” says Quat, apparently not wanting to try the name again right away. Then he beams toward the crowd:

“I assume we are all just an effete clique of snobs and intellectuals in this room . . . I am referring to the words of Vice-President Agnew, of course, who can’t be with us today because he is in the South Pacific explaining the Nixon doctrine to the Australians. All vice-presidents suffer from the Avis complex—they’re second best, so they try harder, like General Ky or Hubert Humphrey . . .” He keeps waiting for the grins and chuckles after each of these mots, but all the celebrities and culturati are nonplussed. They give him a kind of dumb attention. They came here for the Panthers and Radical Chic, and here is Old Queens Boulevard Real Estate Man with sideburns on telling them Agnew jokes. But Quat is too deep into his weird hole to get out. “Whatever respect I have had for Lester Maddox, I lost it when I saw Humphrey put his arm around his shoulder . . .” and somehow Quat begins disappearing down a hole binging Hubert Humphrey with lumps of old Shelley Berman material. Slowly he climbs back out. He starts telling about the oppression of the Panther 21. They have been in jail since February 2, 1969, awaiting trial on ludicrous charges such as conspiring to blow up the Bronx Botanical Gardens. Their bail has been a preposterous \$100,000 per person, which has in effect denied them the right to bail. They have been kept split up and moved from jail to jail. For all intents and purposes they have been denied the right to confer with their lawyers to prepare a defense. They have been subjected to inhuman treatment in jail—such as the case of Lee Berry, an epileptic, who was snatched out of a hospital bed and thrown in jail and kept in solitary confinement with a light bulb burning over his head night and day. The Panthers who have not been thrown in jail or killed, like Fred Hampton, are being stalked and harassed everywhere they go. “One of the few higher officials who is still . . . in the clear”—Quat smiles—“is here today. Don Cox, Field Marshal of the Black Panther Party.”

“ . . . Lenny stands here in his own home radiating the charm and grace that make him an easy host for leaders of the oppressed . . . ”

“Right on,” a voice says to Leon Quat, rather softly. And a tall black man rises from behind one of Lenny’s grand pianos . . . **The Negro by the piano** . . .

The Field Marshal of the Black Panther Party has been sitting in a chair between the piano and the wall. He rises up; he has the hardrock look, all right; he is a big tall man with brown skin and an Afro and a goatee and a black turtleneck much like Lenny’s, and he stands up beside the piano, next to Lenny’s million-dollar **chatchka** flotilla of family photographs. In fact, there is a certain perfection as the first Black Panther rises within a Park Avenue living room to lay the Panthers’ 10-point program on New York Society in the age of Radical Chic. Cox is silhouetted—well, about 19 feet behind him is a white silk shade with an Empire scallop over one of the windows overlooking Park Avenue. Or maybe it isn’t silk, but a Jack Lenor Larsen mercerized cotton, something like that, lustrous but more subtle than silk. The whole image, the white shade and the Negro by the piano silhouetted against it, is framed by a pair of bottle-green velvet curtains, pulled back.

And does it begin now?—but this Cox is a cool number. He doesn’t come on with the street epithets and interjections and the rest of the rhetoric and red eyes used for mau-mauing the white liberals, as it is called.

“The Black Panther Party,” he starts off, “stands for a 10-point program that was handed down in October, 1966, by our Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton . . .” and he starts going through the 10 points . . . “We want an educational system that expresses the true nature of this decadent society” . . . “We want all black men exempt from military service” . . . “We want all black men who are in jail to be set free. We want them to be set free because they have not had fair trials. We’ve been tried by predominantly middle-class, all-white juries” . . . “And most important of all, we want peace . . . see . . . We want peace, but there can be no peace as long as a society is racist and one part of society engages in systematic oppression of another” . . . “We want a plebiscite by the United Nations to be held in black communities, so that we can control our own destiny” . . .

Everyone in the room, of course, is drinking in his performance like tiger’s milk, for the . . . Soul, as it were. All love the tone of his voice, which is Confidential Hip. And yet his delivery falls into strangely formal patterns. What are these block phrases, such as “our Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton”—

“Some people think that we are racist, because the news media find it useful to create that impression in order to support the power structure, which we have nothing to do with . . . see . . . They like for the Black Panther Party to be made to look like a racist organization, because that camouflages the true class nature of the struggle. But they find it harder and harder to keep up that camouflage and are driven to campaigns of harassment and violence to try to eliminate the Black Panther Party. Here in New York 21 members of the Black Panther Party were indicted last April on ridiculous charges of conspiring to blow up department stores and flower gardens. They’ve had 27 bail hearings since last April . . . see . . .”

—But everyone in here loves the **sees** and the **you knows**. They are so, somehow . . . **black** . . . so **funky** . . . so metrical . . . Without ever bringing it fully into

consciousness everyone responds—communes over—the fact that he uses them not for emphasis, but for punctuation, metrically, much like the **uhs** favored by High Church Episcopal ministers, as in, “And bless, uh, these gifts, uh, to Thy use and us to, uh, Thy service”—

“. . . they’ve had 27 bail hearings since last April . . . see . . . and every time the judge has refused to lower the bail from \$100,000 . . . Yet a group of whites accused of actually bombing buildings—they were able to get bail. So that clearly demonstrates the racist nature of the campaign against the Black Panther Party. We don’t say ‘bail’ anymore, we say ‘ransom,’ for such repressive bail can only be called ransom.

“The situation here in New York is very explosive, as you can see, with people stacked up on top of each other. They can hardly deal with them when they’re **un**organized, so that when a group comes along like the Black Panthers, they want to eliminate that group by any means . . . see . . . and so that stand has been embraced by J. Edgar Hoover, who feels that we are the greatest threat to the power structure. They try to create the impression that we are engaged in criminal activities. What are these ‘criminal activities’? We have instituted a breakfast program, to address ourselves to the needs of the community. We feed hungry children every morning before they go to school. So far this program is on a small scale. We’re only feeding 50,000 children nationwide, but the only money we have for this program is donations from the merchants in the neighborhoods. We have a program to establish clinics in the black communities and in other ways also we are addressing ourselves to the needs of the community . . . see . . . So the people know the power structure is lying when they say we are engaged in criminal activities. So the pigs are driven to desperate acts, like the murder of our deputy chairman, Fred Hampton, in his bed . . . see . . . in his sleep . . . But when they got desperate and took off their camouflage and murdered Fred Hampton, in his bed, in his sleep, see, that kind of shook people up, because they saw the tactics of the power structure for what they were. . . .

“We relate to a phrase coined by Malcolm X: ‘By any means necessary’ . . . you see . . . ‘By any means necessary’ . . . and by that we mean that we recognize that if you’re attacked, you have the right to defend yourself. The pigs, they say the Black Panthers are armed, the Black Panthers have weapons . . . see . . . and therefore they have the right to break in and murder us in our beds. I don’t think there’s anybody in here who wouldn’t defend themselves if somebody came in and attacked them or their families . . . see . . . I don’t think there’s anybody in here who wouldn’t defend themselves . . .”

—and every woman in the room thinks of her husband . . . with his cocoa-butter jowls and Dior Men’s Boutique pajamas . . . ducking into the bathroom and locking the door and turning the shower on, so he can say later that he didn’t hear a thing—

“We call them pigs, and rightly so,” says Don Cox, “because they have the way of making the victim look like the criminal, and the criminal look like the victim. So every Panther must be ready to defend himself. That was handed down by our

Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton: Everybody who does not have the means to defend himself in his home, or if he does have the means and he does not defend himself—we expel **that man** . . . see . . . As our Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton, says, ‘Any unarmed people are slaves, or are slaves in the real meaning of the word’ . . . We recognize that this country is the most oppressive country in the world, maybe in the history of the world. The pigs have the weapons and they are ready to use them on the people, and we recognize this as being very bad. They are ready to commit genocide against those who stand up against them, and we recognize this as being very bad.

“All we want is the good life, the same as you. To live in peace and lead the good life, that’s all we want . . . see . . . But right now there’s no way we can do that. I want to read something to you:

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and . . .” He reads straight through it, every word. “. . . and, accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.’

“You know what that’s from?”—and he looks out at everyone and hesitates before laying this gasper on them—“That’s from the Declaration of Independence, the American Declaration of Independence. And we will defend ourselves and do like it says . . . you know? . . . and that’s about it.”

The “that’s about it” part seems so casual, so funky, so right, after the rhetoric of what he has been saying. And then he sits down and sinks out of sight behind one of the grand pianos.

The thing is beginning to move. And—hell, yes, the **Reichstag fire!** Another man gets up, a white named Gerald Lefcourt, who is chief counsel for the Panther 21, a young man with thick black hair and the muttonchops of the Movement and that great motor inside of him that young courtroom lawyers ought to have. He lays the Reichstag fire on them. He reviews the Panther case and then he says:

“I believe that this odious situation could be compared to the Reichstag fire attempt”—he’s talking about the way the Nazis used the burning of the Reichstag as the pretext for first turning loose the Gestapo and exterminating all political opposition in Germany—“and I believe that this trial could also be compared to the Reichstag trial . . . in many ways . . . and that opened an era that this country could be heading for. That could be the outcome of this case, an era of the Right, and the only thing that can stop it is for people like ourselves to make a noise and make a noise now.”

. . . and not be Krupps, Junkers, or Good Germans . . .

“ . . . We had an opportunity to question the Grand Jury, and we found out some interesting things. They all have net worths averaging \$300,000, and they all come from this neighborhood,” says Lefcourt, nodding as if to take in the whole Upper East Side. And suddenly everyone feels, really **feels**, that there are two breeds of mankind in the great co-ops of Park Avenue, the blue-jowled rep-tied Brook Club Junker reactionaries in the surrounding buildings . . . and the few **attuned** souls here in Lenny’s penthouse. “. . . They all have annual incomes in the area of \$35,000 . . . And you’re supposed to have a ‘jury of your peers’ . . . They were shocked at the questions we were asking them. They shouldn’t have to answer such questions, that was the idea. They all belong to the Grand Jury Association. They’re somewhat like a club. They have lunch together once in a while. A lot of them went to school together. They have no more understanding of the Black Panthers than President Nixon.”

The Junkers! Leon Quat says: “Fascism always begins by persecuting the least powerful and least popular movement. It will be the Panthers today, the students tomorrow—and then . . . the Jews and other troublesome minorities! . . . What price civil liberties! . . . Now let’s start this off with the gifts in four figures. Who is ready to make a contribution of a thousand dollars or more?”

All at once—nothing. But the little gray man sitting next to Felicia, the gray man with the sideburns, pops up and hands a piece of paper to Quat and says: “Mr. Clarence Jones asked me to say—he couldn’t be here, but he’s contributing \$7,500 to the defense fund!”

“Oh! That’s marvelous!” says Felicia.

Then the voice of Lenny from the back of the room: “As a guest of my wife”—he smiles—“I’ll give my fee for the next performance of **Cavalleria Rusticana**.” Comradely laughter. Applause. “I **hope** that will be four figures!”

Things are moving again. Otto Preminger speaks up from the sofa down front:

“I geeve a t’ousand dollars!”

Right on. Quat says: “I can’t assure you that it’s tax deductible.” He smiles. “I wish I could, but I can’t.” Well, the man looks brighter and brighter every minute. He knows a Radical Chic audience when he sees one. Those words are magic in the age of Radical Chic: it’s **not** tax deductible.

The contributions start coming faster, only \$250 or \$300 at a clip, but faster . . . Sheldon Harnick . . . Bernie and Hilda Fishman . . . Judith Bernstein . . . Mr. and Mrs. Burton Lane . . .

“I know some of you are caught with your Dow-Jones averages down,” says Quat, “but come on—”

Quat says: “We have a \$300 contribution from Harry Belafonte!”

“No, no,” says Julie Belafonte.

"I'm sorry," says Quat, "it's Julie's private money! I apologize. After all, there's a women's liberation movement sweeping the country, and I want this marked down as a gift from **Mrs.** Belafonte!" Then he says: "I know you want to get to the question period, but I know there's more gold in this mine. I think we've reached the point where we can pass out the blank checks."

