



The new left wing is way far out—often in the direction of Mao. Here, a demonstration on Broadway.

To the East Of the Communist Party

By THOMAS R. BROOKS

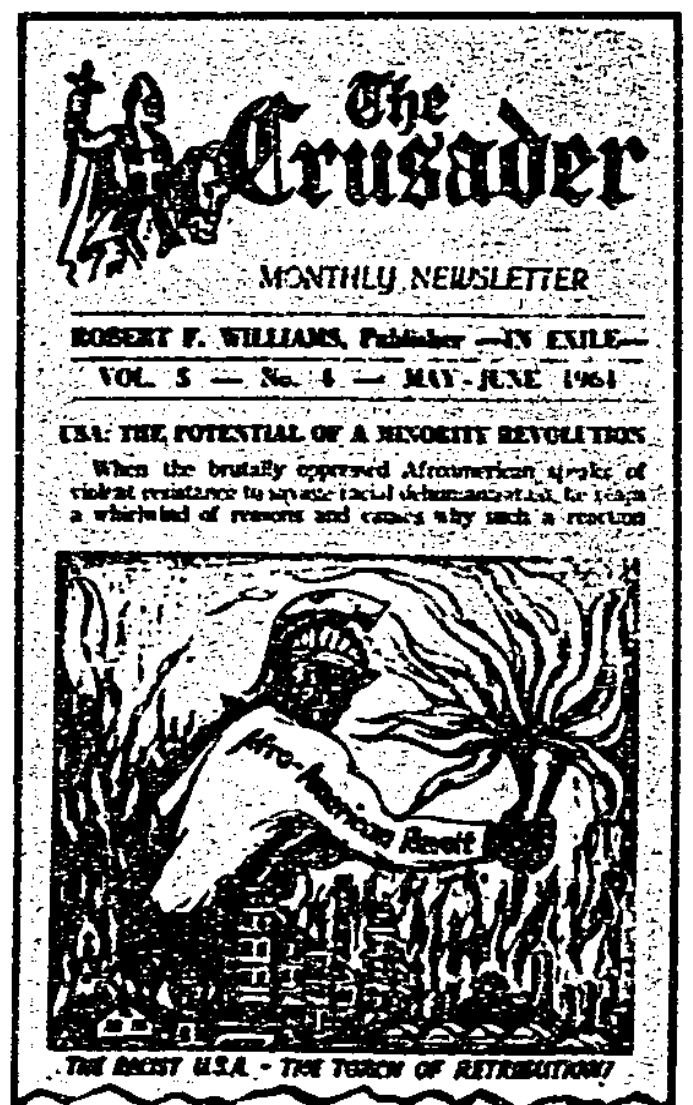
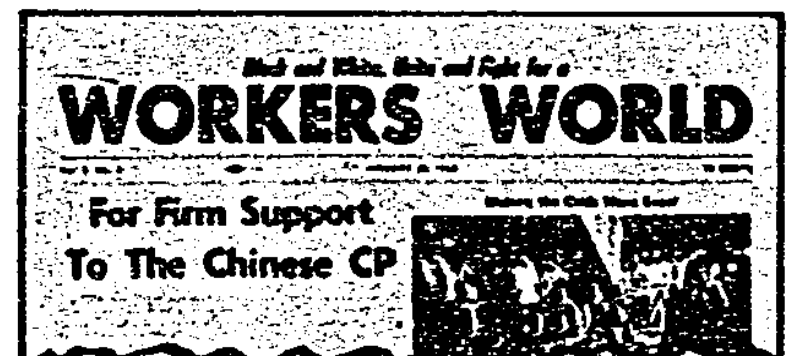
LAST Aug. 14, a group of 84 students returned from Cuba. Since their visit had taken place against the wishes of the State Department, the homecoming youngsters were interviewed by curious reporters. Otherwise, an announcement by one of their number, Charles Berrard, might have gone unrecorded. As it was, it went unheeded for six months. Said Berrard: "There are 11 black people who traveled on this trip to Cuba. One girl. And while in

Cuba we decided to call ourselves the Black Liberation Front—and so this is who is addressing you right now, the Black Liberation Front."

