

Chapter 6

**CORNELL'S SECOND CRISIS:
"ONE HELL OF A CULTURE CLASH"**

And you know something is happening here,
but you don't know what it is.
Do you, Mr. Jones?

—Bob Dylan, "Ballad of a Thin Man"

Steve Muller's decision to buck the nullification of the reprimands over to a vote of the faculty placed these partisans for idealized reason in the unaccustomed role of governors. Governors must bend the rules to resolve problems when adherence to a single principle would mean a disaster for the common good; they are the ultimate relativists. The faculty had trouble adapting to this new role, because they were used to being absolutists not only with their scholarship, but also with their students. When a faculty member said that a student got a certain grade, or would not be admitted to a seminar, or had to read a certain text, that was it. No mechanism, formal or informal, even existed for questioning the faculty's authority to reign supreme in their little world.

Interviewed twenty years after the fact, Wayne Biddle, the SDS member who had resigned from the judicial board in protest, said that the faculty became so agitated because "they didn't like being irrelevant," which is exactly what they became, briefly but brutally, during the week after the takeover. What started as a parlor debate among the sovereign faculty — in which they roundly rejected Muller's deal and maintained the reprimands — became, in Biddle's words, "one hell of a culture clash," as two days of massive disobedience by almost the entire student body forced the faculty to reverse course and nullify them. The faculty initially clung to the rules, as John K. Galbraith said of those who adhere to conventional wisdom, "as though to a raft," but their edicts, based on form and not substance, had no more power than King Canute's command to the waters to recede. The faculty were quickly compelled by the rising tide of student revolution to abandon the fraying raft.

The debate on nullifying the reprimands was, as President Perkins put it, “a great testing point” for the university, or at least for a certain part of it. There was little agony of conscience for the administration, which had already agreed with the AAS, or the student body, which by and large also agreed, either on the merits or just to end the turmoil. But it was the great testing point of professional life for my father and the other faculty. It was they, after all, who were entrusted with the essential mission of the university, who did the teaching and the research that was to expand and impart the knowledge and values of society. As professors, they had implicitly signed an oath far more binding than the New York State loyalty oath many had explicitly refused to sign during the madness of McCarthyism: like the signers of the Declaration of Independence, they had mutually pledged to each other their Lives, their Fortunes, and their sacred Honor. And if there was one concept they honored, it was reason, defined as rational debate in an ivory tower unswayed by the winds of popular prejudice.

In each discipline, the faculty could name their stalwart heroes, the great minds who had persevered against common opinion, and these were the standard, as George Washington put it at the Constitutional Convention, to which the wise and honest could repair. They also knew of the pathetic failures, the runs-of-the-mill who had been unable to stand up against the popularity of the prevailing paradigm in their field, and they had always assumed that they would be able to use their tools of reason to identify the great and the pathetic in their own time. The faculty had forgotten that when history lurches forward in a crisis, reason is a minor part of that tumultuous process. Irrational, amoral desire without regard for others’ rights is at the core of any eruption, personal or historical. It can be harnessed or tempered by reason, but not entirely eliminated. Reason unleavened by passion will never rise in the direction of the reforms that all societies need and make. As Walter Slatoff of the English department said during the Crisis, “reasonableness can be a hindrance to change,” and it was proving to be so for blacks at Cornell, because it had led only to “endless talks and endless committees.”

The *Ithaca Journal* cast the debate in heroic terms, calling the AAS’s demands “an attack on the procedures of democracy,” and the faculty saw it that way as well. Objectively, of course,

there is nothing democratic about universities. Administrators make rules and students abide by them; a campus is not a polity, but a business monopoly. By paying tuition, parents are buying credentials and perhaps education for their children, but not an equal vote for them in how the campus is run. The university and its procedures are sanctioned by the state, which is a democratic entity, but the connection is too remote to permit students to feel the personal power and fairness that is the essence of democracy. For students, the Crisis was more a contest of power and challenge than it was one of reason and revolt. Students knew rules as protection for social outrages like the war and racial disadvantage, barriers that, as one student put it, simply have to be broken sometimes. Faculty members knew rules as a bulwark against anarchy, barriers that if broken with impunity would eliminate all protection from intimidation and mob rule. Neither side could grasp too well the other's truth.

