

It was a crisis of light, and of darkness—the kind of event that brings out the best and the worst in people. Certainly the 1965 blackout could never happen again, or so New Yorkers had thought. But something very much like it struck Wednesday the 13th, only this time it was frighteningly different. Through the long, sweaty night and most of the following day, the nation's largest city was powerless, lacking both the electricity on which it depends so heavily and any means to stop a marauding minority of poor blacks and Hispanics who, in severe contrast to 1965, went on a rampage, the first since the hot summer riots of the 1960s. They set hundreds of fires and looted thousands of stores, illuminating in a perverse way twelve years of change in the character of the city, and perhaps of the country.

For a short while after the lights flickered out, most New Yorkers refused to believe that a crisis was at hand and gamely carried on. Broadway actors performed under the uncertain beams of flashlights held by stagehands; the nude cast of *Oh! Calcutta!*, unable to grope to

cy in New York. The city sent extra policemen and fire fighters to the ghettos, portable generators to hospitals, and set up banks of operators to handle citizens' calls for help. But His Honor, who at 71 is running hard for a second term, also began searching for someone to blame. Without bothering to wait for the verdict of investigations ordered by himself, Governor Hugh Carey and President Carter, the mayor quickly zeroed in on Consolidated Edison Co., the company that New Yorkers love to hate (see *ECONOMY & BUSINESS*). Declared Beame: "Con Ed's performance is, at the very best, gross negligence—and, at the worst, far more serious." Responded Con Ed Chairman Charles Luce: "It's a little like saying, 'We'll have a fair trial before we hang the defendant.'"

Though the jury was still out, the trouble apparently began when lightning struck not only twice but several times, knocking out crucial high-voltage lines feeding in from north of the city. This loss of power had a cascading effect that brought down the city's whole electric system.

as desirable boodle. Police caught one man in Bedford-Stuyvesant with 300 sink stoppers and another with a case of clothespins. Two young boys were spotted carrying away an end table. "Where'd you get that thing?" a cop shouted. "My momma give it to me—you can have it," said one of the kids as they dropped their loot and dashed into a crowd that was happily watching a blazing furniture store.

At Hearn's department store in Brooklyn, youths stripped clothing from window mannequins, broke their limbs and scattered them on the floor. Said Miguel Ten, a Viet Nam veteran who stood guarding Arnet's Children's Wear store: "This reminds me of Pleiku in 1966. There was a war out here. And the mannequins remind me of the dead people I saw in Nam without legs and arms."

At the Ace Pontiac showroom in The Bronx, looters smashed through a steel door and stole 50 new cars, valued at \$250,000; they put the ignition wires together and drove off. Young men roamed East 14th Street in Manhattan, snatching women's purses. Adults toted

THE BLACKOUT/COVER STORIES

NIGHT OF TERROR

TIME

THE NATION

their dressing rooms, borrowed clothes from members of the audience and went home in cabs. Waiters at Manhattan restaurants served patrons by candlelight. Buses were delayed only slightly by darkened traffic lights. Garbage trucks whined as usual on their nightly rounds. Mayor Abraham Beame, assuming, like many citizens, that a fuse had blown, ad-libbed a quip during a campaign speech at the Co-op City Traditional Synagogue in The Bronx. "See," he said, "This is what you get for not paying your bills."

Gradually, however, the realization took over that the unthinkable had happened: at 9:34 on one of the summer's most sweltering nights, air conditioners, elevators, subways, lights, water pumps—all the electric sinews of a great modern city—had stopped. They would not work again for as long as 25 hours. The blackout was far smaller than that of 1965—9 million people lost electricity in New York and the northern suburbs, v. 25 million people in eight states and two Canadian provinces twelve years ago. But the effects were nationwide. TV networks stopped broadcasting for several minutes. The flow of teletyped news from the A.P. and U.P.I. was interrupted, then limped along under jury rigs (see *THE PRESS*). Wall Street's banks, brokerages, and stock and commodities exchanges shut down for a day.

Beame declared a state of emergen-

Most New Yorkers, from silk-stocking districts to scabrous ghettos, responded with neighborliness and even bravery. But what shocked the city, and much of the world, was that tens of thousands of blacks and Hispanics poured from their tenements and barrios-in 16 areas—to produce an orgy of looting. In Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant ghetto, in Manhattan's Harlem, in the South Bronx, the violence and plundering approached the levels of the 1968 riots after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. The cry echoed through the ghettos: "It's Christmastime, it's Christmastime!" But to Abe Beame, and countless other New Yorkers of all races, it was "a night of terror."