More contributions . . . \$100 from Mrs. August Heckscher . . .

"We'll take **anything!**" says Quat. "We'll take it all!" . . . he's high on the momentum of his fund-raiser voice . . . "You'll leave here with nothing!"

But finally he wraps it up. A beautiful ash-blond girl with the most perfect Miss Porter's face speaks up. She's wearing a leather and tweed dress. She looks like a Junior Leaguer graduating to the Ungaro Boutique.

"I'd like to ask Mr. Cox a question," she says. Cox is standing up again, by the grand piano. "Besides the breakfast program," she says, "do you have any other community programs, and what are they like?"

"Everyone in the room is drinking in Cox's performance like tiger's milk, for the Soul"

Cox starts to tell about a Black Panther program to set up medical clinics in the ghettos, and so on, but soon he is talking about a Panther demand that police be required to live in the community they patrol. "If you police the community, you must live there . . . see . . . Because if he lives in the community, he's going to think twice before he brutalizes us, because we can deal with him when he comes home at night . . . see . . . We are also working to start liberation schools for black children, and these liberation schools will actually teach them about their environment, because the way they are now taught, they are taught not to see their real environment . . . see . . . They get Donald Duck and Mother Goose and all that lame happy jive . . . you know . . . We'd like to take kids on tours of the white suburbs, like Scarsdale, and like that, and let them see how their oppressors live . . . you know . . . but so far we don't have the money to carry out these programs to meet the real needs of the community. The only money we have is what we get from the merchants in the black community when we ask them for donations, which they **should give**, because they are the exploiters of the black community"—

—and **shee-ut**. What the hell is Cox getting into that for? Quat and the little gray man are ready to spring in at any lonesome split second. For God's sake, Cox, don't open that can of worms. Even in this bunch of upholstered skulls there are people who can figure out just **who** those merchants are, what group, and just how they are **asked** for donations, and we've been free of that little issue all evening, man—don't bring out **that** ball-breaker—

But the moment is saved. Suddenly there is a much more urgent question from the rear:

"Who do you call to give a party? Who do you call to give a party?"

Every head spins around . . . Quite a sight . . . It's a slender blond man who has pushed his way up to the front ranks of the standees. He's wearing a tuxedo. He's wearing black-frame glasses and his blond hair is combed back straight in the Eaton Square manner. He looks like the intense Yale man from out of one of those 1927 Frigidaire ads in the **Saturday Evening Post**, when the way to sell anything was to show Harry Yale in the background, in a tuxedo, with his pageboy-bobbed young lovely, heading off to dinner at the New Haven Lawn Club. The man still has his hand up in the air like the star student of the junior class.

"I won't be able to stay for everything you have to say," he says, "but who do you call to give a party?"

In fact, it is Richard Feigen, owner of the Feigen Gallery, 79th and Madison. He arrived on the art scene and the social scene from Chicago three years ago . . . He's been moving up hand over hand ever since . . . like a champion . . . Tonight—the tuxedo—tonight there is a reception at the Museum of Modern Art . . . right on . . . a "contributing members" reception, a private viewing not open to mere "members" . . . But before the museum reception itself, which is at 8:30, there are private dinners . . . right? . . . which are the **real** openings . . . in the homes of great collectors or great climbers or the old Protestant elite, marvelous dinner parties, the real thing, black tie, and these dinners are the only true certification of where one stands in this whole realm of Art & Society . . . The whole game depends on whose home one is invited to before the opening . . . And the game ends as the host gathers everyone up about 8:45 for the trek to the museum itself, and the guests say, almost ritually, "God! I wish we could see the show from here! It's too delightful! I simply don't want to **move!**!" . . . And, of course, they mean it! Absolutely! For them, the opening is already over, the hand is played . . . And Richard Feigen, man of the hour, replica 1927 Yale man, black tie and Eaton Square hair, has dropped in, on the way, **en passant**, to the Bernsteins', to take in the other end of the Culture tandem, Radical Chic . . . and the rightness of it, the exhilaration, seems to sweep through him, and he thrusts his hand into the air, and somehow Radical Chic reaches its highest, purest state in that moment . . . as Richard Feigen, in his tuxedo, breaks in to ask, from the bottom of his heart, "Who do you call to give a party?" There you had a trend, a fashion, in its moment of naked triumph. How extraordinary that just 30 minutes later Radical Chic would be—

But at that moment Radical Chic was the new wave supreme in New York Society. It had been building for more than six months. It had already reached the fashion pages of **Vogue** and was moving into the food column. **Vogue** was already preparing a column entitled "Soul Food."

"The cult of Soul Food," it began, "is a form of Black self-awareness and, to a lesser degree, of white sympathy for the Black drive to self-reliance. It is as if those who ate the beans and greens of necessity in the cabin doorways were brought into communion with those who, not having to, eat those foods voluntarily as a sacrament. The present struggle is emphasized in the act of breaking traditional bread . . .

SWEET POTATO PONE

3 cups finely grated raw sweet potatoes

½ cup sweet milk

2 tablespoons melted butter

½ teaspoon each: cinnamon, ginger, powdered cloves, and nutmeg

2 eggs

salt

½ cup brown sugar

½ cup molasses or honey

Mix together potatoes, milk, melted butter, cinnamon, ginger, powdered cloves, and nutmeg. Add a pinch of salt and the molasses or honey. (Molasses gives the authentic pone; honey a dandified version.)”

A little sacramental pone . . . as the young’uns skitter back in through the loblolly pine cabin doorway to help Mama put the cinnamon, ginger, powdered cloves and nutmeg back on the Leslie Foods “Spice Island” spice rack . . . and thereby finish up the communion with those who, not having to, eat those foods voluntarily as a sacrament.

Very nice! In fact, this sort of **nostalgie de la boue**, or romanticizing of primitive souls, was one of the things that brought Radical Chic to the fore in New York Society. **Nostalgie de la boue** is a 19th-century French term that means, literally, “nostalgia for the mud.” Within New York Society **nostalgie de la boue** was a great motif throughout the 1960s, from the moment two socialites, Susan Stein and Christina Paolozzi, discovered the Peppermint Lounge and the twist and two of the era’s first pet primitives, Joey Dee and Killer Joe Piro. **Nostalgie de la boue** tends to be a favorite motif whenever a great many new faces and a lot of new money enter Society. New arrivals have always had two ways of certifying their superiority over the hated “middle class.” They can take on the trappings of aristocracy, such as grand architecture, servants, parterre boxes and high protocol; and they can indulge in the gauche thrill of taking on certain styles of the lower orders. The two are by no means mutually exclusive; in fact, they are always used in combination. In England during the Regency period, a period much like our own—even to the point of the nation’s disastrous involvement in colonial wars during a period of mounting affluence—**nostalgie de la boue** was very much the rage. London socialites during the Regency adopted the flamboyant capes and wild driving styles of the coach drivers, the “bruiser” fashions and hair styles of the bare-knuckle prize fighters, the see-through, jutting-nipple fashions of the tavern girls, as well as a reckless new dance, the waltz. Such affectations were meant to convey the arrogant self-confidence of the aristocrat as opposed to the middle-class striver’s obsession with propriety and keeping up appearances. During the 1960s in New York **nostalgie de la boue** took the form of the vogue of rock music, the twist-frug genre of dances, Pop Art, Camp, the courting of pet primitives such as the Rolling Stones and José Torres, and innumerable dress fashions summed up in the recurrent image of the wealthy young man with his turtleneck jersey meeting his muttonchops at mid-jowl, à la the 1962 Sixth Avenue Automat bohemian, bidding good night to an aging doorman dressed in the mode of an 1870 Austrian army colonel.

At the same time Society in New York was going through another of those new-money upheavals that have made the social history of New York read like the political history of the Caribbean; which is to say, a revolution every 20 years, if not sooner. Aristocracies, in the European sense, are always based upon large hereditary landholdings. Early in the history of the United States, Jefferson's crusade against primogeniture eliminated the possibility of a caste of hereditary land barons. The great landholders, such as the Carrolls, Livingstons and Schuylers, were soon upstaged by the federal bankers, such as the Biddles and Lenoxes. There followed wave after wave of new plutocrats with new sources of wealth: the international bankers, the real-estate speculators, the Civil War profiteers, railroad magnates, Wall Street operators, oil and steel trust manipulators, and so on. By the end of the Civil War, social life in New York was already The Great Barbecue, to borrow a term from Vernon L. Parrington, the literary historian. During the season of 1865-66 there were 600 Society balls given in New York, and a great wall of brownstone mansions went up along Fifth Avenue.

In the early 1880s New York's social parvenus—the people who were the Sculls, Paleys, Engelhards, Holzers, of their day—were the Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, Huntingtons and Goulds. They built the Metropolitan Opera House for the simple reason that New York's prevailing temple of Culture, the Academy of Music, built just 29 years before at 14th Street and Irving Place, had only 18 fashionable proscenium boxes, and they were monopolized by families like the Lorillards, Traverses, Belmonts, Stebbinses, Gandys and Barlows. The status of the Goulds and Vanderbilts was revealed in the sort of press coverage the Met's opening (October 22, 1883) received: "The Goulds and the Vanderbilts and people of that ilk perfumed the air with the odor of crisp greenbacks." The Academy of Music is now a moviehouse showing double features, although it did enjoy one moment of eminence in 1964, when the Rolling Stones played there, live, with Murray the K as M.C.

By the 1960s yet another new industry had begun to dominate New York life, namely, communications—the media. At the same time the erstwhile "minorities" of the first quarter of the century had begun to come into their own. Jews, especially, but also many Catholics, were eminent in the media and in Culture. So, by 1965—as in 1935, as in 1926, as in 1883, as in 1866, as in 1820—New York had two Societies, "Old New York" and "New Society." In every era, "Old New York" has taken a horrified look at "New Society" and expressed the devout conviction that a genuine aristocracy, good blood, good bone—themselves—was being defiled by a horde of rank climbers. This has been an all-time favorite number. In the 1960s this quaint belief was magnified by the fact that many members of "New Society," for the first time, were not Protestant. The names and addresses of "Old New York" were to be found in the Social Register, which even 10 years ago was still confidently spoken of as the Stud Book and the Good Book. It was, and still is, almost exclusively a roster of Protestant families. Today, however, the Social Register's annual shuffle, in which errant socialites, e.g., John Jacob Astor, are dropped from the Good Book, hardly even rates a yawn. The fact is that "Old New York"—except for those members who also figure in "New Society," e.g., Nelson Rockefeller, John Hay Whitney, Mrs. Wyatt Cooper—is no longer good copy, and

without publicity it has **never** been easy to rank as a fashionable person in New York City.

The press in New York has tended to favor New Society in every period, and to take it seriously, if only because it provides “news.” For example, the \$400,000 Bradley Martin ball of 1897. The John Bradley Martins were latecomers from Troy, New York, who had inserted an invisible hyphen between the Bradley and the Martin and preferred to be known as the Bradley Martins, after the manner of the Gordon Walkers in England. For the record, the Bradley Martins staged their own ball in 1897 as “an impetus to trade” to alleviate the suffering of the poor. Inflamed by the grandeur of it all, the newspapers described the affair down to the last piece of Mechlin lace and the last drop of seed pearl. It was the greatest single one-shot social climb in New York history prior to Truman Capote’s masked ball in 1966.

“ . . . Radical Chic was the new wave supreme in New York Society. **Vogue** was already preparing a food column entitled Soul Food . . . ”

By the 1960s New York newspapers had an additional reason to favor New Society. The Seventh Avenue garment trade, the newspapers’ greatest source of advertising revenue, had begun recruiting New Society in droves to promote new fashions. It got to the point where for a matron to be photographed in the front row at the spring or fall showings of European copies at Ohrbach’s, by no means the most high-toned clothing store in the world, became a certification of “socialite” status second to none. But this was nothing new, either. Forty years ago firms flogging things like Hardman pianos, Ponds cold cream, Simmons metal beds and Camel cigarettes found that matrons in the clans Harriman, Longworth, Belmont, Fish, Lowell, Iselin and Carnegie were only too glad to switch to their products and be photographed with them in their homes, mainly for the sheer social glory of the publicity.