Few got the message, though Gordon D. Hall of Boston, who diligently collects such data for his lectures on extremism, tape-recorded Berrard's brief announcement. Then, on Feb. 16, Robert Steele Collier, Walter Augustus Bowe, Khaleel Sayyed and a French-Canadian Separatist, Michelle Duclos, were arrested for allegedly plotting to blow up the Statue of Liberty and the Washington Monument. Collier, Bowe and Sayyed are members of the Black Liberation Front, according to the police, who also described the organiza-

tion as a pro-Castro and pro-Chinese Communist group. Whether or not the charges against Collier and his fellow Black Liberationists will stand up in court, the "plot" is a way-out manifestation of a new extreme left in American politics, an extreme that may be defined by its view of last summer's riots in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant as "a rebellion of the Negro people." It is a view shared by Havana and Peking.

This "Maoist" coloration gives certain far-out left groups an added notoriety in these days of President Lyndon B. Johnson's consensus. But as a self-proclaimed new breed of "Marxist-Leninist," they hardly need the touch of Peking pink to draw



Headlines—Above are samples of the front pages of some of the new left's publications.

attention to themselves and their actions.

The most prominent of the groups is the Progressive Labor Movement (P.L.M.), which has just met in New York to hold a "founding convention of a new United States Communist party." It will be called the Progressive Labor party. "The most hated government in the world today is the government of our country," said a P.L.M. manifesto that went on to pledge a "struggle on whatever level and with whatever forms are necessary [against] the gas-chamber plans of this country's ruling class."

"Today's Communist," Jack Newfield recently wrote in *The Village Voice*, is (Continued on Page 116)

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young, candid, Bohemian, violent, witty, pragmatic and identifies with the Cuban revolution. He reads anything from Swift to Le Roi Jones and listens to anything from Cuban folk melodies to John Coltrane. And he belongs to the Progressive Labor Movement."

The description is a little disingenuous. For one thing, today's Communist is not always candid and not necessarily bohemian.

TODAY'S far-out left consists of any number of front organizations, splits, splinters, tendencies or groups other than the P.L.M. A few of these groups include the New England Party of Labor, the West Coast Ad Hoc Committee for a Marxist-Leninist Party, the Provisional Organizing Committee to Reconstitute the Marxist-Leninist Party in the U.S.A., and the Workers World party. On the periphery, one finds the May 2d Movement, the Harlem Defense Council, Youth Against War and Fascism and CERGE, the Committee to Defend Resistance to Ghetto Life.

These groups are active and vociferous. At demonstrations, their leading activists are sure to be among those who holler "Fascist cops," and are likely to be among the more violent hauled off in police vans. At the World's Fair demonstrations a year ago, as an instance, members of Youth Against War and Fascism were prominent among those who tried to carry out a threatened stall-in. Alex Chernowitz, the Y.A.W.F.'s campus organizer, had his nose bloodied and was arrested for jamming subway doors at the Jackson Heights stop. Key Martin, the Y.A.W.F. chairman, tried to get arrested in support of the stall-in; instead he got whacked on the head and pushed back into the subway

car, and woke up in the next station. The leaders of Youth Against War and Fascism certainly act out their beliefs.

"We place no confidence in the institutions of this society," declares the lead editorial in the group's new magazine, *Partisan*. "If the Marines were to leave Saigon and police Selma instead, wouldn't they carry on their bayonet the same kind of 'democracy' they are inflicting on the Vietnamese?"

Last summer, the way-out left was accused of fomenting the Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant riots and of spreading the outbreaks of ghetto violence to Buffalo, Chicago and Philadelphia. A New York City grand jury is still investigating a possible conspiracy to incite to riot and has subpoenaed more than 30 people, two-thirds of whom are members of the Progressive Labor Movement. Four are in prison for civil contempt and five others have been jailed for criminal contempt arising from the grand jury proceedings. And one P.L.M. leader, Bill Epton, is under indictment for criminal anarchy because of the leaflets the movement distributed during the riots. During the recent waterfront strike, the P.L.M.'s distribution among longshoremen of its publication, *Challenge*, provoked the otherwise amiable Assistant Secretary of Labor, James J. Reynolds, into charging that Communist influence was prolonging the walkout.