Roving bands of determined men, women and even little children wrenched steel shutters and grilles from storefronts with crowbars, shattered plate-glass windows, scooped up everything they could carry, and destroyed what they could not. First they went for clothing, TV sets, jewelry, liquor; when that was cleaned out, they picked up food, furniture and drugs. Said Frank Ross, a black police officer in Bedford-Stuyvesant: "It's like a fever struck them. They were out there with trucks, vans, trailers, everything that could roll."

Looters looked on anything movable

shopping bags stuffed with steaks and roasts from a meat market on 125th Street in Harlem. At an appliance store on 105th Street, two boys about ten years old staggered along with a TV set, while a woman strolled by with three radios. "It's the night of the animals," said Police Sergeant Robert Murphy, who wore a Day-Glo blue riot helmet. "You grab four or five, and a hundred take their place. We come to a scene, and people who aren't looting whistle to warn the others. All we can do is chase people away from a store, and they just run to the next block, to the next store."

The arsonists were as busy as the looters. Firemen fought 1,037 blazes, six times the normal number, and received nearly 1,700 false alarms. They were set either to divert the attention of the cops or just for the fun of it. When the firemen showed up, their sirens screaming, the crowds pelted them with rocks and bottles. Of the fires, 65 were considered serious, including a store fire in Brooklyn at which 22 firemen were hurt. Another blaze began in a looted factory warehouse in Brooklyn, then leaped across the street to destroy four tenements and finally spread to two other houses. In all, 59 firemen were injured fighting the fires.

One of New York's worst-hit areas was a 14-block stretch of jewelry, clothing, appliance, furniture and other re-