Another source of publicity was aid to the poor. New York’s new socialites, in whatever era, have always paid their dues to “the poor,” via charity, as a way of claiming the nobility inherent in **noblesse oblige** and of legitimizing their wealth. The Bradley Martin ball was a case in point. New money usually works harder in this direction than old. John D. Rockefeller, under the guidance of Ivy P. Lee, the original “public relations counsel,” managed to convert his reputation from that of robber baron and widow-fleecer to that of august old sage philanthropist so rapidly that small children cried when he died. His strategy was to set up several hundred million dollars’ worth of foundations for Culture and scientific research.

Among the new socialites of the 1960s, especially those from the one-time “minorities,” this old social urge to do well by doing good, as it says in the song, has taken a more specific political direction. This has often been true of Jewish socialites and culturati, although it has by no means been confined to them. Politically, Jews have been unique among the groups that came to New York in the great migrations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many such groups,

of course, were Left or liberal during the first generation, but as families began to achieve wealth, success, or, simply, security, they tended to grow more and more conservative in philosophy. The Irish are a case in point. But forced by 20th as well as 19th century history to remain on guard against right-wing movements, even wealthy and successful Jewish families have tended to remain faithful to their original liberal-left worldview. In fact, according to Seymour Martin Lipset, Nathan Glazer, and Kenneth Keniston, an unusually high proportion of campus militants come from well-to-do Jewish families. They have developed the so-called “red diaper baby” theory to explain it. According to Lipset, many Jewish children have grown up in families which “around the breakfast table, day after day, in Scarsdale, Newton, Great Neck and Beverly Hills,” have discussed racist and reactionary tendencies in American society. Lipset speaks of the wealthy Jewish family with the “right-wing life style” (e.g. a majority of Americans outside of the South who have full-time servants are Jewish, according to a study by Lipset, Glazer and Herbert Hyman) and the “left-wing outlook.”

This phenomenon is rooted not only in Jewish experience in America, but in Europe as well. Anti-Semitism was an issue in the French Revolution; throughout Europe during the 19th century all sorts of legal and **de facto** restrictions against Jews were abolished. Yet Jews were still denied the social advantages that routinely accrued to Gentiles of comparable wealth and achievement. They were not accepted in Society, for example, and public opinion generally remained anti-Semitic. Not only out of resentment, but also for sheer self-defense, even wealthy Jews tended to support left-wing political parties. They had no choice. Most organizations on the Right had an anti-Semitic or, at the very least, an all-Christian, cast to them. Jews coming to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw little to choose from among the major political parties. As to which party seemed the more anti-Jewish, the Democratic or the Republican, it was a tossup. The Republicans had abolished slavery, but the party was full of Know-nothings and anti-immigrant nativists. Even the Populists were anti-Jewish. For example, Tom Watson, the famous Populist senator, denounced the oil cartels, fought against American involvement in World War I as a cynical capitalist adventure, defended Eugene Debs, demanded U.S. recognition of the Soviet Union shortly after the Revolution—and was openly anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic and was laid out in the shadow of an eight-foot-high cross of roses from the Ku Klux Klan at his funeral in 1922. As a result, many Jews, especially in cities like New York and Chicago, backed the socialist parties that thrived briefly during the 1920s. In many cases Jews were the main support. At the same time Jews continued to look for some wing of the major parties that they could live with, and finally found it in the New Deal.

For years many Jewish members of New Society have supported black organizations such as the NAACP, the Urban League and CORE. And no doubt they have been sincere about it, because these organizations have never had much social cachet, i.e., they have had “middle class” written all over them. All one had to do was look at the “Negro leaders” involved. There they were, up on the dais at the big hotel banquet, wearing their white shirts, their Hart Schaffner & Marx suits three sizes too big, and their academic solemnity. By last year, however, the

picture had changed. In 1965 two new political movements, the anti-war movement and black power, began to gain great backing among culturati in New York. By 1968 the two movements began to achieve social as well as cultural prestige with the Presidential campaigns of Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy; especially Kennedy's. Kennedy was not merely an anti-war candidate; he also made a point of backing Caesar Chavez' grape workers—"La Causa," "La Huelga"—in California. On the face of it, La Causa was a labor union movement. But La Causa quickly came to symbolize the political ambitions of all lower-class Mexican-Americans—**chicanos**, "Brown Americans"—and, by extension, that of all colored Americans, including blacks.

The black movement itself, of course, had taken on a much more electric and romantic cast. What a relief it was—socially—in New York—when the leadership seemed to shift from middle class to . . . **funky!** From A. Philip Randolph, Dr. Martin Luther King and James Farmer . . . to Stokely, Rap, LeRoi and Eldridge! This meant that the tricky business of the fashionable new politics could now be integrated with a tried and true social motif: **Nostalgie de la boue**. The upshot was Radical Chic.

From the beginning it was pointless to argue about the sincerity of Radical Chic. Unquestionably the basic impulse, "red diaper" or otherwise, was sincere. But, as in most human endeavors focused upon an ideal, there seemed to be some double-track thinking going on. On the first track—well, one **does** have a sincere concern for the poor and the underprivileged and an honest outrage against discrimination. One's heart does cry out—quite spontaneously!—upon hearing how the police have dealt with the Panthers, dragging an epileptic like Lee Berry out of his hospital bed and throwing him into the Tombs. When one thinks of Mitchell and Agnew and Nixon and all of their Captain Beef-heart Maggie & Jiggs New York Athletic Club troglodyte crypto-Horst Wessel Irish Oyster Bar Construction Worker followers, then one understands why poor blacks like the Panthers might feel driven to drastic solutions, and—well, anyway, one truly **feels** for them. One really does. On the other hand—on the second track in one's mind, that is—one also has a sincere concern for maintaining a proper East Side lifestyle in New York Society. And this concern is just as sincere as the first, and just as deep. It really is. It really **does** become part of one's psyche. For example, one **must** have a weekend place, in the country or by the shore, all year round preferably, but certainly from the middle of May to the middle of September. It is hard to get across to outsiders an understanding of how **absolute** such apparently trivial needs are. One **feels** them in his solar plexus. When one thinks of being trapped in New York Saturday after Saturday in July or August, doomed to be a part of those fantastically dowdy herds roaming past Bonwit's and Tiffany's at dead noon in the sandstone sun-broil, 92 degrees, daddies from Long Island in balloon-seat Bermuda shorts bought at the Times Square Store in Oceanside and fat mommies with white belled pants stretching over their lower bellies and crinkling up in the crotch like some kind of Dacron-polyester labia—well, anyway, then one truly **feels** the need to obey at least the minimal rules of New York Society. One really does.

“. . . The first big party in the era of Radical Chic, the epochal event, so to speak, was in Southampton for the grape workers . . .”

One rule is that **nostalgie de la boue**—i.e., the styles of romantic, raw-vital, Low Rent primitives—are good; and **middle class**, whether black or white, is bad. Therefore, Radical Chic invariably favors radicals who seem primitive, exotic and romantic, such as the grape workers, who are not merely radical and “of the soil,” but also Latin; the Panthers, with their leather pieces, Afros, shades, and shoot-outs; and the Red Indians, who, of course, had always seemed primitive, exotic and romantic. At the outset, at least, all three groups had something else to recommend them, as well: they were headquartered 3,000 miles away from the East Side of Manhattan, in places like Delano (the grape workers), Oakland (the Panthers) and Arizona and New Mexico (the Indians). They weren’t likely to become too much . . . **underfoot**, as it were. Exotic, Romantic, Far Off . . . as we shall soon see, other favorite creatures of Radical Chic had the same attractive qualities; namely, the ocelots, jaguars, cheetahs and Somali leopards.

Rule No. 2 was that no matter what, one should always maintain a proper address, a proper scale of interior decoration, and servants. Servants, especially, were one of the last absolute dividing lines between those truly “in Society,” New or Old, and the great scuffling mass of middle-class strivers paying up to \$1,250-a-month rent or buying expensive co-ops all over the East Side. There are no two ways about it. One **must** have servants. Having servants becomes such a psychological necessity that there are many women in Society today who may be heard to complain in all honesty about how hard it is to find a nurse for the children to fill in on the regular nurse’s day off. There is the famous Mrs. C-----, one of New York’s richest widows, who has a 10-room duplex on Sutton Place, the good part of Sutton Place as opposed to the Miami Beach-looking part, one understands, but who is somehow absolute poison with servants and can’t keep anything but day help and is constantly heard to lament: “What good is all the money in the world if you can’t come home at night and know there will be someone there to take your coat and fix you a drink?” There is true anguish behind that remark!

In the era of Radical Chic, then, what a collision course was set between the absolute need for servants—and the fact that the servant was the absolute symbol of what the new movements, black or brown, were struggling against! How absolutely urgent, then, became the search for the only way out: white servants!

The first big Radical Chic party, the epochal event, so to speak, was the party that Assemblyman Andrew Stein gave for the grape workers on his father’s estate in Southampton on June 29, 1969. The grape workers had already been brought into New York social life. Carter and Amanda Burden, the “Moonflower Couple” of the 1960s, had given a party for them in their duplex in River House, on East 52nd Street overlooking the East River. Some of New York’s best graphic artists, such as Paul Davis, had done exquisite posters for “La Causa” and “La Huelga.”

The grape workers had begun a national campaign urging consumers to boycott California table grapes, and nowhere was the ban more strictly observed than in

Radically Chic circles. Chavez became one of the few union leaders with a romantic image.

Andrew Stein's party, then, was the epochal event, not so much because he was fashionable as because the grape-workers were. The list of guests and sponsors for the event was first-rate. Henry Ford II's daughter Anne (Mrs. Giancarlo Uzielli) was chairman, and Ethel Kennedy was honorary chairman. Mrs. Kennedy was making her first public appearance since the assassination of her husband in 1968. Stein himself was the 24-year-old son of Jerry Finkelstein, who had made a small fortune in public relations and built it up into a firm called Struthers Wells. Finkelstein was also a power in the New York State Democratic party and, in fact, recently became the party's New York City chairman. His son Andrew had shortened his name from Finkelstein to Stein and was noted not only for the impressive parties he gave but for his election to the State Assembly from Manhattan's Upper West Side. The rumor was that his father had spent \$500,000 on his campaign. No one who knew state politics believed that, however, since for half that sum he could have bought enough of Albany to have the boy declared king.

The party was held on the lawn outside Finkelstein's huge **cottage orné** by the sea in Southampton. There were two signs by the main entrance to the estate. One said Finkelstein and the other said Stein. The guests came in saying the usual, which was, "you can't take the Fink out of Finkelstein." No one turned back, however. From the beginning the afternoon was full of the delicious status contradictions and incongruities that provide much of the electricity for Radical Chic. Chavez himself was not there, but a contingent of grape workers was on hand, including Chavez' first lieutenant, Andrew Imutan, and Imutan's wife and three sons. The grape workers were all in work clothes, Levis, chinos, Sears balloon-seat twills, K-Mart sports shirts, and so forth. The socialites, meanwhile, arrived at the height of the 1969 summer season of bell-bottom silk pants suits, Pucci clings, Dunhill blazers and Turnbull & Asser neckerchiefs. A mariachi band played for the guests as they arrived. Marvelous! Everyone's status radar was now so sensitive that the mariachi band seemed like a **faux pas**. After all, mariachi bands, with those Visit Mexico costumes on and those sad trumpets that keep struggling up to the top of the note but always fall off and then try to struggle back up again, are the prime white-tourist Mexicans. At a party for La Causa, the grape workers, the fighting **chicanos**—this was a little like bringing Ma Goldberg in to entertain the Stern Gang. But somehow it was . . . **delicious** to experience such weird status thrills . . .