Clearly there is a revival of the totalitarian left, though under a somewhat different guise from the heyday of Stalinism. The extreme left today is made up of those who are to the left—or, geographically speaking, to the east—of the Communist party of the U. S. A. Many of those involved are indeed children of the nineteen-thirties generation of Communists and fellow travelers. Most identify emo-

tionally with Fidel Castro and politically with Peking. Their number remains so far small—only about 2,500 to 3,000 altogether—and the revival would be of little significance were it not for the potential damage their presence—and encouragement of extremist demonstrations for demonstration's sake—could bring to the civil-rights movement as well as the peace movement and student groups.

THE OLD GUARD

THE Communist party is no longer much of a threat to anyone. Whole sections of the party, including most of the staff of *The Daily Worker*, quit over such developments as Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin and the Hungarian rebellion. Of those who stayed on, a goodly number have since been expelled as Albanian-Chinese deviants by the orthodox, Moscow-oriented wing. Membership has dwindled to somewhat less than 10,000. And these survivors are dismissed contemptuously by the new leftists. "They're all old ladies up in the Bronx," one said.

In addition, the party has been inhibited by the legal harassment of the Department of Justice, acting under the 1950 Internal Security Act, the so-called Communist Control Law. The act created the Subversive Activities Control Board, which is empowered to hold hearings to determine whether an organization is a Communist action group or a Communist front organization. If the Control Board finds that the organization is either, it must register with the Attorney General and submit annual reports, financial statements and a membership list.

Back in 1961 the Communist party was indicted for failing to register; the case was thrown out of the courts—"on a technicality," according to a Justice Department spokesman. On Feb. 25 the party was indicted once again and the case is now in the courts. "Until that case is settled," the department spokesman said, "there is no point in proceeding with any other groups." Since the act was drafted when there was only one center of world Communism, lawyers say that it seems likely the law may not apply to the new Maoist-type organizations at all, for they certainly are not under the domination of the old, familiar Communist party. "However," said the Justice Department spokesman, "we are keeping an eye on them."

Nonetheless, some Moscow

orientation survives and, indeed, has experienced a modest revival both in the Communist party and within a new organization, the W. E. B. Dubois Clubs of America. Named after the Negro leader who helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and who later became a Communist, the clubs were founded on the West Coast about three years ago. Last June the Dubois Clubs became a national organization, and local clubs have since sprung up at most New York City campuses.

Nationally, the Dubois Clubs claim a membership of about 1,000—with active groups in Madison, Wis.; Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Portland, Pittsburgh and Boston. There are 200 or so members in New York and 200 to 250 in the San Francisco Bay area.

Although the Dubois Clubs disclaim any affiliation with the Communist party (J. Edgar Hoover, on the other hand, says they were "spawned" by it), some Dubois spokesmen do identify with the Soviet bloc. Robert Heisler, a 19-year-old sophomore at City College and New York coordinator of the clubs, puts it this way:

"The Soviet Union and the whole Socialist bloc are on the right track. They have broken loose from some of the basic problems that are at the heart of this country's social system. I don't mean that we're calling for a blueprint, a carbon-copy of what they do. But I do believe that the Soviet Union and the Socialist bloc—including the new nations in Africa and Asia—are more on the way to getting this than is the United States at this point."

Bettina Aptheker, a 20-year-old University of California history major and daughter of the historian Herbert Aptheker, director of the Institute of Marxist Studies, calls herself a "Marxist-Socialist." She is an active Dubois Club member and believes that the "Socialist world, even with all its problems, is moving closer than any other countries toward the sort of society I think should exist in the United States. In the Soviet Union it has almost been achieved."

The pro-Soviet attitude of some of the Dubois leaders has caused some problems for the clubs. According to one West Coast observer of the new radicals, there is a "bitter conflict between the clubs' 'coalition politics head' and their 'Maoist heart.'" In the Bay area, where the clubs are considered a power by the much larger civil-rights forces, the Dubois



ACTIVISTS—Four leaders of the Progressive Labor Movement: from left, Fred Jerome, editor; Bill Epton, vice chairman; Milton Rosen, chairman, and Mortimer Scheer, West Coast organizer. Last week they announced the formation of a new "revolutionary" Progressive Labor party.

people support both the militants within CORE and the N.A.A.C.P., and at the same time try to maintain a relationship with the "moderate" Negro politicians.