Cornell's professors of government and history should have been able to see no little similarity between the AAS's guerilla theater in December and the constant interplay of forceful protest with law in American history. From the Sons of Liberty's tarrings and tea parties before the Revolution through the labor and civil rights movements of the twentieth century, from the Bonus marchers of the 1930s dispersed by Gens. MacArthur and Eisenhower to the farmers and truckers tying up the Capital with their amazing machines in the 1970s, unlawful protest has been part of American politics, and the country has survived, even flourished with these excessive examples of "the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Anomie is an integral part of our democracy. My father himself recognized the murky but crucial role of protest in our social contract when he wrote that the final and only true check on the burgeoning power of the modern presidency was not the orderly workings of the other two branches of government, but the ephemeral bonds of public opinion. When it came to a struggle on their own campus, though, the faculty associated rule-breaking with fascism, and not democracy.

The main contours of the debate were already evident in the articles in the Monday morning *Cornell Daily Sun*. There was the overriding feeling of loss and incredulity with the events of the weekend, with my father, speaking more in sorrow than an-

ger, saying, "I don't want to teach at a university where rifles are carried openly and crosses are burned." There was the incipient movement to reject the nullifications, with an "anonymous senior Government professor" (probably Allan Sindler) intoning that not to do so "could be the end of Cornell University." And there was a perspective of moderation, with the temporary director of the black studies program saying, in support of the agreement, "If Cornell is going to collapse in the face of a single crisis, then Cornell has less strength than I thought."

After lengthy informal discussions on Sunday, a faculty meeting was set for Monday afternoon. My father's usual courtesy prevailed even and especially in a hectic crisis. He called Dean Miller, whom he did not know well, to warn him that he was going to read a statement at the meeting explaining why he and a number of others would not teach for the rest of the semester if the reprimands were nullified. Miller objected strongly, as he recalled in a letter to my mother after my father's death:

I don't know where I got the nerve, but I read him a lecture. I told him that a historian should not reach conclusions until the facts had been presented, to read the statement would be an attempt to coerce the faculty vote, and finally, it was inappropriate to take action for which his students would suffer if the majority of the faculty took a different view from his own. Clint heard me out, and said he would think about what I had said.

About 1,000 professors, roughly half the faculty, attended the meeting. The debate was predictably cast as principle versus pressure. My father spoke against nullification, but refrained from making the statement he had planned to, or from threatening any particular action should his position fail. By a 7-2 ratio, the faculty voted not to nullify the reprimands, but it tried to temper the challenge this would pose to the AAS. The resolution stated that it was "impossible to agree at this meeting to dismiss" the reprimands, because of the seizure of the Straight and the continued presence of guns on campus. This implied that after a reasonable debate with the black students in "secure and non-pressurized circumstances," the faculty might yet approve nullification. To the faculty, this was an invitation of, as Lyndon Johnson was fond of saying, "come, let us reason together," but to the AAS, like the

Vietnamese in their dealings with Johnson, it was a summons to talk with a powerful enemy on the enemy's terms. The AAS responded to this latest entreaty as it had to earlier ones: its members would not talk with the faculty about the campus judicial system and its applicability to black political protest until the December charges were dropped.

After the vote, Miller dropped his bombshell, telling the faculty that he was resigning to fulfill his pledge to the AAS. This injected a new, explosive element into an already super-charged atmosphere: the prospect of resignation on principle. My father now saw that Miller had been justified in asking him not to threaten his boycott, since Miller had also kept secret his intent to resign if his position lost. As Miller recalled:

Clint rushed to the microphone. He cried, with the kind of passion that only he could put into it, that the faculty did not want me to resign, that I was the kind of man the faculty wanted to be their dean. I have never been so moved. On that day when so many were the captives of their emotions, few paid any attention to what anyone else said. But Clint endured a lecture from me at a moment when he was clearly in disagreement with me, and he thought it over.