“ . . . ‘If we can only raise 20 per cent of the money that has gone into all the Puccis I see here today, we'll be doing all right’ . . . ”

When the fund-raising began, Andrew Imutan took a microphone up on the terrace above the lawn and asked everybody to shut their eyes and pretend they were a farm worker's wife in the dusty plains of Delano, California, eating baloney

sandwiches for breakfast at 3 a.m. before heading out into the fields . . . So they all stood there in their Pucci dresses, Gucci shoes, Capucci scarves, either imagining they were grape workers' wives or wondering if the goddamned wind would ever stop. The wind had come up off the ocean and it was wrecking everybody's hair. People were standing there with their hands pressed against their heads as if the place had been struck by a brain-piercing ray from the Purple Dimension. Andrew Stein's hair was long, full, and at the outset had been especially well coifed in the Roger's 58th Street French manner, and now it was . . . a wreck. . . . He kept one hand on his head the whole time, like the boy at the dike . . . "eating baloney sandwiches for breakfast at 3 a.m. . . ."

Then Frank Mankiewicz, who had been Robert Kennedy's press secretary, got up and said, "Well, all I know, if we can only raise 20 percent of the money that has gone into all the Puccis I see here today, we'll be doing all right!" He waited for the laughter, and all he got was the ocean breeze in his face. By then everyone present was thinking approximately the same thing . . . and it was **delicious** in that weird way . . . but to just blurt it out was a strange sort of counter-gaffe.

Nevertheless, Radical Chic had arrived. The fall social season of 1969 was a big time for it. People like Jean vanden Heuvel gave parties for **Ramparts** magazine, which had by now become completely a magazine of the barricades, and for the Chicago Eight. Jules Feiffer gave a party for the G.I. coffee houses, at which Richard Avedon, America's most famous fashion photographer, took portraits of everybody who made a \$25 contribution to the cause. He had his camera and lights set up in the dining room. As a matter of fact, Avedon had become a kind of court photographer to the Movement. He was making his pentennial emergence to see where it was now at. Five years before he had emerged from his studio to take a look around and had photographed and edited an entire issue of **Harper's Bazaar** to record his findings, which were of the Pop, Op, Rock, Andy, Rudi and Go-Go variety. Now Avedon was putting together a book about the Movement. He went to Chicago for the trial of The Eight and set up a studio in a hotel near the courthouse to do portraits of the celebrities and activists who testified at the trial or watched it or circled around it in one way or another.

Meanwhile, some of the most prestigious young matrons in San Francisco and New York were into an organization called Friends of the Earth. Friends of the Earth was devoted to the proposition that women should not buy coats or other apparel made from the hides of such dying species as leopards, cheetahs, jaguars, ocelots, tigers, Spanish lynx, Asiatic lions, red wolves, sea otter, giant otter, polar bear, mountain zebra, alligators, crocodiles, sea turtles, vicunas, timber wolves, wolverines, margays, kolinskies, martens, fishers, fitch, sables, servals and mountain lions. On the face of it, there was nothing very radical about this small gesture in the direction of conservation, or ecology, as it is now known. Yet Friends of the Earth was Radical Chic, all right. The radical part began with the simple fact that the movement was not tax deductible. Friends of the Earth is a subsidiary of the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club's pre-eminence in the conservation movement began at precisely the moment when the federal government declared it a political organization, chiefly due to its fight against proposed dam projects in the Grand Canyon. That meant that contributions to it were no longer tax

deductible. One of the Sierras Club's backstage masterminds, the late Howard Gossage, used to tell David Brower, the Sierra Club's president: "That's the grea-a-a-atest thing that ever happened to you. It removed all the guilt! Now the money's just rollllllling in." Then he would go into his cosmic laugh. He had an incredible cosmic laugh, Gossage did. It started way back in his throat and came rolllling out, as if from Lane 27 of the Heavenly bowling alley.

No tax deduction! That became part of the canon of Radical Chic. Lay it on the line! Matrons soliciting funds for Friends of the Earth and other organizations took to making telephone calls that ended with: "All right, now, I'll expect to see your check in the mail—and it's **not** tax deductible." That was a challenge, the unspoken part of which was: You can be a tax deductible Heart Funder, April in Paris Baller, Day Care Center-of-the-roader, if that's all you want out of your jiveass life . . . As for themselves, the Friends of the Earth actually took to the streets, picketing stores and ragging women who walked down the street with their new Somali leopard coats on. A woman's only acceptable defense was to say she had shot the animal and eaten it. The Friends of the Earth movement was not only a fight in behalf of the poor beasts but a fight against greed, against the spirit of capitalistic marauding, to call it by its right name . . . although the fight took some weird skews here and there, as Radical Chic is apt to do.

Those goddamned permutations in taste! In New York, for example, Freddy Plimpton had Jacques Kaplan, the number one Society furrier, make her a skirt of alley cat pelts (at least that was the way it first came out in the **New York Times**). Not for nothing is Jacques Kaplan the number one Society furrier. He must have seen Radical Chic coming a mile away. Early in the game he himself, a furrier, started pitching in for the embattled ocelots, margays, fitch and company like there was no tomorrow. Anyway, the **Times** ran a story saying he had made a skirt of alley cat hides for Freddy Plimpton. The idea was that alley cats, unlike ocelots and so on, are an absolute glut in the ecology and end up in the ASPCA gas chambers anyway. Supposedly it was logical to Kaplan and logical to Mrs. Plimpton—but to hundreds of little-old-lady cat lovers in Dickerson Archlock shoes, there was some kind of a weird class warp going on here . . . Slaughter the lowly alley cat to save the high-toned ocelot . . . That was the way it came out . . . and the less said about retrieving decorative hides from the gas chambers, the better . . . They were going to picket Jacques Kaplan and raise hell about the slaughter of the alley cats. The fact that the skirt was actually made of the hides of genet, a European nuisance animal like the ferret — as the **Times** noted in a correction two days later—this was not a distinction that cut much ice with the cat lovers by that time. Slaughter the lowly alley genet to save the high-toned ocelot . . .

Other charitable organizations began to steer in the direction of Radical Chic, even if they did not go all the way and give up their tax-deductible status. For example, the gala for the University of the Streets on January 22, 1970. The University of the Streets was dedicated to "educating the 'uneducatables' of the ghetto." The gala was a dance with avant-garde music, light shows, movies, sculpture, and "multi-sensory environments." The invitation said "Price: \$125 Per Couple (Tax Deductible)" and "Dress: Beautiful." This was nothing new. What was

new was that the ball would not be within the grand coving-and-pilaster insulation of a midtown hotel but down on the Lower East Side, East Seventh Street and Avenue A, at Tompkins Square, in the heart of Radically Chic Puerto Rican & black & hippie territory. The invitations came in a clear plastic box with a lid, and each had the radiant eye of a real peacock feather inside; also a flower blossom, which arrived dried up and shriveled, and many wondered, wildly, if it was some exotic Southwestern psychedelic, to be smoked. One matron on the invitation list gave the peacock feather to her daughter to take to her school, one of the city's most fashionable private grammar schools, for her class' morning game of "Show and Tell," in which some unusual object is presented, wondered over, and then explained. When she returned home, her mother asked her how the feather had gone down, whereupon the little girl burst into tears. Seven other children in her class had also brought the radiant eye of a peacock feather that morning for "Show and Tell."

Soon—just a few weeks after his first big Radical Chic party—Andrew Stein was throwing another one, this time for Bernadette Devlin, the Irish Joan of Arc. Not to be outdone, Carter Burden, his chief rival, developed what can only be termed the first Total Radical Chic lifestyle. In 1965 Burden, then 23, and his wife Amanda, then 20, had been singled out by **Vogue** as New York's perfect young married couple. They had moved into an ample co-op in the Dakota and had coated and encrusted it with a layer of antiques that was like the final triumph of a dowager duchess in an Angela Thirkell novel. They were described as possessing not merely wealth, however, but also "enquiring minds." To clinch the point, **Vogue** pointed out that "Mrs. Burden, with the help of a maid, is learning how to keep house." Just a year after their Dakota triumph, the Burdens moved to River House, flagship of the East River co-op gold coast from Beekman Place to Sutton Place. They set up house in a duplex and hired Parish Hadley, interior decorators to Jacqueline Kennedy, Jay and Sharon Rockefeller, the Paleys, the Wrightsmans and the Engelhards. "Gossip has it," said **Town & Country**, "that a cool million was invested in Carter and Amanda Burden's River House apartment alone, just for backgrounds. Most of the art and furniture were already there." But in a couple of years the Burdens went Radical Chic. True, they did not give up their River House showplace. In fact, they did not disturb or deplete its treasures in the slightest. But they did set up another apartment on Fifth Avenue at 100th Street. This established residence for Burden in the Fourth Councilmanic District and qualified him to run for the New York City Council; successfully, as it turned out. It also gave him the most exquisitely poised Total Radical Chic apartment in New York.

There was genius to the way the Burdens gave visual expression to the double-track mental atmosphere of Radical Chic. The building is perhaps the scruffiest co-op building on Upper Fifth Avenue. The paint job in the lobby and hallways looks like a 1947 destroyer's. There is a doorman but no elevator man; one has to take himself up in an old West Side-style Serge Automatic elevator. But . . . it **is** a co-op and it **is** on Upper Fifth Avenue. The apartment itself has low ceilings, a small living room and only five rooms in all. But it **does** overlook Central Park. It is furnished almost entirely in the sort of whimsical horrors—japanned chairs,

brass beds, and so on—that end up in the attic in the country, the sort of legacies from God knows where that one never gets around to throwing away . . . And yet they **are** . . . amusing. The walls are covered in end-of-the-bolt paintings by fashionable artists of the decorative mode, such as Stella and Lichtenstein . . . the sort of mistakes every collector makes and wonders where he will ever hang . . . and yet they **are** Stellas and Lichtensteins . . . somehow Burden even managed to transform himself from the Deke House chubbiness of his Early **Vogue** Period to the look known as Starved to Near Perfection. It is within this artfully balanced style of life that the Burdens have been able to groove, as they say, with the Young Lords and other pet primitives from Harlem and Spanish Harlem and at the same time fit into all the old mainline events such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 100th anniversary gala and be photographed doing the new boogaloo.

So . . . Radical Chic was already in full swing by the time the Black Panther party began a national fund-raising campaign late in 1969. The Panthers' organizers, like the grape workers', counted on the "cause party"—to use a term for it that was current 35 years ago—not merely in order to raise money. The Panthers' status was quite confused in the minds of many liberals, and to have the Panthers feted in the homes of a series of social and cultural leaders could make an important difference. Ideally, it would work out well for the socialites and culturati, too, for if there was ever a group that embodied the romance and excitement of which Radical Chic is made, it was the Panthers.

Even before the Bernsteins' party for the Panthers, there had been at least three others, at the homes of John Simon of Random House, on Hudson Street, Richard Baron, the publisher, in Chappaqua, and Sidney and Gail Lumet, in their townhouse at Lexington Avenue and 91st Street. It was the Lumets' party that led directly to the Bernsteins'. A veteran cause organizer named Hannah Weinstein had called up Gail Lumet. She said that Murray Kempton had asked her to try to organize a party for the Black Panthers to raise money for the defense of the Panther 21.

The party was a curious one, even by the standards of Radical Chic. Many of the guests appeared not to be particularly "social" . . . more like Mr. and Mrs. Wealthy Dentist from New Rochelle. Yet there was a certain social wattage in the presence of people like Murray Kempton, Peter Stone, writer of **1776**, the Lumets themselves, and several Park Avenue matrons, the most notable being Leonard Bernstein's wife, Felicia.

Anyway, the white guests and a few academic-looking blacks were packed, sitting and standing, into the living room. Then a contingent of 12 or 13 Black Panthers arrived. The Panthers had no choice but to assemble in the dining room and stand up—in their leather pieces, Afros and shades—facing the whites in the living room. As a result, whenever anyone got up in the living room to speak, the audience was looking not only at the speaker but into the faces of a hard front line of Black Panthers in the dining room. Quite a tableau it was. It was at this point that a Park Avenue matron first articulated the great recurrent emotion of Radical Chic: "These are no civil-rights **Negroes** wearing gray suits three sizes too big—these are **real men!**"

The first half of the session generated the Radical Chic emotion in its purest and most penetrating form. Not only was there the electrifying spectacle of the massed Panthers, but Mrs. Lee Berry rose and delivered a moving account of how her husband had been seized by police in his hospital room and removed summarily to jail. To tell the truth, some of the matrons were disappointed when she first opened her mouth. She had such a small, quiet voice. "I am a Panther wife," she said. **I am a Panther wife?** But her story **was** moving. Felicia Bernstein had been present up to this point and, as a longtime supporter of civil liberties, had been quite upset by what she had heard. But she had had to leave before the session was over. Each guest, as he left, was presented with a sheet of paper and asked to do one of three things: pledge a contribution to the defense fund, lend his name to an advertisement that was to appear in the New York **Times**, or to make his home available for another party and fund-raising event. By the time she left, Felicia was quite ready to open her doors.