"The genius of the Dubois Clubs," said a close observer of the West Coast scene, "is that they have been able to maintain a very radical style while pursuing a very opportunistic line."

The clubs, reportedly, have more people who will get themselves arrested at a moment's notice than anyone else on the West Coast. When their leadership's guard is down, however, some members are quick to indulge in liberal-baiting, Martin Luther King-baiting and vilification of the Socialist party, Michael Harrington and Bayard Rustin.

Last summer, as an instance of Dubois duality, the clubs expressed their solidarity with local CORE and N.A.A.C.P. leaders who had repudiated the moratorium on demonstrations called by the national civil-rights leadership — while, at the same time, the clubs saw to it that there were no demonstrations during the campaign.

The *nouveaux* Marxist-Leninists have little use for the pro-Soviet and conciliatory attitudes of the Dubois Clubs. Unique on the new left, however, is Spartacist, a revolutionary group that views both Cuba and China as "deformed workers' states," worthy of defense against U.S. imperialism but also needing an additional dosage of revolution and further defense against "counter-revolutionary Stalinism." (Russia is a "degenerated workers' state," a far more serious de-

cline from revolutionary virtue in Spartacist eyes.)

Spartacist, a split off the old Trotskyite Socialist Workers party, is considered "sectarian" by many of the new leftists, in part because of its adamant anti-Stalinism and in part because of its ideological purity. As James Robertson, the 36-year-old, mild-mannered ex-chemist who is its chief ideologue, says: "We want to be a Trotskyite party that Trotsky would recognize."

THE WAY-OUT P.L.M.

THE goal of the Progressive Labor Movement, which started four years ago as a Brooklyn mail drop and operated for a time out of an East Village apartment, is much more grandiose—nothing short of being a "vanguard party, capable of leading millions directly." It now runs three offices in New York City—in Harlem, on the Lower East Side and on the Upper West Side. It publishes a monthly organ, Progressive Labor; a theoretical journal, Marxist-Leninist Quarterly; a New York newspaper in English and Spanish, Challenge-Desafio, and a paper in San Francisco, Spark.

The largest *nouveaux* Communist group, it claims a membership of 1,200 in some 60 or 70 clubs around the country — New York City, San Francisco, the Bay area, Seattle, Portland, Louisville, Atlanta, Georgia and Boston. According to Fred Jerome, the editor of Challenge, the average age of its membership is about 25, with 75 per cent of the membership under 30 and close to 95 per cent under 40. About a quarter of the members are Negroes or Puerto Ricans; 50 per cent are stu-

dents, and the rest are "workers of all kinds." Since so many members are young, adds Jerome, "it figures that they were not previously involved in organized politics."

Some of the original group of 15 or so P.L.M. founders, however, come out of the Communist party, including Milt Rosen, the chairman; Bill Epton, the vice chairman, who is under indictment for criminal anarchy, and Jerome. "We felt it necessary to have a revolutionary movement in this country," Rosen said recently, "and one didn't exist. The Communist party, which most of us come from, no longer served that purpose."

Rosen, a balding, heavy-set 39-year-old with freckles and light blue eyes, claims that the P.L.M.'s break with the Communist party "had little to do with international politics—the struggle between the Soviets and the Chinese—but had everything to do with the policies the Communist party followed. We felt that the Communist party was no longer a revolutionary party: It was an apologist for the liberal imperialists and a tail to the Democratic party. It supported the incorrect policy of the Meanys and Reuthers in the labor movement and of the Uncle Toms in the Negro movement—in short, it had become a Marxist A.D.A."

Rosen was born in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, where he still lives with his wife and two children. His father was a garment worker who went into the dress business and is now retired. Rosen grew up in New Jersey; after graduating from high school in 1943, he entered the Army,

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where he earned two battle stars in the North Apennines and the Po Valley. He still favors the ex-G.I.'s postwar uniform of sports coat, khaki trousers and white shirt—with or without tie, depending on the occasion.

After the war Rosen worked for a while in Buffalo as a machinist, becoming a shop steward. Then he worked in various machine shops around New York City, serving as area steward in the old United Electrical Workers Local 485. He was also Crown Heights chairman of the American Labor party for a number of years.