After the meeting, however, my father did sign a statement he later regretted, a thinly-veiled threat by a group of faculty to "reconsider" their "relationship" with the university if the faculty reversed its decision. It was the guns that did it, that made this almost routine question of politically-motivated student misconduct so charged, that heightened the stakes, that made it so inconceivable to nullify the reprimands and made it so conceivable to resign if it happened. Guns! At a university! Universities traced their life's-blood to John Locke's celebration of reason as "the common bond whereby humane kind is united into one fellowship and society," and they were only slightly less vigorous than Locke in believing that a person who refuses to abide by the rule of reason "becomes liable to be destroyed by the injured person and the rest of mankind, as any other wild beast, or noxious brute that is destructive to their being." A gun was the antithesis and ultimate threat to reason; as my father told the New York Times that day, "There is nothing reasonable about a gun."

Protest itself, legal and illegal, was no stranger to Cornell, as the fat files of press-clippings collected under that title in the campus library attest. The first article in the file labeled "PROTEST—1958-68" is ironically about a demonstration by Government and History professors, a "scrub-in" for better janitorial service in their building. There, in a carefully staged shot, were my father and his colleague Walter Berns, scrubbing forcefully while plying carefully-prepared quips. My father was a spontaneous wit, but even he would have had to prepare this one: "They're too busy watering the potted plants over at the Business School. I think this whole situation reflects the priorities of this campus. The sciences must work in antiseptic surroundings, but the humanities can live in dirt." These students of American government understood the power of the visual image of protest: the picture was probably the last one of Cornell until the Crisis to be carried nationally, and it had its desired effect on the cleaners' schedules.

The 1960s were full of serious fracas at Cornell, over such diverse issues as the food in the dining halls, the right to advocate resistance to the draft, and ROTC. Cornell had picked its way carefully through burnings in effigy, disruptions and sit-ins, in each case balancing its penalties and pardons with its need not to alienate the majority of students or faculty. And way back in 1958 Cornell students rang out the Victorian era on campus with an uprising against the strict rules governing interaction between men and "co-eds," as fairly accurately chronicled in Richard Fariña's novel, *Been Down So Long It Seems Like Up To Me*. Led by an angry faculty brat who later became a distinguished author, Kirkpatrick Sale, hundreds of students disrupted classes to protest rules such as having to leave the door open and the lights on when women visited a fraternity room, and threw eggs at the Dean who tried to calm them. Then some 3,000 students, nearly all the male undergraduate population, surrounded a women's dormitory at night, protecting women who refused to abide by their curfew. Finally, a thousand marched off under torch-light a mile to the home of President Deane Malott to demand an end to these "parietal" rules.

"P and I, P and I" they chanted, referring to one dean's argument that any relaxation in the rules would lead to "petting and intercourse." Malott, a forthright former businessman, was

as little fazed by the mob as by the legislators in Albany who had demanded that he fire various professors for un-American tendencies. He excused himself from his wife Eleanor and his house-guests the Collyers, and came out to talk to the students, even as some eggs and perhaps a few stones came through his windows. He disperse the crowd with vague promises to review the rules. Mrs. Collyer is reputed to have turned to her husband as the missiles came through the windows and asked, "Dear, are these the boys you're giving the boat-house to?" (They were, and he did: Cornell's crews still row out of the Collyer boat-house that was dedicated the next day.)

"Students Stone Head of Cornell" read the national headlines, and the alumni, politicians, and pundits bayed for the blood of the barbarians. But all they got was a few suspensions, while the students got the complete disposal of parietal rules and the appointment of a new Dean of Students. As quick as a wink, the impossible was reality: *in loco parentis*, with its condescending control of private life, was only a memory. Nearly every campus rule and social norm imaginable had been violated, but the university had to move forward with the times or alienate so much of the student body as to render the concept of rules irrelevant.