The emotional momentum was building rapidly when Ray "Masai" Hewitt, the Panthers' Minister of Education and member of the Central Committee, rose to speak. Hewitt was an intense, powerful young man and in no mood to play the diplomacy game. Some of you here, he said, may have some feelings left for the establishment, but we don't. We want to see it die. We're Maoist revolutionaries, and we have no choice but to fight to the finish. For about 30 minutes Masai Hewitt laid it on the line. He referred now and again to "that M ----- F ----- Nixon" and to how the struggle would not be easy, and that if buildings were burned and other violence ensued, that was only part of the struggle that the power structure had forced the oppressed minorities into. Hewitt's words tended to provoke an all-or-nothing reaction. A few who remembered the struggles of the Depression were profoundly moved, fired up with a kind of **nostalgie de that old-time religion**. But more than one Park Avenue matron was thrown into a Radical Chic confusion. The most memorable quote was: "He's a magnificent man, but suppose some simple-minded schmucks take all that business about burning down buildings **seriously?**"

Murray Kempton cooled things down a bit. He stood up and, in his professorial way, in the tweedy tones of the lecturer who clicks his pipe against his teeth like a mental metronome, he summed up the matter. Dependable old Murray put it all in the more comfortable terms of Reason Devout, after the manner of a lead piece in the periodicals he worshipped, **The New Statesman** and **The Spectator**. Murray, it turned out, was writing a book on the Panthers and otherwise doing his best for the cause. Yes, Masai Hewitt may have set the message down too hard, but that was of little consequence. In no time at all another party for the Panthers had been arranged. And this time in the home of one of the most famous men in the United States, Leonard Bernstein.

Who do you call to give a party!" says Richard Feigen. "Who do you call to give a party!"

And all at once the candid voice of Radical Chic, just ringing out like that, seems about to drop Don Cox, Field Marshal of the Black Panthers, in his tracks, by

Lenny's grand piano. He just stares at Feigen . . . this Yale-style blond in a tuxedo . . . And from that moment on, the evening begins to take on a weird reversal. Rather than Cox being in the role of the black militant mau-mauing the rich white liberals, he is slowly backed into a weird corner. Afro, goatee, turtleneck and all, **he** has to be the diplomat . . . **He** has to play that all-time-loser role of the house guest trying to deal with a bunch of leaping, prancing, palsied happy-slobber Saint Bernards . . . It's a ball-breaker . . . And no wonder! For what man in all history, has ever before come face to face with naked white Radical Chic running ecstatically through a Park Avenue duplex and letting it all hang out.

One of the members of the Panther defense committee, a white, manages to come up with a phone number, "691-8787," but Feigen is already pressing on:

"There is one candidate for governor," he says—quite an impressive voice—"who feels very deeply about what is going on here. He had hoped to be here tonight, but unfortunately he was detained upstate. And that's Howard Samuels. Now, what I want to know is, if he were willing to come before you and present his program, would you be willing to consider supporting it? In other words, are the Black Panthers interested in getting any political leverage within the System?"

Cox stares at him again. "Well," he says—and it is the first time he falls into that old hesitant thing of beginning a sentence with **well**—"any politician who is willing to relate to our 10-point program, we will support him actively, but we have no use for the traditional political—"

"But would you be willing to listen to such a candidate?" says Feigen.

". . . 'Every time there is violence, it's used as an indictment of the Black Panthers,' says Lefcourt. 'I'm hip,' says Lenny . . ."

"—the traditional political arena, because if you try to oppose the system from within the traditional political arena, you're wasting your time. Look at Powell. As soon as he began to speak for the people, they threw him out. We have no power within the system, and we will never have any power within the system. The only power we have is the power to destroy, the power to disrupt. If black people are armed with knowledge—"

"But would you be willing to listen to such a candidate?" says Feigen.

"Well," says Cox, a bit wearily, "we would refer him to our Central Committee, and if he was willing to support our 10-point program, then we would support that man."

Feigen muses sagely inside of his tuxedo. **Dapper**. A dapper dude in pinstripe suit and pencil moustache in the rear of the room, a black named Rick Haynes, president of Management Formation Inc., an organization promoting black capitalism, asks about the arrest the other night of Robert Bay and another Panther named Jolly.

“Right on,” says Cox, softly, raising his left fist a bit, but only as a fraternal gesture—and through every white cortex rushes the flash about how the world here is divided between those who rate that acknowledgement—**right on**—and those who don’t . . . Right on . . . Cox asks Robert Bay to stand, and his powerful form and his ferocious Afro rise from out of the midst of the people in the rows of chairs in the center of the room, he nods briefly towards Haynes and smiles and says “Right on”—there it is—and then he sits down. And Cox tells how the three detectives roused and hassled Bay and Jolly and another man, and then the detectives went on radio station WINS and “lied about it all day.” And Lefcourt gets up and tells how this has become a pattern, the cops incessantly harassing the Panthers, wherever they may be, everything from stopping them for doing 52 in a 50-mile-an-hour zone to killing Fred Hampton in his bed.

The beautiful ash-blond girl speaks up: “People like myself who feel that up to now the Panthers have been very badly treated—we don’t know what to do. I mean, if you don’t have money and you don’t have influence, what can you do? What other community programs are there? We want to do something, but what can we do? Is there some kind of committee, or some kind of . . . I don’t know . . .”

Well baby, if you really—but Cox tells her that one of the big problems is finding churches in the black community that will help the Panthers in their breakfast program for ghetto children, and maybe people like her could help the Panthers approach the churches. “It’s basically the churches who have the large kitchens that we need,” he says, “but when we come to them to use their kitchens, to feed hot breakfasts to hungry children, they close the door in our faces. That’s where the churches in the black community are at.”

“Tell why!” says Leonard Bernstein. Hardly anybody has noticed it up to now, but Leonard Bernstein has moved from the back of the room to an easy chair up front. He’s only a couple of feet from Cox. But Cox is standing up, by the piano, and Lenny is sunk down to his hip sockets in the easy chair . . . They really don’t know what they’re in for. Lenny is on the move. As more than one person in this room knows, Lenny treasures “the art of conversation.” He treasures it, monopolizes it, conglomerates it, like a Jay Gould, an Onassis, a Cornfeld of Conversation. Anyone who has spent a three-day weekend with Lenny in the country, by the shore, or captive on some lonesome cay in the Windward Islands, knows that feeling—the alternating spells of adrenal stimulation and insulin coma as the Great Interrupter, the Village Explainer, the champion of Mental Jotto, the Free Analyst, Mr. Let’s Find Out, leads the troops on a 72-hour forced march through the lateral geniculate and the pyramids of Betz, no breathers allowed, until every human brain is reduced finally to a clump of dried seaweed inside a burnt-out husk and collapses, implodes, in one last crunch of terminal boredom. Mr. Pull! Mr. Push! Mr. Auricularis! . . . But how could the Black Panther Party of America know that? Just now Lenny looks so sunk-down-low in the easy chair. Almost at Don Cox’s feet he is, way down in an easy chair with his turtleneck and blazer on, and his neckpiece. Also right down front, on the couch next to the wall, is Otto Preminger, no piece of wallpaper himself, with his great head and neck rising up

like a howitzer shell from out of his six-button doublebreasted, after the manner of the eternal Occupation Zone commandant.

“Tell why,” says Lenny.

“Well,” says Cox, “that gets into the whole history of the church in the black community. It’s a long story.”

“Go ahead and tell it,” says Lenny.

“Well,” says Cox, “when the slaves were brought to America, they were always met at the boat by the cat with the whip and the gun . . . see . . . and along with him was the black preacher, who said, Everything’s gonna be all right, as long as you’re right with Jesus. It’s like, the normal thing in the black community. The preacher was always the go-between the slavemasters and the slave, and the preacher would get a little extra crumb off the table for performing this service . . . you know . . . It’s the same situation in the black community today. The preacher is riding around in a gold Cadillac, but it’s the same thing. If you ask a lot of these churches to start working for the people instead of for The Man, they start worrying about that crumb . . . see . . . Because if the preacher starts working for the people, then the power structure starts harassing him. Like we found this one minister who was willing for us to use his church for the breakfast program. So okay, and then one day he comes in, and he’s terrified . . . see . . . and he says we have to leave, that’s all there is to it. The cat’s terrified . . . So we say, okay, we’ll leave, but just tell us what they said to you. Tell us what they did to intimidate you. But he won’t even talk about it, he just says, Leave. He’s too terrified to even talk about it.”

Bernstein says, “Don, what’s really worrying a lot of us here is the friction between groups like the Black Panthers and the established black community.”

No problem. Cox says, “We recognize that there is not only a racial struggle going on in this country, but a class struggle. The class structure doesn’t exist in the same way in the black community, but what we have are very bourgeois-minded people”—he uses the standard New Left pronunciation, which is “booooooooozhwah”—“petty bourgeois-minded people . . . you see . . . and they have the same mentality as bourgeois-minded people in the white power structure.”

“Yes,” says Bernstein, “but a lot of us here are worried about things like threats against the lives of leaders of the established black community—”

Suddenly Rick Haynes speaks out from the back of the room: “This thing about ‘the black community’ galls me!” He’s really put out, but it’s hard to tell what over, because what he does is look down at the Ash-Blond Beauty, who is only about 10 feet away: “This **lovely young lady** here was asking about **what she could do . . .**” What a look . . . if sarcasm could reach 550 degrees, she would shrivel up like a slice of Oscar Mayer bacon. “Well, I suggest that she forget about going into **the black community**. I suggest that she think about the white community. Like the **Wall Street Journal**—the **Wall Street Journal** just printed an article about the Black Panthers, and they came to the shocking conclusion—for them—that a majority of the black community supports the Black Panthers. Well, I suggest that

this lovely young lady get somebody like her **daddy**, who just might have a little more **pull** than she does, to call up the **Wall Street Journal** and congratulate them when they write it straight like that. Just call up and say, We like that. The name of the game is to use the media, because the media have been using us.”

“Right on,” says Don Cox.

Curiously, Ash Blonde doesn't seem particularly taken aback by all this. If this dude in a pin-stripe suit thinks he's going to keep her off The All-Weather Panther Committee, he's bananas . . .

And if they think this is going to deflect Leonard Bernstein, they're **all** out to lunch. About five people are talking at once—Quat—Lefcourt—Lenny—Cox—Barbara Walters is on the edge of her chair, bursting to ask a question— but it is the Pastmaster who cuts through:

“I want to know what the Panthers' attitude is toward the threats against these black leaders!” says Lenny.

Lefcourt the lawyer jumps up: “Mr. Bernsteen—”

“**STEIN!**” roars Lenny. He's become a veritable tiger, except that he is sunk down so low into the Margaret Owen billows of the easy chair, with his eyes peering up from way down in the downy hollow, that everything he says seems to be delivered into the left knee of Don Cox.

“Mr. Bernstein,” says Lefcourt, “every time there are threats, every time there is violence, it's used as an indictment of the Black Panthers, even if they had nothing whatsoever to do with it.”

“I'm hip,” says Lenny. “That's what I'm trying to establish. I just want to get an answer to the question.”

Lefcourt, Quat, half a dozen people it seems like, are talking, telling Lenny how the threats he is talking about, against Whitney Young and Roy Wilkins, were in 1967, before the Panthers were even in existence in New York, and the people arrested in the so-called conspiracy allegedly belonged to an organization called Revolutionary Action Movement, and how the cops, the newspapers, TV, like to aim everything at the Panthers.

“I think everybody in this room buys that,” says Bernstein, “and everybody buys the distinction between what the media, what the newspapers and television say about the Panthers and what they really are. But this thing of the threats is in our collective memory. Bayard Rustin was supposed to be here tonight, but he isn't here, and for an important reason. The reason he isn't here tonight is that he was warned that his life would be in danger, and that's what I want to know about.”