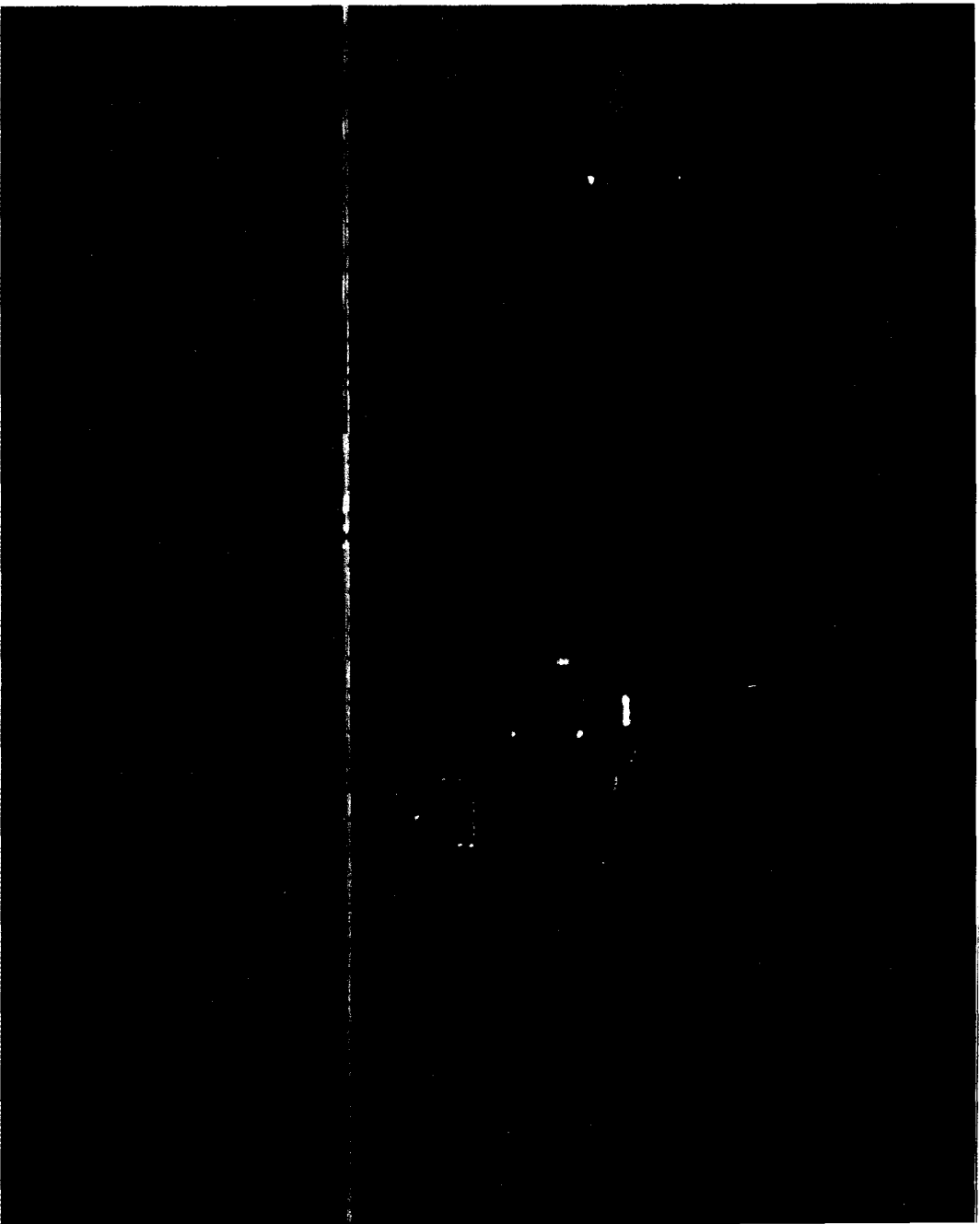
REININGER—CONTACT/CAMP



IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, LOOTERS IN BROOKLYN BRAZENLY CONTINUE TO SMASH THEIR WAY INTO STORES & HAUL OFF ANYTHING THEY CAN GRAB SO AVARICIOUS & DETERMINED ARE SOME PILLAGERS THAT THEY SCAVENGE THE RUBBLE IN A BRONX SUPERMARKET BURNED BY MOBS

GORGONE—CONTACT/CAMP





THE FAMED SPARKLING SKYLINE OF MIDTOWN MANHATTAN DARKENED ABRUPTLY INTO GHOSTLY BEAUTY. IN THIS TIME EXPOSURE, PASSING PALMETTO STREET IN BEDFORD-STUYVESANT SWARMS WITH ACTIVITY AS SOME PEOPLE GO ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS WHILE LOOTERS CARRY AWAY GOOD:

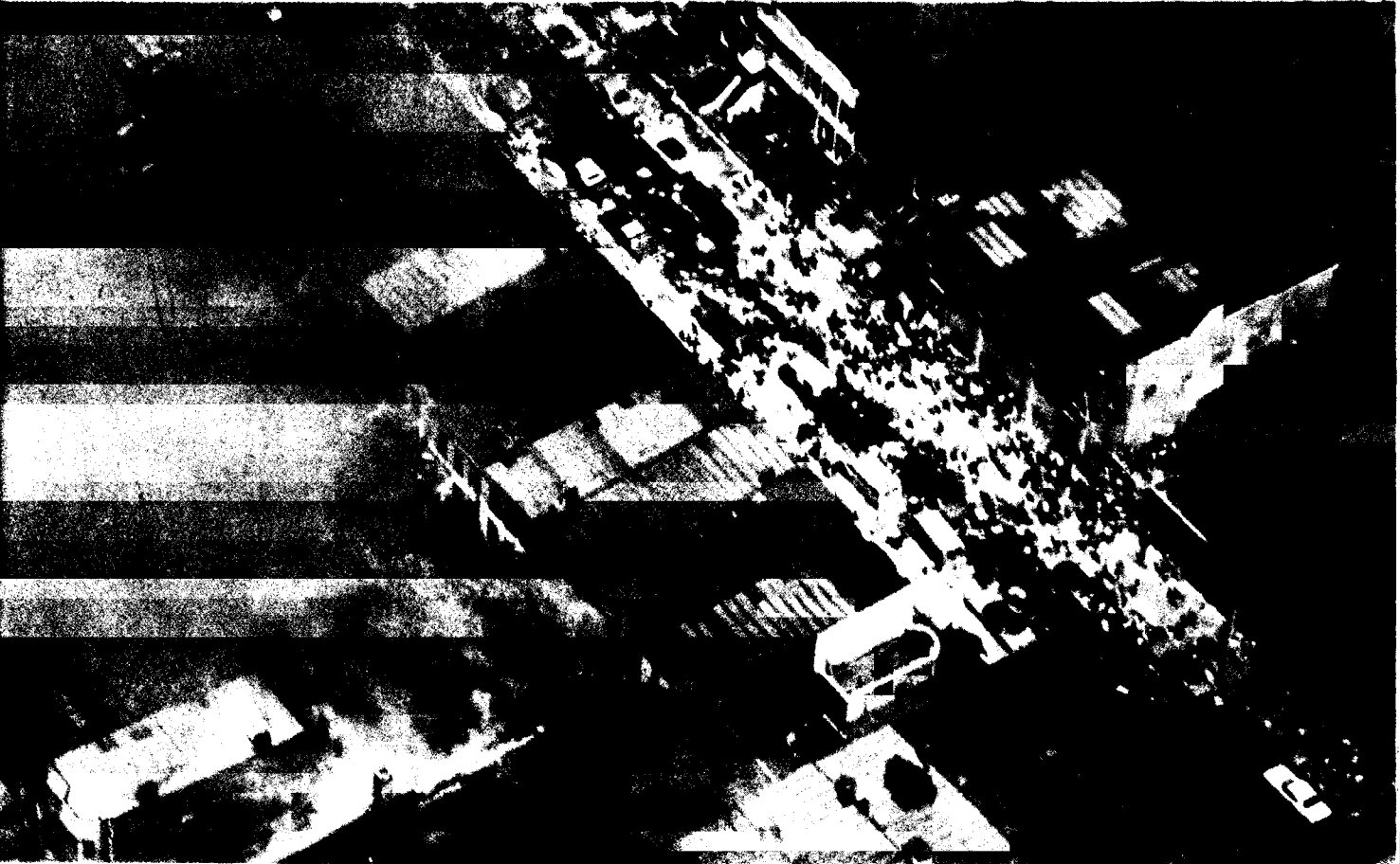




R. PHILLIPS

TOMOBILES TRACE STREAKS OF YELLOW IN THE NIGHT. LEFT FOREGROUND: UNITED NATIONS PLAZA HOTEL GLOWS FEBBLY WITH EMERGENCY LIGHTING
WILE FIRES SWEEP THROUGH NEARBY BUILDINGS, SIGHTSEERS & THIEVES THROUGH A STREET IN BROOKLYN

TONY LINCK





FIREMEN STRUGGLE TO PUT OUT ONE OF THE **MANY BLAZES THAT** TURNED PARTS OF THE BRONX INTO AN INFERNO
COP COOLS DOWN A CROWD IN FRONT OF A LOOTED STORE IN THE BRONX

ANDERSON—CONTACT/CAMP

A CHAINED PRISONER IS LED AWAY BY POLICE



GORON—CONTACT/CAMP

SEITZ—CONTACT/CAMP



tail stores along Broadway in the **Bushwick** section of Brooklyn. Reported **TIME'S** Paul Wittenman: "The evidence of looting was numbing. As **firemen** fought blazes from cherrypickers, the looters went about their business virtually unmolested. Occasionally they would step over to one of the **fire** trucks and drink water from a running outlet. Some of the more enterprising looters parked rented trucks on the side streets, engines running, and loaded up with couches, refrigerators, TV sets—the durable goods that will sell most easily on the black market. Periodically, when a rumor swept through the pack that the police were coming, the looters would break and run. But the police, outnumbered and fatigued, often did not try to chase them. When I left the area, it was **burning**, the flames taking what little the looters left behind."

After touring the ravaged South Bronx, **TIME** Correspondent Mary **Cronin** reported: "Streams of black water from broken fire hydrants swept the residue of the looting into the middle of the streets. Burned-out delivery trucks, spilling their seats onto the pavement, blocked doorways. Twisted steel grilles—some yanked from storefronts with trucks that were then filled with loot—lay across sidewalks. In the new **Fedco** supermarket, shelves gleamed bare and white, while several inches of mashed produce, packages of squashed hamburger, rivers of melted ice cream,

and broken bottles covered the **floors**. The stench was overpowering. Up to 300 stores were cleaned out in the neighborhood, and the next morning sheets of plywood covered most of their smashed windows. Said Policeman John Fitzgerald: "There are only cops and **crooks** left here now."

In the South Bronx, along East **Tremont** Avenue, one of the few shopping areas left in the gutted slum, looters stole some \$55,000 worth of goods from the huge **R & M** Furniture store. The next day its owner put out word that he would pay \$25 for each TV set returned. Police learned from a tipster that a man had stashed swag in his basement. The cops entered without a search warrant and reclaimed about **\$2,000** worth of furniture. One of the invading cops admitted later with a laugh: "Now I can be arrested for a violation."