Another mass refusal to abide by the rules occurred in 1967 when, with Cornell's top administrators at a meeting in New York City, the campus police chief took it into his head to seize copies of a student magazine, The Trojan Horse, for having obscene text and drawings. When the editors announced plans to sell their remaining copies on the steps of the Straight the next day, the country district attorney, Richard Thaler, decided that he would have the Ithaca police arrest anyone who sold the magazine, because he too believed that it was "obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy and in violation of the law," specifically for having the word "motherfucker" in a story. Wayne Biddle's political "lights went on" as he passed by the Straight on his way to class, and saw 2,000 students stop the legally constituted authority of the democratic state from carrying out its puritanical duties. Chanting "Sell it, Sell it," they surrounded Thaler's car, flattened the tires, and forced him to release the six students he had just arrested. Biddle, and a lot of other students, had never thought that seemingly unassailable power could in fact be challenged and beaten when it overstepped the bounds of part of the public's strongly-held

opinions. The police chief resigned, the arrests and the injunction on publication were voided, and Thaler lost his bid for re-election. The seizure of Willard Straight differed from these earlier protests only in the carrying of guns...and in the race of the miscreants. Some faculty argued that the refusal of the AAS to recognize punishment for political protest or to compromise on "non-negotiable" demands were also crucial differences, and they contrasted both with the spirit of Martin Luther King Jr., who had become more and more of a paragon to white America as other black leaders had become more and more intimidating. But King had accepted penalties for breaking unjust laws and bargained over Negro rights for tactical purposes only. These students were more similar than different to King in choosing different tactics toward the same goal, that is until they took up guns. By seizing on a symbol of violence, the AAS first appeared to have made a mistake: the faculty that Monday bent over backwards not to appease armed force far more than if the takeover had been unarmed. However, the guns were also a symbol of danger that cried out for a quick resolution of the dispute, and as the Crisis dragged on after the vote, the AAS ended up being well-served by its decision to raise the stakes.

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After the faculty announced its decision on Monday, the campus churned with uncertainty. The AAS, now renamed the Black Liberation Front, was not going to budge from its armed camp at the cooperative, although its leaders came out of seclusion to address a meeting of white students in Bailey Hall, the campus concert hall, and asked for their help. This reaching out by a group that had belligerently refused to work with white students galvanized support for the AAS in its standoff. The urgency of the situation brought a moment of unavoidable choice to all but the most irresponsible of students: solidarity with the old white men of the faculty who talked about reason while creating an irrational mess, or solidarity with the young black men of the AAS who talked about freedom from oppression.

It was like choosing between Lyndon Johnson and Huey Newton: no choice at all. In this cultural clash, you stuck with your own kind, and those revolting against parental and societal authority were your own kind. A few students petitioned the faculty to stand by its decision, but the news coverage they re-

ceived only irritated more students into openly expressing their preference for the AAS. An even smaller number reveled in their irresponsibility, according to their mentor, professor Allan Bloom, the political philosopher who would later gain national renown with his diatribe against universities in general and Cornell's behavior in the Crisis in particular, The Closing of the American Mind. These students squirreled themselves away to read the ancient Greeks, emerging from their perch above the fray only to pass out lengthy copies of texts assailing the stupidity of mob rule, but never staying to try to guide the mob, since they considered it, against the growing reality of its power, irrelevant, and apparently preferred to leave all governance to the elite mob, the faculty.

Two major groups emerged among the majority of white students who supported the AAS, the wreckers, a sizable minority egged on by appeals to "shut the university down" made by a small but vocal SDS contingent of perhaps 100, and the fixers, the thousands who wanted to force the faculty to back down and then revert to their normal role as students. These two merged in a marriage of convenience that for a while concealed their underlying antipathy. The tiny but well-organized SDS contingent and its experienced graduate student leaders were the first to organize students' anger at the faculty's decision, calling the meeting in Bailey Hall, which seated 2,000. When that proved too small for the students who flocked to this one chance to find out what was happening and maybe help it happen, the meeting moved to the military drill hall and gymnasium, Barton Hall, which could accommodate the well over 10,000 students who filtered in and out during the next few days.

The military setting solidified student support for the AAS and their argument that they were justified in bringing in guns to protect themselves. There obviously was a place for guns on campus: in the hands of ROTC students who were training to kill Vietnamese to impose a US-backed regime. People claiming that the AAS had breached the line of civilized discourse could be shown by the artillery displayed around them in Barton Hall that their claim was a mirage, that what counted was power and how it defined that discourse. It was appropriate that the trappings of the very war that had spawned student protest in general would provide one more piece of evidence to sustain it in this specific

case. The war had come home inexorably, and had discredited those who wanted to hold the campus above it.