It's a gasper, this remark. Lefcourt and Quat start talking, but then, suddenly, before Don Cox can open his mouth, Lenny reaches up from out of the depths of the easy chair and hands him a mint. There it is, rising up on the tips of his fingers, a mint. It is what is known as a puffed mint, an after-dinner mint, of the sort that suddenly appears on the table in little silver Marthinsen bowls, as if

deposited by the mint fairy, along with the coffee, but before the ladies leave the room, a mint so small, fragile, angel-white and melt-crazed that you have to pick it up with the papillae of your forefinger and thumb lest it get its thing on a straightaway, namely, one tiny sweet salivary peppermint melt . . . in mid-air, so to speak . . . just so . . . Cox takes the mint and stares at Bernstein with a strange Plexiglas gaze . . . This little man sitting down around his kneecaps with his Groovy gear and love beads on . . .

Finally Cox comes around. “We don’t know anything about that,” he says. “We don’t threaten anybody. Like, we only advocate violence in self-defense, because we are a colonial people in a capitalist country . . . you know? . . . and the only thing we can do is defend ourselves against oppression.”

Quat is trying to steer the whole thing away—but suddenly Otto Preminger speaks up from the sofa where he’s sitting, also just a couple of feet from Cox:

“He used von important vord”—then he looks at Cox—“you said zis is de most repressive country in de vorld. I dun’t beleef zat.”

Cox says, “Let me answer the question—”

Lenny breaks in: “When you say ‘capitalist’ in that pejorative tone, it reminds me of Stokely. When you read Stokely’s statement in **The New York Review of Books**, there’s only one place where he says what he really means, and that’s way down in paragraph 28 or something, and you realize he is talking about setting up a socialist government—”

Preminger is still talking to Cox: “Do you mean dat zis government is more repressive zan de government of Nigeria?”

“I don’t know anything about the government of Nigeria,” says Cox. “Let me answer the question—”

“You dun’t eefen **listen** to de kvestion,” says Preminger. “How can you **answer** de kvestion?”

“Let me answer the question,” Cox says, and he says to Lenny: “We believe that the government is obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income . . . see . . . but if the white businessman will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessman and placed in the community, with the people.”

Lenny says: “How? I dig it! But how?”

“Right on!” Someone in the back digs it, too.

“Right on!”

Julie Belafonte pipes up: “That’s a very difficult question!”

“You can’t blueprint the future,” says Cox.

“You mean you’re just going to **wing** it?” says Lenny.

“Like . . . this is what we want, man,” says Cox, “we want the same thing as you, we want peace. We want to come home at night and be with the family . . . and turn on the TV . . . and smoke a little **weed** . . . you know? . . . and get a little **high** . . . you dig? . . . and we’d like to get into that bag, like anybody else. But we can’t do that . . . see . . . because if they send in the pigs to rip us off and brutalize our families, then we have to fight.”

“I couldn’t agree with you more!” says Lenny. “But what do you do—”

Cox says: “We think that this country is going more and more toward fascism to oppress those people who have the will to fight back—”

“I agree with you one hundred percent!” says Lenny. “But you’re putting it in defensive terms, and don’t you really mean it in offensive terms—”

“That’s the language of the oppressor,” says Cox. “As soon as—”

“Dat’s not—” says Preminger.

“Let me finish!” says Cox. “As a Black Panther, you get used to—”

“Dat’s not—”

“Let me finish! As a Black Panther, you learn that language is used as an instrument of control, and—”

“He doesn’t **mean** dat!”

“Let me finish!”

Cox to Preminger to Bernstein to . . . they’re wrestling for the Big Ear . . . quite a struggle . . . Cox standing up by the piano covered in the million-dollar **chatchkas** . . . Lenny sunk down into the Margaret Owen easy chair . . . Preminger, the irresistible commandant of the sofa . . . they’re pulling and tugging—

—whereupon the little gray man, the servant of history, pops up from beside the other piano and says:

“Mr. Bernstein, will you yield the floor to Mrs. Bernstein?”

And suddenly Felicia, serene and flawless as Mary Astor, is on her feet: “I would just like to quote this passage from Richard Harris, in **The New Yorker**,” and she is standing up beside the other piano with a copy of **The New Yorker** in her hand, reading from an article by Richard Harris on the Justice Department.

“This is a letter from Roger Wilkins to Secretary Finch,” says Felicia. This is Roy Wilkins’ nephew, Roger Wilkins, former head of the Justice Department’s Community Relations Service, and now with the Ford Foundation. “A year ago of the question, because black leaders—even the most militant of them—knew that all they would accomplish was to get themselves and their followers killed.”

Felicia looks up at the audience, as during any first-class reading, and her voice begins to take on more and more theatrical lift. “But I think that the despair is far deeper now. You just can’t go on seeing how white men live, the opportunity they

have, listening to all the promises they make and realizing how little they have delivered, without having to fight an almost ungovernable rage within yourself.” Felicia’s voice has taken on the very vibrato of emotion. And in the back room, standing close to Gail Lumet, is Roger Wilkins himself. “Some black children in this country,” recites Felicia, “have to eat dog food or go hungry. No man can go on watching his children grow up in hunger and misery like that with wealth and comfort on every side of him, and continue to regard himself as a man. I think that there are black men who have enough pride now so that they would rather die than go on living the way they have to live. And I think that most of us moderates would have difficulty arguing with them. The other day, an old friend of mine, a black man who has spent his life trying to work things out for his people within the system, said to me”—Felicia looks at the audience and sets up the clincher —“**Roger, I’m going to get a gun. I can’t help it**”.”

“That’s maaaaa-velous!” says Lenny. He says it with profound emotion . . . He sighs . . . He sinks back into the easy chair . . . Richard Harris . . . Ahura Mazda with the original flaming revelation . . .

Cox seizes the moment: “Our Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton, has said if we can’t find a meaningful life . . . you know . . . maybe we can have a meaningful death . . . and one reason the power structure fears the Black Panthers is that they know the Black Panthers are ready to die for what they believe in, and a lot of us have already died.”

“. . . ‘When you walk into this house, into this building’—
Lenny gestures as if to take it all in—‘you must feel
infuriated.’ . . .”

Lenny seems like a changed man. He looks up at Cox and says, “When you walk into this house, into this building”—and he gestures vaguely as if to take it all in, the moldings, the sconces, the Roquefort morsels rolled in crushed nuts, the servants, the elevator attendant and the doorman downstairs in their white dickeys, the marble lobby, the brass struts on the marquee out front —“when you walk into this house, you must feel infuriated!”

Cox looks embarrassed. “No, man . . . I manage to overcome that . . . That’s a personal thing . . . I used to get very uptight about things like that, but—”

“Don’t you get bitter? Doesn’t that make you mad?”

“Noooo, man . . . That’s a personal thing . . . see . . . and I don’t get mad about that personally. I’m over that.”

“Well,” says Lenny, “it makes **me** mad!”

And Cox stares at him, and the Plexiglas lowers over his eyes once more . . . These cats—if I wasn’t here to see it—

“This is a very paradoxical situation,” says Lenny. “Having this apartment makes this meeting possible, and if this apartment didn’t exist, you wouldn’t have it. And

yet—well, it's a very paradoxical situation.”

“I don't get uptight about all that,” says Cox. “I've been through all that. I grew up in the country, in a farming community, and I finally became a ‘respectable Negro’ . . . you know . . . I did all the right things. I got a job and a car, and I was wearing a suit and getting good pay, and as long as I didn't break any rules I could go to work and wear my suit and get paid. But then one day it dawned on me that I was only kidding myself, because that wasn't where it was at. In a society like ours I might as well have had my hair-guard on and my purple pants, because when I walked down the street I was just another **nigger** . . . see . . . just another **nigger** . . . But I don't have that hate thing going. Like, I mean, I can **feel** it, I can **get** uptight. Like the other day I was coming out of the courthouse in Queens and there was this off-duty pig going by . . . see . . . and he gives me the finger. That's the pig's way of letting you know he's got his eye on you. He gives me the finger . . . and for some reason or other, this kind of got the old **anger** boiling . . . you know?”

“God,” says Lenny, and he swings his head around toward the rest of the room, “most of the people in this room have had a problem about being unwanted!”

Most of the people in this room have had a problem about being unwanted.

There it is. It's an odd feeling. Most-of-the-people-in-this-room's . . . heads have just spun out over this one. Lenny is unbeatable. Mental Jotto at 3 a.m. He has done it. He has just steered the Black Panther movement into a 1955 Jules Feiffer cartoon. Rejection, Security, Anxiety, Oedipus, Electra, Neurosis, Transference, Id, Superego, Archetype and Field of Perception, that wonderful 1950s game, beloved by all educated young men and women in the East who grew up in the era of the great cresting tide of Freud, Jung, Adler, Reik & Reich, when everyone either had an analyst or quoted Ernest Dichter telling Maytag that dishwashing machines were bought by women with anal compulsions. And in the gathering insulin coma Lenny has the Panthers and 75 assorted celebrities and culturati heading off on the long march into the neural jungle, 1955 Forever. One way or another we **all** feel insecure—right? And so long as we repress our—it's marvelous! Mr. Auricularis! The Village Explainer! **Most of the people in this room have had a problem about being unwanted—**

Cox looks at him, with the Plexiglas lowering . . . But the little gray man, the servant of history, jumps in once more. He sends a lovely young thing, one of the blondes in the room, over to whisper something in Lenny's ear. “Livingston Wingate is here,” she tells him.

No slouch in such situations, Lenny immediately seems to dope this out as just an interruption to shut him up.

“Oh, why don't I just leave!” he says. He makes a mock move as if to get up from the chair and leave the room. “Noooo! Noooo!” everybody says. Everybody is talking at once, but then Barbara Walters, who has had this certain thing building up inside of her, springs it loose. Everybody knows that voice, Barbara Walters of the **Today Show**, televised coast to coast every morning, a mid-Atlantic voice,

several miles east of Newfoundland and heading for Blackpool, and she leans forward, sitting in the third row in her checked pantsuit with the great fur collar:

"I'm a member of the news media, but I'm here as an individual, because I'm concerned about the questions raised here, and there has been a lot of talk about the media. Last year we interviewed Mrs. Eldridge Cleaver, Kathleen Cleaver, and it was not an edited report or anything of that sort. She had a chance to say whatever she wanted, and this is a very knowledgeable, very brilliant, very articulate woman . . . And I asked her, I said, 'I have a child, and you have a child,' and I said, 'Do you see any possibility that our children will be able to grow up and live side by side in peace and harmony?' and she said, 'not with the conditions that prevail in this society today, not without the overthrow of the system.' So I asked her, 'How do you feel, as a mother, about the prospect of your child being in that kind of confrontation, a nation in flames?' and she said, 'Let it burn!' And I said, 'What about your own child?' and she said, 'May he light the first match!' And that's what I want to ask you about. I'm still here as a concerned person, not as a reporter, but what I'm talking about, and what Mr. Bernstein and Mr. Preminger are talking about, when they ask you about the way you refer to capitalism, is whether you see any chance at all for a peaceful solution to these problems, some way out without violence."

Cox says, "Not with the present system. I can't see that. Like, what can change? There's 750 families that own all the wealth of this country—"

"Dat's not **tdrue!**" says Preminger. "Dere are many people vid vealth all over—"

"Let me finish!—and these families are the most reactionary elements in the country. A man like H. L. Hunt wouldn't let me in his house."

Barbara Walters says: "I'm not talking about—"

"I wouldn't **go** to his house eef he **asked me,**" says Preminger.

"Well I almost—"

"Vot about Ross Perot? He's a Texan, too, and is spending millions of dollars trying to get de vives of prisoners of war in touch with the government of North Vietnam—"

Cox says: "I would respect him more if he was giving his money to hungry children."

"He is!" says Preminger. "He is! You dun't **read** anyt'ing! Dat's your tdrouble!"

"I'm not talking about that," Barbara Walters says to Cox. "I'm talking about what's supposed to happen to other people if you achieve your goals."