Rosen joined the Communist party right after his discharge from the Army. "I was inspired by the Italian Communist party," he recalled, "and when I came home I saw things happening which I opposed, and I felt only the C.P. was fighting." He was a member of the national committee of the party and its trade-union director for New York State at the time of his expulsion in 1960.

"When the Communist party expelled me," Rosen explained, "they accused me and Mort Scheer [now P.L.M.'s West Coast organizer] of being agents of the Albanian party." Since then the Communist party has charged that P.L.M. is financed by the Chinese through Cuba. P.L.M. leaders deny this, pointing to their self-evident relative poverty.

Bill Epton, another founder of P.L.M. and its vice chairman, was born in Harlem, one of seven children, in 1932. His father is a retired longshore worker. Epton, a graduate of De Witt Clinton High School, served two years in the Army, 14 months of that time in Korea as an artillery wireman.

While in high school he had begun reading Marxist literature distributed by the Young Communist League and "liked it." He became active in the Civil Rights Congress, becoming "convinced that the only solution was Socialism." He joined the Communist party in the mid-fifties, and left with Rosen and others "because the party was not following a Marxist position and had become an appendage of the Democratic party."

As a P.L.M. functionary, Epton earns \$25 a week. His wife works and they live in Harlem, where their two children attend the public schools. Epton ran for the City Council in 1963, but failed to get on the ballot for lack of valid signatures. He may try again this year, for P.L.M. is planning to run two or three "local" candidates either alone or in support of Jesse Gray's Federation for Independent Political Action.

Epton, a tall, thin, moustached, attractive figure, is the chairman of P.L.M.'s Harlem branch, which has an office on Lenox Avenue above a laun-

dry, next door to Sister Conchita's Mystic Readings. Last summer Epton's Harlem group—along with the Harlem Defense Council—distributed "Wanted for Murder" posters featuring a picture of Lieut. Thomas Gilligan, the off-duty policeman who shot and killed a young Negro schoolboy, James Powell, who was allegedly brandishing a knife. The P.L.M. group also distributed leaflets urging Harlem residents "to defend themselves" and sought unsuccessfully to defy a ban on demonstrations imposed by the police at the outset of the Harlem riots. Out of this activity came the present grand jury investigations of P.L.M. and the criminal-anarchy charges against Epton.

When Epton was jailed he was bailed out—with a \$10,000

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bond—by Albert Maher, the son of a Texas millionaire. Maher, a Harvard student with sideburns and a tawny Buffalo Bill moustache, told a New York Times reporter: "I use my resources to help causes that I think are correct." His father, John F. (Big John) Maher, is a wheel in the production of tools for the petroleum industry. Young Maher is considered P.L.M.'s "big contributor."

Fred Jerome, the editor of Challenge, is an intense, slight figure with dark, wavy hair. He became involved in politics through his family. His father, for many years a leading Communist intellectual, is V. J. Jerome. His mother, Alice Jerome, is the chairman of the Integrated Workers Branch of P.L.M. Young Jerome joined the Labor Youth League, a Communist youth organization, when he was 16.

Born and brought up in Manhattan, he graduated from Stuyvesant High School. In 1955 he attended the Warsaw Youth Festival and toured the Soviet Union for two weeks. He went to City College, uptown, where he became editor of a campus newspaper, and graduated magna cum laude with a Phi Beta Kappa key in 1960. He joined the Communist party after graduation, and spent eight months, off and on, in Cuba during 1960-61, writing for The National Guardian, learning Spanish and teaching English. "That, more than anything else," he says,

"made me feel emotionally that it was necessary and possible to make a revolution."

Between trips to Cuba, Jerome worked as a make-up man for a weekly news magazine, then went South to work on newspapers in North Carolina and Georgia. Eventually he became an associate editor of the New York district union paper of the State, County and Municipal Employees. "They fired me after the F.B.I. came by and mentioned my name," Jerome says. He then started P.L.M.'s monthly magazine, Progressive Labor. Jerome lives in Manhattan on the Lower East Side with his wife, who is expecting a child soon.