All day Tuesday the students listened to each other's speeches and passed various resolutions under SDS's orchestration. All sides of the debate were expressed and accorded respect, but the position predominated that said that in the interests of calm and not a little justice, the reprimands should be lifted. Most students quickly identified and acknowledged the cost of capitulation, but found it outweighed by the need to recognize America's historic injustice to blacks and to make a gesture of good will to the AAS that would restore order to the campus. Off-campus, however, commentators found any cost too steep to pay. The guns had inflamed white public opinion, which wanted the black students to be arrested and expelled, period.

Professor Kenneth Clark of City University of New York, the only black on New York State's educational overseers, the Board of Regents, gave a carefully-crafted speech on Tuesday that mixed sympathy for the motivations of the protest, frustration with the university's weak commitment to black education, and disapproval for the black students' tactics. He acknowledged the "flagrant injustice" of America, and tried to educate rather than castigate Cornell's black students by reminding them that, "All forms of tyranny are introduced initially under the guise of moral indignation and are justified by some higher moral ends." The press covered his speech prominently, but condensed this balanced assessment into an attack by a top black educator on, as the New York Times headlined it, "Student Use of Oppression to Achieve Goals." Unlike the Times, most papers didn't carry Clark's text, and just asserted that it showed that even Negro leaders were critical of Cornell's pusillanimous approach to the protesters. Similarly, the press highlighted the fact that Negro and Puerto Rican legislators were signing on to the plethora of bills in the State Capitol in Albany that would make carrying guns and other disruptions on campuses criminal offenses.

Cornell remained blissfully oblivious to the brewing national storm of contempt, as people focused on finding a resolution to the Crisis. The refusal by the AAS to negotiate alienated the faculty, but threats made by AAS leader Tom Jones on Tuesday horrified them. He went on the campus radio and announced that the university had "three hours to live" if the faculty didn't

their decision, and then called seven prominent administrators and professors, including my father, "racists" who would be "dealt with." The threatened men were called to the campus police station to listen to a tape of his remarks, and some, although not my father, decided as a precaution to leave their homes and move their families into motels. The faculty began to understand that the AAS would not compromise, whatever the result. Many believed that they were dealing with a suicidal madness, with people who would gladly bring the university down around their own heads if they didn't get their way. The realization that the AAS was implacable, coupled with the revolt of the white students who had occupied Barton Hall, meant that the only possible settlement by the faculty would of necessity be a surrender, a step of hope taken unilaterally to save a union that the other side appeared to disdain, and not even a step of compromise to achieve a common goal.

A possible spoiler in efforts to end the Crisis was SDS, which was edging towards an attempt to fan the students' spark of anger at the faculty into a general conflagration. So removed from the campus mainstream that they secretly practiced shooting on remote lots to be ready for repression and revolution, SDS was stunned finally to have an issue and an audience. Its leaders started cautiously, purposely presenting a reasonable image in an attempt to win acceptance as the leader of the "Barton Community." This ploy, as some students noted, was transparent, since everyone knew that SDS's driving force was a belief in disrupting America until it made radical changes, both in Vietnam and at home, and that its usual method was to shout down those who opposed its attempts to disrupt the illegitimate university. SDS's known qualities just didn't gibe with the patient, tolerant manner in which Dave Burak was running the meeting on Tuesday, letting all sides in Barton have their say. Still, since he was acting fairly, there was little dissent to his leadership.

Gently and gradually, so as not to lose his self-appointed role as the embodiment of the Barton Community, Burak nudged the agenda leftward. It was the finest hour in a strange career. Over the next few years, Burak became a cultural revolution of one, distinguishing himself with bizarre acts and justifying his reportedly drug-addled behavior with equally bizarre letters to newspapers based on extended, disjointed metaphors about base-

ball. In a symbolic confrontation between radical inanity and durable tradition, he was bonked on the head by emeritus professor and historian of Cornell Morris Bishop with the ceremonial mace, the symbol of Cornell's authority, when he tried to seize the microphone at commencement in 1970 to "say a few words about racism." Burak later handed out leaflets at a junior high school in Ithaca that read "dope is good" and continued raising money for the Black Panthers — this was the only role for whites in Panther politics, just like the only place for women there was "on their backs" — well into the 1970s, long after it had become clear to most of their supporters that they had degenerated into a gang rather than a movement. Showing its belief in redemption and perhaps cooperation, Cornell not too many years later hired him as an English instructor.