"You can't just put it like that!" says Julie Belafonte. "That needs clarification."

Barbara Walters says: "I'm talking as a white woman who has a white husband, who is a capitalist, or an agent of capitalists, and I am, too, and I want to know if you are to have your freedom, does that mean we have to go!"

Barbara Walters and her husband, Lee Guber, a producer, up against the wall in the cellar in Ekaterinburg.

Cox says, "For one person to be free, everybody must be free. As long as one whole class is oppressed, there is no freedom in a society. A lot of young white people are beginning to—"

"Dat eesn't vat she's asking—"

"Let me finish—let me answer the question—"

"You dun't even **listen** to de kvestion—"

"Let me finish—A lot of young white people are beginning to understand about oppression. They're part of the petty bourgeoisie. It's a different class from the black community, but there's a common oppressor. They're protesting about individual freedoms, to have their music and smoke weed and have sex. These are individual freedoms but they are beginning to understand—"

"If you're for freedom," says Preminger, "tell me dis: Is it all right for a Jew to leave Russia and settle in Israel?"

"Let me finish—"

"Is it all right for a Jew to leave Russia and settle in Israel?"

Most people in the room don't know what the hell Preminger is driving at, but Leon Quat and the little gray man know right away. They're trying to wedge into the argument. The hell with that little number, that Israel and Al Fatah and U.A.R. and MIGS and USSR and Zionist imperialist number—not in this room you don't —

Quat stands up with a terrific one-big-happy-family smile on and says: "I think we're all ready to agree that the crisis in this country today comes not from the Black Panthers but from the war in Vietnam, and—"

But there is a commotion right down front. Barbara Walters is saying something to one of the Panther wives, Mrs. Lee Berry, in the front row.

"What did she say to you?" says Lenny.

"I was talking to this very nice lady," says Barbara Walters, "and she said, 'You sound like you're afraid.'"

Mrs. Berry laughs softly and shakes her head.

"I'm not afraid of you," Barbara Walters says to her, "but maybe I am about the idea of the death of my children!"

"Please!" says Quat.

"All I'm asking is if we can work together to create justice without violence and destruction!"

"Please!" says Quat.

“He never answered her question!” says Preminger.

“Please!”

“I can answer the question—”

“You dun’t eefen **listen**—”

“So—”

“Let me answer the question! I can deal with that. We don’t believe that it will happen within the present system, but—”

Lenny says: “So you’re going to start a revolution from a Park Avenue apartment!”

Right on!

Quat sings out desperately: “Livingston Wingate is here! Can we please have a word from Mr. Livingston Wingate of the Urban League?” Christ, yes, bring in Livingston Wingate.

So Livingston Wingate, executive director of the New York Urban League, starts threading his way down to the front. He hasn’t got the vaguest notion of what has been going on, except that this is Panther night at the Bernsteins’. He apparently thinks he is called upon to wax forensic, because he starts into a long disquisition on the changing mood of black youth.

“I was on television this morning with a leader of the Panther movement, he says, “and—”

“That was me”—Cox from his chair beside the piano.

Wingate wheels around. “Oh, yes . . .” He does a double take. “I didn’t see you here . . . That was **you** . . . Hah . . .” And then he continues, excoriating himself and his generation of black leaders for their failures, because non-violence didn’t work, and he can no longer tell the black youth not to throw that rock—

In the corner, meanwhile, by the piano, Preminger has reached out and grabbed Cox by the forearm in some kind of grip of goodwill and brotherhood and is beaming as if to say, I didn’t mean anything by it, and Cox is trying to grab his hand and shake hands and say that’s O.K., and Preminger keeps going for the forearm, and Cox keeps going for the hand, and they’re lost there in a weird eccentric tangle of fingers and wrist bones between the sofa and the grand piano, groping and tugging—

—because, says Livingston Wingate, he cannot prove to the ghetto youth that anything else will work, and so forth and so on, “and they are firmly convinced that there can be no change unless the system is changed.”

“Less than 5 per cent of the people of this country have 90 per cent of the wealth,” says Lefcourt the lawyer, “and 10 per cent of them have most of the 90 per cent. The mass of the people by following the system can never make changes, and there is no use continuing to tell people about constitutional guarantees, either.

Leon and I could draw up a constitution that would give us all the power, and we could make it so deep and legitimate that you would have to kill us to change it!”

Julie Belafonte rises up in front and says: “Then we’ll kill you!”

“Power to the people!” says Leon Quat . . . and all rise to their feet . . . and Charlotte Curtis puts the finishing touches in her notebook . . . and the white servants wait patiently in the wings to wipe the drink rings off the Amboina tables . . .

Still wound up with the excitement of the mental Jotto they had all just been through, Lenny, Felicia and Don Cox kept on talking there in the duplex, long after most guests had gone, up to about 10 p.m., in fact. Lenny and Felicia knew they had been through a unique experience, but they had no idea of the furor that was going to break the next day when Charlotte Curtis’ account of the party would appear in the **New York Times**.

The story appeared in two forms—a preliminary report rushed through for the first edition, which reaches the streets about 10:30 p.m., and a much fuller one for the late city edition, the one most New Yorkers see in the morning. Neither account was in any way critical of what had gone on. Even after reading them, Lenny and Felicia probably had little inkling of what was going to happen next. The early version began:

“Mrs. Leonard Bernstein, who has raised money for such diverse causes as indigent Chileans, the New York Philharmonic, Church World Service, Israeli student scholarships, emotionally disturbed children, the New York Civil Liberties Union, A Greek boys’ school and Another Mother for Peace, was into what she herself admitted yesterday was a whole new thing. She gave a cocktail party for the Black Panthers. ‘Not a frivolous party,’ she explained before perhaps 30 guests arrived, ‘but a chance for all of us to hear what’s happening to them. They’ve really been treated very inhumanely.’”

Felicia herself couldn’t have asked for it to be put any better. In the later edition it began: “Leonard Bernstein and a Black Panther leader argued the merits of the Black Panther party’s philosophy before nearly 90 guests last night in the Bernsteins’ elegant Park Avenue duplex”—and went on to give some of the dialogue of Lenny’s, Cox’s and Preminger’s argument over Panther tactics and Lenny’s refrain of “I dig it.” There was also a picture of Cox standing beside the piano and talking to the group, with Felicia in the background. No one in the season of Radical Chic could have asked for better coverage. It took up a whole page in the fashion section, along with ads for B. Altman’s, Edith Imre wigs, fur coats, the Sherry-Netherland Hotel, and The Sun and Surf (Palm Beach).

What the Bernsteins probably did not realize at first was that the story was going out on the **New York Times** News Service wires. In other cities throughout the United States and Europe it was played on page one, typically, to an international chorus of horse laughs or nausea, depending on one’s **Weltanschauung**. The

English, particularly, milked the story for all it was worth and seemed to derive one of the great cackles of the year from it.

By the second day, however—Friday—the Bernsteins certainly knew they were in for it. The **Times** ran an editorial! on the party. It was headed “False Note on Black Panthers”:

“Emergence of the Black Panthers as the romanticized darlings of the politico-cultural jet set is an affront to the majority of black Americans. This so-called party, with its confusion of Mao-Marxist ideology and Fascist paramilitarism, is fully entitled to protection of its members’ constitutional rights. It was to make sure that those rights are not abridged by persecution masquerading as law-enforcement that a committee of distinguished citizens has recently been formed [a group headed by Arthur Goldberg that sought to investigate the killing of Fred Hampton by Chicago police].

“ . . . The so-called ‘party’ for the Panthers had not been a party at all. It had been a meeting. Nothing social about it . . . ”

“In contrast, the group therapy plus fund-raising soiree at the home of Leonard Bernstein, as reported in this newspaper yesterday, represents the sort of elegant slumming that degrades patrons and patronized alike. It might be dismissed as guilt-relieving fun spiked with social consciousness, except for its impact on those blacks and whites seriously working for complete equality and social justice. It mocked the memory of Martin Luther King Jr., whose birthday was solemnly observed throughout the nation yesterday.

“Black Panthers on a Park Avenue pedestal create one more distortion of the Negro image. Responsible black leadership is not likely to cheer as the Beautiful People create a new myth that Black Panther is beautiful.”

Elegant slumming . . . mocked the memory of Martin Luther King . . . Black Panthers on a Park Avenue pedestal . . . the Beautiful People . . . it was a stunner. And this was not the voice of some right-wing columnist like William Buckley (although he would be heard from)—this was an editorial, on the editorial page, underneath the eagle medallion with “All the News That’s Fit To Print” and “Established 1851” on it . . . in the very **New York Times** itself.

Felicia spoke to Charlotte Curtis, and Charlotte Curtis agreed with her that the **Times** was wrong to characterize the party as “elegant slumming.” The following week she wrote a story testifying to the sincerity of many Society figures, including Felicia, who had worked diligently for the less fortunate. But she stood by her original story down to the last detail. Felicia seemed to accept this in good grace. But Lenny was not so sure. The whole thing sounded like a put-up job. Look at it this way: they held a meeting—not a party, but a meeting—in his home on one of the most important issues of the day, and the **Times** chose to run a story not by Homer Bigart or Harrison Salisbury, but by a Society writer who puts in a lot of “hairbrained” details about his Black Watch pants and a lot of sappy quotes he

never uttered—right? This sets him up like a dummy for a roundhouse right from the cheap seats—the editorial about “elegant slumming” and the mockery of the memory of Martin Luther King. Not only that, he himself was already beginning to be mocked in New York in the old word-of-mouth carnival. It was unbelievable. Cultivated people, intellectuals, were characterizing him as “a masochist” and—and this was the really cruel part—as “the David Susskind of American Music.”

Felicia sat down that very day, Friday, and wrote an aggrieved but calmly worded letter to the **Times**:

“As a civil libertarian, I asked a number of people to my house on Jan. 14 in order to hear the lawyer and others involved with the Panther 21 discuss the problem of civil liberties as applicable to the men now waiting trial, and to help raise funds for their legal expenses.

“Those attending included responsible members of the black leadership as well as distinguished citizens from a variety of walks of life, all of whom share common concern on the subject of civil liberties and equal justice under our laws.

“The outcome of the Panther 21 trial will be determined by the judge and jury. That was not our concern. But the ability of the defendants to prepare a proper defense will depend on the help given prior to the trial, and this help must not be denied because of lack of funds.

“It was for this deeply serious purpose that our meeting was called. The frivolous way in which it was reported as a ‘fashionable’ event is unworthy of the **Times**, and offensive to all people who are committed to humanitarian principles of justice.”

Felicia delivered the letter in person to the **Times** that afternoon. The Bernsteins picked up Saturday’s paper—and no letter. In fact, it did not appear until Wednesday, **after** the publication of a letter from someone named Porter saying things like “we shall soon witness the birth of local Rent-a-Panther organizations.” This fed the conspiracy theory, at least in the Bernstein household. By now columnists all over the place were taking their whack at the affair. Buckley, for example, cited it as an object lesson in the weird masochism of the white liberal who bids the Panther come devour him in his “luxurious lair.”

But if the Bernsteins thought their main problem at this point was a bad press, they were wrong. A controversy they were apparently oblivious of suddenly erupted around them. Namely, the bitterness between Jews and blacks over an issue that had been building for three years, ever since Black Power became important. The first inkling the Bernsteins had was when they started getting hate mail, some of it apparently from Jews of the Queens-Brooklyn Jewish Defense League variety. Then the League’s national chairman, Rabbi Meir Kahane, blasted Lenny publicly for joining a “trend in liberal and intellectual circles to lionize the Black Panthers . . . We defend the right of blacks to form defense groups, but they’ve gone beyond this to a group which hates other people. That’s not

nationalism, that's Naziism. And if Bernstein and other such intellectuals do not know this, they know nothing."