P.L.M. has taken up all the trappings of the Communist party of the thirties, including the jargon about "democratic centralism," the wish "to be a vanguard of the people's movements" and the casting out of Trotskyite devils. "The party," Milt Rosen wrote in a pre-convention issue of Progressive Labor, "must become first and foremost in our lives." He urged the adoption of a rigorous set of requirements for membership, including a 17-year-old age minimum, familiarity with the program and policies of P.L.M., and the rule that a "candidate member must work with a club for three months and may only be admitted after a two-thirds vote of the club membership."

P.L.M. members are expected to attend all meetings of their local organization, sell P.L.M. publications for at least two hours a week, belong to a P.L.M. study group and "participate in criticism and self-criticism." "No club will recruit a member who presently belongs to any Trotskyite, C.P. or other counterrevolutionary sect." Gossip is frowned upon; factions and cliques "are not to be tolerated." "No party member may make adverse statements about the party politically unless sanctioned by the leading body in the area or nationally."

FRONTS AND SPLINTERS

THE P.L.M. has already promoted some front groups and infiltrated other organizations, much in the old Stalinist style. As an instance, P.L.M. members work on campus through their own clubs and within the May 2d Movement, an amorphous "radical student peace organization," currently agitating against involvement in Vietnam.

The May 2d Movement (the name is taken from the date of its first major demonstration) began about a year ago with a meeting at Yale addressed by Socialist Michael Harrington. Poet Marc Schleifer is one of M2M's seven national coordinators. At one Western university, an active, pro-NATO Socialist acts as faculty adviser to the

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campus M2M group. The captain of an Ivy League football team is said to be a member. According to Richard Rhoades, who holds the title of M2M coordinator, the May 2d Movement is an "independent organization. Though there are members of P.L.M. who work with us, there is no formal relationship." There is, he added, "a big difference in function—P.L.M. is an embryonic Communist party; we're an embryonic mass student movement."

It is the Stalinist syndrome all over again—but with a difference. As a P.L.M. policy statement, "Road to Revolution," points out: "The Chinese Communist party has helped other Communists to see things for what they are."

P.L.M., of course, is not the only group with Maoist aspirations. The New England Party of Labor in its mimeographed monthly, Hammer and Steel, recently urged that "Marxist-Leninists in the United States should ask that the Chinese party, as the leading party, discuss the line of Progressive Labor." It ended its peroration on behalf of Peking with: "China is our leader, we shall not be moved."

Another group, the Workers World party, with members in 11 states, is possibly as large as P.L.M. Workers World, however, appears to be a good deal more hung up on Castro and near-Black Nationalism than the cool P.L.M.

Robert F. Williams, who urged Negroes to arm themselves, and then fled to Castro's Cuba, is a Workers World folk hero. "He's a per-

son we support very much," says Vincent Copeland, editor of Workers World. "We were the very first to welcome his comment that Negroes should meet violence with violence. . . . Self-defense is an elementary human right, not to mention a class right." Just about all that keeps P.L.M. and the Workers World party apart is the latter's Trotskyite past.

So far, of all the Maoist groups, P.L.M. seems most likely to get the nod if Peking should ever choose to start a Chinese International and recognize an American party. It has already been blessed by Frank Coe, a former Treasury Department and International Monetary Fund official now living in China, who called P.L.M. "a true Marxist labor movement" in a speech delivered at a mass meeting celebrating Mao Tse-tung's 1963 statement on the American Negro.

HOW significant is the new Maoism? In numbers, certainly not very. But the new Maoist left, unlike the older Stalinist left, exercises a fascination for the disaffected among white and Negro civil-rights militants and students. This fascination is compounded of disillusionment, rising out of a lack of progress in civil rights and the war on poverty in the United States, and a romantic identification with the new nations in Africa and Asia. Russia is old hat—and white. Red China is an anti-American hero—and distant.

We know less about Red China than an earlier generation of liberals and radicals did about the Soviet Union. Remember how some liberals clung to an image of a progressive Russia long after the Moscow trials and the Stalin-Hitler pact?

Still, the sectarianism of the Maoist left puts off the indigenous American radical. And it is likely to continue to do so unless President Johnson's Great Society falls apart at the seams. If we can come up with the right answers in Mississippi and Harlem, we have little to fear from Moscow, Peking or Havana—or this generation's far-out leftists.