Burak maneuvered the crowd into declaring Barton Hall occupied. Perkins tried to defuse a confrontation by himself declaring the meeting an approved one, even though no request had been filed for such approval. This only reinforced the belief in the crowd that unequal justice was at work, and broke the moral backbone of the faculty's refusal to nullify the reprimands: when black students, with small numbers on campus, broke the rules for political reasons, they were punished; when white students, in the thousands, did the same, they were excused. After an afternoon of speeches and resolutions, Burak made his long-expected move, urging the students to vote with their feet and follow SDS out to occupy another building. Bud Kenworthy, a government professor known by students as a radical, took the microphone from Burak, and pleaded with the crowd not to follow SDS out. He cited as evidence that the crisis was resolving itself the fact that the faculty of two diverse colleges had called for nullification that afternoon: Home Economics, and Arts and Sciences, the latter on a nearly unanimous motion by one of the most senior and respected professors of government, Mario Einaudi.

Kenworthy appealed directly to the activists in the crowd, arguing that a "rational radical" would wait to see what the morrow brought before upsetting the applecart, and he added his own pledge that if the faculty did not reverse itself the next day, he would join a group of leftist faculty who had pledged to occupy a building themselves. Many student and faculty accounts agree that this was a crucial speech, and that without it Burak and SDS

would have led a sizable number of students out to seize another building. Kenworthy's speech settled the crowd down for the night, and dancing, dope, and pick-up basketball would probably have prevailed had not SDS, the New Left's Stalinist Puritanism shining through, denounced such activities as trivial and used its members to enforce a vote not to let a band come in and play or let students bring in alcohol.

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Despite a growing feeling that the Crisis would be resolved by the faculty reversing itself the next day — a feeling reinforced by the faculty's governing council and judicial oversight board calling for nullification and the creation of new judicial rules — students and faculty alike held their breath all Tuesday night. Tom Jones's threat that the university had only three hours to live, although apparently overtaken by the momentum toward reversal, still reverberated throughout the campus. There were reports of rifle shots, which the safety division decided later were probably air-rifles. A few thousand students spent the night in and around Barton Hall talking through the issues, exhilarated by their role in controlling the university, yet concerned lest the power vacuum spawn chaos and violence. On Wednesday morning, nearly the entire student body returned to Barton Hall. Classes, papers and labs went by the board as over 10,000 people awaited the result of the faculty meeting in nearby Bailey Hall.

The meeting lacked suspense. The sentiment for nullification was as strong as the sentiment for holding firm had been on Monday, so the debate was more a rehearsal for explaining one's position to students and the press later than it was a real contest for the thoughts and votes of colleagues. According to a reporter who simply strolled into the private meeting, Perkins received a standing ovation from three-fourths of the 1,000 faculty in attendance when he spoke first and said he hoped they would "expunge" all the tension of the current crisis. Professor Ernest Roberts offered a motion to nullify all judicial decisions from the spring semester and start exploring a new judicial system. He was one of those threatened by Tom Jones, and had requested the right to offer the motion as a way of demonstrating that even personal attacks would not dissuade him from the path of reconciliation he believed was needed.

During the debate that followed, my father was one of the clearest voices for reversal, and his departmental colleagues Sindler and Berns were two of the clearest voices against. This contest in front of the faculty, although they knew it to be somewhat artificial because of the predetermined outcome, started a rift between him and these long-time friends that never healed. The outcome of the vote would have been the same had none of them spoken up, but they became identified as leaders of the opposing camps by virtue of their prestige and respect among the other faculty, which was only increased, grudgingly in some cases, by their willingness to stand at the head of those who agreed with them in this difficult debate.

Faculty opposing reversal expressed their belief that to switch under intimidation, under the obvious threat of massive noncooperation and occupations by both white and black students, would be to teach students the disastrous lesson that might makes right. They argued that Cornell could survive the expulsion of any number of students and the destruction of any number of buildings better than it could survive the death of principle. They labeled as histrionic the argument that it could well be more than principle that would die, claiming that the civil authorities could quickly restore order without loss of life. They saw nullification as an abdication of personal honor as well as professional responsibility. One of them asked: "Do we leave this hall as free men or as cowards?"