The Jewish Defense League had been formed in 1968 for the specific purpose of defending Jews in low-rent neighborhoods, many of which are black. But even many wealthier and more cultivated Jews, who look at the Defense League as somewhat extremist, Low Rent and gauche, agreed essentially with the point Kahane was making. One of the ironies of the history of the Jews in America was that their long championship of black civil liberties had begun to backfire so badly in the late 1960s. As Seymour Lipset has put it, "The integrationist movement was largely an alliance between Negroes and Jews (who, to a considerable extent, actually dominated it). Many of the interracial civil-rights organizations have been led and financed by whites, and the majority of their white members have been Jews. Insofar as a Negro effort emerged to break loose from involvement with whites, from domination of the civil-rights struggle by white liberals, it meant concretely a break with Jews, for they were the whites who were active in these movements. The Black Nationalist leadership had to push whites (Jews) 'out of the way,' and to stop white (Jewish) 'interference' in order to get whites (Jews) 'off their backs.'"

“. . . 'If you're for freedom,' says Otto Preminger, 'tell me dis: Is it all right for a Jew to leave Russia and settle in Israel?' . . ."

Meanwhile, Black Power groups such as SNCC and the Black Panthers were voicing support for the Arabs against Israel. This sometimes looked like a mere matter of black nationalism; after all, Egypt was a part of Africa, and black nationalist literature sometimes seemed to identify the Arabs as blacks fighting the white Israelis. Or else it looked like merely a commitment to world socialism; the Soviet Union and China supported the Arabs against the imperialist tools, the Israelis. But many Jewish leaders regarded the anti-Zionist stances of groups like the Panthers as a veiled American-brand anti-Semitism, tied up with such less theoretical matters as extortion, robbery and mayhem by blacks against Jews in ghetto areas. They cited things like the August 30, 1969, issue of **Black Panther**, which carried an article entitled "Zionism (Kosher Nationalism) + Imperialism = Fascism" and spoke of "the fascist pigs." The June, 1967, issue of another Panther publication, **Black Power**, had carried a poem entitled "Jew-Land," which said:

**Jew-Land, On a summer afternoon, Really, Couldn't kill the Jews too soon,
Now dig. The Jews have stolen our bread
Their filthy women tricked our men into bed
So I won't rest until the Jews are dead . . .
In Jew-Land, Don't be a Tom on Israel's side
Really, Cause that's where Christ was crucified.**

But in the most literate circles of the New Left—well, the Panthers' pronouncements on foreign affairs couldn't be taken too seriously. Ideologically, they were still feeling their way around. To be a UJA Zionist about the whole thing

was to be old-fashioned, middle-class middle-aged, suburban, Oceanside-Cedarhurstian, in an age when the youth of the New Left had re-programmed the whole circuitry of Left opposition to oppression. The main thing was that the Panthers were the legitimate vanguard of the black struggle for liberation—among the culturati whom Leonard Bernstein could be expected to know and respect, this was not a point of debate, it was an axiom. The chief theoretical organ of Radical Chic, **The New York Review of Books**, regularly cast Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver as the Simón Bolívar and José Martí of the black ghettos. On August 24, 1967, **The New York Review of Books** paid homage to the summer urban riot season by printing a diagram for the making of a Molotov cocktail on its front page. In fact, the journal was sometimes referred to good-naturedly as **The Parlour Panther**, with the **-our** spelling of **Parlour** being an allusion to its concurrent motif of anglophilia. The **Review's** embracing of such apparently contradictory attitudes—the nitty-gritty of the ghetto warriors and the preciousness of traditional English Leavis & Loomis intellectualism—was really no contradiction at all, of course. It was merely the essential double-track mentality of Radical Chic—**nostalgie de la boue** and high protocol—in its literary form. In any case, given all this, people like Lenny and Felicia could hardly have been expected to comprehend a complex matter like the latter-day friction between blacks and Jews.

To other people involved in Radical Chic, however, the picture was now becoming clear as day. This was no time for Custer's last stand. This was time . . . to panic. Two more couples had already agreed to give parties for the Panthers: Peter and Cheray Duchin and Frank and Domna Stanton. The Duchins had already gotten some of the static themselves. Peter had gone to Columbus, Ohio, with his orchestra . . . and the way some of the locals let him have it! All because Charlotte Curtis' article had quoted Cheray saying how thrilled she was at the prospect of meeting her first Black Panther at Felicia's. Columbus freaking **Ohio**, yet. Nor did it take the Stantons long to put two and two together. Frank Stanton, the entrepreneur, not the broadcaster, had a duplex co-op that made Lenny's look like a fourth-floor walkup. It had marble floors, apricot velvet walls, trompel'oeil murals in the dining room, the works. A few photos of the Panthers against this little backdrop—well, you could write the story yourself.

On Saturday evening, the 24th, the Duchins, the Stantons, Sidney and Gail Lumet, and Lenny and Felicia met at the Bernsteins' to try to think out the whole situation. Sidney Lumet was convinced that a new era of "McCarthyism" had begun. It was a little hard to picture the editorial and women's page staffs of the **Times** as the new Joe McCarthy—but damn it . . . The **Times** was pushing its own pet organizations, the NAACP, the Urban League, the Urban Coalition, and so on. Why did it look like the **Times** always tried to punish prominent Jews who refused to lie down and play good solid burghers? Who was it who said the **Times** was a Catholic newspaper run by Jews to fool the Protestants? Some professor at Columbia . . . In any case, they were now all "too exposed" to do the Panthers any good by giving parties for the Panthers in their homes. They would do better to work through organizations like the NAACP legal defense fund.

Lenny couldn't get over the whole affair. Earlier in the evening he had talked to a reporter and told him it was "nauseating." The so-called "party" for the Panthers had not been a party at all. It had been a meeting. There was nothing social about it. As to whether he thought because parties were held in the homes of socially prominent people simply because the living rooms were large and the acoustics were good, he didn't say. In any case, he and Felicia didn't give parties, and they didn't go to parties, and they were certainly not in anybody's "jet set." And they were not "masochists," either.

So four nights later Lenny, in a tuxedo, and Felicia, in a black dress, walked into a party in the triplex of one of New York's great hostesses, overlooking the East River, on the street of social dreams, East 52nd, and right off the bat some woman walks right up to him and says, "Lenny, I just think you're a masochist." It was unbelievable.

The panic turned out to be good for The Friends of the Earth, somewhat the way the recession has been bad for the Four Seasons but good for Riker's. Many matrons, such as Cheray Duchin, turned their attention toward the sables, cheetahs and leopards, once the Panthers became radioactive. The Stantons, meanwhile, dropped their plans for a Panther party and had one instead for the Buddhists, and Richard Feigen dropped his plans for a party because of the Panthers' support for Al Fatah. Leonard Bernstein went off to England to rehearse with the London Symphony Orchestra for an already scheduled performance in the Royal Albert Hall. He couldn't have been very sorry about the trip. Unbelievable hostility was still bubbling around him. In Miami, Jewish pickets forced a moviehouse to withdraw a film of Lenny conducting the Israel Philharmonic on Mount Scopus in celebration of Israel's victory in the Six-Day War.

In general, the Radically Chic made a strategic withdrawal, denouncing the "witchhunt" of the press as they went. There was brief talk of a whole series of parties for the Panthers in and around New York, by way of showing the world that socialites and culturati were ready to stand up and be counted in defense of what the Panthers, and, for that matter, the Bernsteins, stood for. But it never happened. In fact, if the socialites already in line for Panther parties had gone ahead and given them in clear defiance of the opening round of attacks on the Panthers and the Bernsteins, they might well have struck an extraordinary counterblow in behalf of the Movement. This is, after all, a period of great confusion among culturati and liberal intellectuals generally, and one in which a decisive display of conviction and self-confidence can be overwhelming. But for the Radically Chic to have fought back in this way would have been a violation of their own innermost convictions. Radical Chic, after all, is only radical in style; in its heart it is part of Society and its traditions. Politics, like Rock, Pop and Camp, has its uses; but to put one's whole status on the line for **nostalgie de la boue** in any of its forms would be unprincipled.

Meanwhile, the damnable press dogged Lenny even in London. A United Press International reporter interviewed him there and sent out a story in which Lenny said: "They"—the Panthers—"are a bad lot. They have behaved very badly. They

have laid their own graves. It was the Panthers themselves who spoiled the deal, they won't be rational." The next day Lenny told a **New York Times** reporter that the UPI story was "nonsense." He didn't remember what he had said, but he hadn't said anything like that. At the same time he released a statement that he had actually drawn up in New York before he left. It said that there had been no "party" for the Panthers in his home in the first place; it had been a meeting, and "the only concern at our meeting was civil liberties." "If we deny these Black Panthers their democratic rights because their philosophy is unacceptable to us, then we are denying our own democracy." He now made it clear that he was opposed to their philosophy, however. "It is not easy to discern a consistent political philosophy among the Black Panthers, but it is reasonably clear that they are advocating violence against their fellow citizens, the downfall of Israel, the support of Al Fatah and other similarly dangerous and ill-conceived pursuits. To all of these concepts I am vigorously opposed and will fight against them as hard as I can."

And still this damned nauseating furor would not lie down and die. Wouldn't you know it—two days after the, well, meeting, on the very day he and Felicia were reeling from the **Times** editorial, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, that renegade, had been down in Washington writing his famous "benign neglect" memo to Nixon. In it Moynihan had presented him and Felicia and their "party" as Exhibit A of the way black revolutionaries like the Panthers had become the "culture heroes" of the Beautiful People. Couldn't you just see Nixon sitting in the Oval Room and clucking and fuming and muttering things like "rich snob bums" as he read: "You perhaps did not note on the society page of yesterday's **Times** that Mrs. Leonard Bernstein gave a cocktail party on Wednesday to raise money for the Panthers. Mrs. W. Vincent Astor was among the guests. Mrs. Peter Duchin, 'the rich blonde wife of the orchestra leader,' was thrilled. 'I've never met a Panther,' she said. 'This is a first for me.'"

On February 29 someone leaked the damned memo to the damned **New York Times**, and that did it. Now he was invested, installed, inaugurated, instituted, transmogrified as Mr. Parlour Panther for all time. The part about their "cocktail party" was right in the same paragraph with the phrase "benign neglect." And it didn't particularly help the situation that Mrs. Astor got off a rapid letter to the **Times** informing them that she was **not** at the "party." She received an invitation, like all sorts of other people, she supposed, but, in fact, she had **not** gone. Thanks a lot, Brooke Astor.

Fools, boors, philistines, Birchers, B'nai B'rithes, Defense Leaguers, Hadassah theatre party pirhanas, UJAviators, concert hall Irishmen, WASP ignorati, toads, newspaper readers—they were booing him, Leonard Bernstein, the **egregio maestro . . . Boooooo**. No two ways about it. They weren't clearing their throats. They were squeezed into their \$14.50 bequested seats, bringing up from out of the false bottoms of their bellies the old Low Rent raspberry boos of days gone by. **Boooooo**. Newspaper readers! That harebrained story in the **Times** had told how he and Felicia had given a party for the Black Panthers and how he had pledged a conducting fee to their defense fund, and now, stretching out before him in New

York, was a great starched white-throated audience of secret candystore bigots, greengrocer Moshe Dayans with patches over both eyes . . .

. . . once, after a concert in Italy, an old Italian, one of those glorious old Italians in an iron worsted black suit and a high collar with veritable embroideries of white thread mending the cracks where the collar folds over, one of those old Europeans who seem to have been steeped, aged, marinated, in centuries of true Culture in a land where people understood the art of **living** and the art of **feeling** and were not ashamed to express what was in their hearts—this old man had come up to him with his eyes brimming and his honest gnarled hands making imaginary snowballs and had said: “Egregio maestro! **Egreggggggggggio maestro!**” The way he said it, combining the **egregio**, meaning “distinguished” with the **maestro**, meaning “master” . . . well, the way he said it meant a conductor so great, so brilliant, so dazzling, so transported, so transcendental, so—yes!—immortal . . . well, there is no word in the whole lame dumb English language to describe it. And in that moment Leonard Bernstein knew that he had reached . . .

Boooooooo! Booooooooo! It was unbelievable. But it was real. These greengrocers—he was their whipping boy, and a bunch of \$14.50 white-throated cretins were booing him, and it was no insomniac hallucination in the loneliness of 3 a.m.

Would that black apparition, that damnable Negro by the piano, be rising up from the belly of a concert grand for the rest of his natural life?