Those favoring reversal acknowledged that fear certainly played a role in their decision, but called it not the fear of cowards for their own safety, but rather a fear for that of others. They were appalled at the cavalier attitude of their opponents toward the lives that might be lost if force were used on the campus. More buildings would be occupied if the faculty refused to nullify, and even if the armed cooperative were left alone, the forces who would retake other buildings — whether rural deputies, the state police, or the national guard — would be armed, jumpy, and trigger-happy. Whatever principle would be maintained by a tough stance, from these professors' perspective, just wasn't worth it if students died. The students were being irresponsible, risking a loss of life to make their point; this made it all the clearer to the nullifiers that the faculty had no choice but to choose responsibility over principle.

On-and-off Dean Miller had stated the underlying question as: "Is our priority to safety of human life, or details of a judicial process?" A letter to the Sun after the Crisis gave the faculty's answer to that question: "The preservation of human life is our most basic concern." Most of the faculty believed that there was a good chance that others might die because of their principles, and were unwilling to take that risk. The cross-burning itself spooked the faculty, and raised the possibility that there were violent people around who would add their personal touch to any confrontation. The consensus of the faculty was that the chances for violence were just too great to continue the stand-off.

Those favoring reversal did not dispute its characterization by government professor Arch Dotson as a clear "capitulation" under intimidation. But they were not apologetic about their choice, noting that to "sacrifice principle to avoid violence and irreparable damage to the university" was no craven stand. Dotson's colleague George Kahin acknowledged that he "voted to switch under threat of violence; it cost me too some of my self-respect," and my father said that "fear of violence for others" (rather than for himself and his family) was certainly a factor in his switch. English professor Cushing Strout expressed the feeling of responsibility for stopping the march toward an unpredictable reckoning when he said after the vote: "We felt we had to draw back from the abyss of chaos. Basically, we could not conceive of watching troops and students battling in conflict."

Even if violence could have been avoided, many among the nullifiers believed that a community of reason should not resort to raw power, whether through expulsions or non-violent armed force, to impose its rules. They felt that to use such power to disperse not a vocal, reckless minority but rather the concerned majority of both blacks and whites who were now engaged in civil disobedience would rend the social fabric of the university for decades. Few faculty had openly espoused the AAS's position on the reprimands throughout the semester, but many were beginning to think that "the blacks' case seemed, on reflection, to have merit," and they were impressed by the fact that the vast majority of "moderate students favored it."

Here, really, was where the two sides differed on principle. One saw the size of the protest as irrelevant if the rule being upheld were sound; the other saw it as relevant because it indicated

that the university had lost contact with so many students that perhaps the rule – which after all related to the protection of students' rights – was no longer sound, and that the consent of the governed that was so central to American history simply had not been obtained. One side was willing to resort to outside force to restore order; the other believed that the community should resolve its own disputes, and was willing to make the compromises, or capitulations, necessary to do so. One side continued to see its role as that of defining a principle; the other had come to see its role as that of governance, which was a principle in itself.

When I discussed the faculty's dilemma with Matt McHugh two decades later, his experience in governance as a district attorney and then as a member of congress left him literally unable to grasp the argument that a rule should be enforced regardless of the consequences. As if it were the more obvious thing in the world, he said, "but the consequences are always relevant." McHugh illustrated both the danger of police action during the Crisis and the principle that the law must be enforced flexibly with a story about a planned raid on skinny-dippers at the Ithaca reservoir later that summer. He was tending his garden one weekend when he was notified of the impending raid, and rushed downtown, where a busload of police in riot gear were preparing to head off to arrest the "hippies." He put the operation on hold, and took Ed Trainor, a tough city detective, along with him to the reservoir. They found a large group of adults, children, and dogs relaxing in the sun, and told them to clear out or the police would come. When McHugh and Trainor returned, the police "were swearing, bitching at us for resolving it. They were ready to beat people up: they had had it."

While the skinny-dippers were breaking the law, McHugh didn't see warning them off rather than arresting them as an abrogation of his duty. In fact, he saw it as the essence of his duty to make a judgment about how best to balance law and order. In this case, he chose to prosecute no one; in the Crisis, he chose to prosecute a few leaders of the Straight occupation for coercion, rather than charge all the students in the Straight with some form of criminal conspiracy. In each case, as the majority of Cornell's faculty did in its reversal, he took the consequences of his actions for the community into account.

Both sides in Bailey Hall that Wednesday had sound arguments, and both expressed fully their reasons and their fears. Both choices were bad, fraught with the danger that students would misinterpret the lesson that was being taught and the gesture that was being made. Economics professor Fred Kahn expressed this reality in his explanation of why he switched positions from Monday to Wednesday. It was, he said, a "two-part process." First, "the Faculty could do no other than it did," since "we need the fundamental support of our community" and simply had to at some point "accede to the fervent conviction" of the students, who overwhelmingly demanded a gesture of reconciliation toward the AAS rather than continued confrontation. Second, there had to be an end to the "confrontation and sloganeering" so that a reasonable debate could take place. The Crisis, he hoped, would help everyone understand "how fragile is the preservation of reasonableness."

As Kahn said later, "students just didn't see the purpose" of the faculty's earlier stand on the reprimands if it was going to result in violence or the mass departure of blacks from Cornell. My father and others had tried to explain to small groups of students and in television and radio interviews why the faculty had done what it had on Monday, but the message just hadn't gotten through that there was more to the faculty's stand than wounded pride and obdurate respect for arcane rules, that they feared that to capitulate would be for the university to cease to respect reason, and so cease to be a university. Most of the changing of minds had come in the other direction, with faculty being forced to consider sound arguments by students that the proceedings against the black students were, as my father acknowledged, "of dubious legality."

Certainly, the ceremony of innocence was drowned, as T.S. Eliot says, for both sides of the debate. Those who favored reversal were pained that the protest, although comprised mostly of moderate students concerned for justice, also provided a forum to a few radical thugs who hoped to make things fall apart. Kahn, speaking for faculty who favored nullification, bitterly denounced AAS leader Jones for threatening his seven colleagues and for hurling the word "racist" around: "If Clinton Rossiter is a racist, I am one too. I want to know the consequences" for Jones of making such threats. One professor made a final plea that the deci-

sion be delayed until all guns were off campus, but that, the majority felt, would simply ensure that guns would in fact stay on campus. Then, by a voice vote on the order of three or four to one, the faculty approved Roberts' motion to nullify all judicial "procedures" from the spring semester, which of course encompassed the reprimands from the December protest.

After approving my father's motion that Miller be asked to return as Dean, many of the faculty walked to Barton, which they entered to the applause of the students. Any hopes on the part of the faculty that a new mood of mutual respect would prevail were immediately dashed by Jones, who made snide remarks about Perkins, who was standing at the rear of the stage, waiting his turn to speak. A black student was reported by faculty members variously to have rudely seized a cup of coke from Perkins or to have poured it over his head. But cheap shots could not mask the fact that the big dispute was over. Perkins said that the coming week would prove him "naive or correct," depending on whether the threat of violence and intimidation persisted or dissipated: "The challenge before us now is to survive together as men of reason." With that definition, he was proved correct.

Biddle recalled that the shift in mood among students from confrontation to relief was so pronounced and rapid that he could almost feel it physically, as if there had been a giant exhale. SDS's strategy of running a united front had miscarried. Not only was SDS's goal of "shutting the campus down" for an extended period not achieved, but for all its patient work in Barton, SDS had not even increased its core membership. The fixers were triumphant, having resisted the more experienced wreckers. SDS leaders became increasingly churlish as the week went on, their tolerant veneer fading as their leadership of the community receded. By Saturday, when the crowd at Barton had dwindled to 500 students who were planning a representative body to help govern the university, SDS, whose business was disruption, not governance, was gone. SDS members debated whether to seize another building to highlight their new demand that half of the student body come from the "working class," but one of their advisers, economic professor Doug Dowd, made them wake up and smell the coffee by firmly pointing out that the relieved mood on campus simply would not support another takeover. The Crisis, it appeared, was finally over.

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