A number of looters were robbed in turn by other thieves, who clawed and wrenched away their booty. When two men in **Bushwick** wearily set down a heavy box of shoes, a band of youths swooped in like vultures and made off with the prize. A teen-age girl on Manhattan's upper West Side complained to friends that some boys had offered to help carry away clothes and radios, then had stolen them from her. Said she, with the skewed logic of the looters: "That's just not right. They shouldn't have done that."

Many bystanders cheered on the looters, but others were outraged by what they saw. Complained a black man in East Harlem: "The shop owners don't live here, but the people who work for them do. They run these stores out, and they run out the few jobs in this neighborhood. The lights are gonna come back on, but what about the jobs?" A man in his 30s bitterly taunted marauding teen-agers: "You dumb niggers. You get busted, you get hurt for a pair of sneakers. You're dumb, niggers. You're dumb. *Sneakers*. Christ!"

Shouted another man at a gang of teenagers who had looted a drugstore: "If my mother gets sick in the night and needs her nitroglycerin, where am I **gonna** go? Maybe you don't care, but where am I supposed to buy my pills?" Next morning, a young woman walked along Third Avenue, desperately looking for any food store that might be open and unlooted. "I'm trying to buy some bread," she said. "I can't find none."

Stores owned by blacks and Hispanics suffered the same fate as those operated by whites. In Brooklyn, the **Fort Green** cooperative supermarket—set up by low-income blacks after the 1968 riots—was stripped bare. The store had no steel window guards because, said Manager Clifford Thomas, "we thought we were part of the community. We were wrong."

In many neighborhoods, however, residents joined to protect the property

LOOKING FOR A REASON

On the morning after the looting orgy, the Spanish-language newspaper *El Diario* front-paged in huge type the question that was on nearly every New Yorker's mind: **¿POR QUÉ?** (Why?)

What had sparked the plunder? What had changed since that placid blackout night of **1965**? Doubtless the heat and humidity made some **difference**; in 1965 the power failed on a pleasantly cool evening in November. But much more had changed in a dozen years. Respect for law and authority has declined; thieves often go unpunished; crime and violence stalk the slums. So, of course, does poverty. Unemployment among young ghetto blacks is as high as **40%**, v. more than 20% in 1965.

Close to half of American black **families** have advanced to the middle class, but their rise has only increased the frustration of an underclass that sees no way up. Says Harvard Social Psychologist Robert Bales: "When economic conditions get better, those who are left behind get angrier." Before their eyes dance television programs and **commercials** that show everybody enjoying a cornucopia of consumer goods—as if everybody should have them as a natural

right. They feel no stake in a society that seems to deny them the **opportunity** to acquire those goods. **Northwestern** Political Scientist Ted Gurr, **co-author** of the 1969 Eisenhower **Commission** report on violence in America, argues that "the poor, and especially poor blacks, don't share our middle-class values for other people's property. The goods were there for the taking."

Many black and Hispanic leaders read in the looting a message to the **nation**. Says Educator Kenneth Clark: "We have reduced the people of the ghetto to the point where they function on the level of predatory animals." Adds U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young: "If you turn the lights out, folks will steal. They'll do that especially if they're **hungry**." That went a bit far—even in the ghetto, few Americans do not have enough to eat.

Psychologist Morton Bard of the Graduate Center of New York's City University regarded the pillage as "a Robin Hood-type of thing—steal from the rich and give to the poor." But the explanation that leans on real and **perceived** deprivation goes only so far. It is by no means clear that most of the **looters** were the neediest. There was an **el-**

ement of glee, perhaps of revenge, of a mob gone wild. Says Bard: "The looting had a quality of madness. I cannot believe that they cleaned out a store of prayer shawls and Bibles." Adds Ernest **Dichter**, a noted behavioral **psychologist**: "It was just like *Lord of the Flies*. People resort to savage behavior when the brakes of civilization fail."

Harvard Social Psychologist **Thomas Pettigrew** was impressed by the lack of ideology in the looting—a striking contrast to the 1960s riots. Says he: "When the lights went out, there was a free-for-all, an individualistic **phenomenon** in which everyone gets what he or she can get." Declared Futurist Herman Kahn, director of the Hudson Institute: "They have no idea of what moral standards are. This 'suppressed rage' idea is crap. This kind of reasoning will make the same thing happen all over again."

Like most other experts, Harvard Sociologist Talcott Parsons is "skeptical" that the pillage in New York would set off a new nationwide wave of disturbances. But behaviorists generally believe that, given a similar combination of total darkness, blistering heat and simmering anger on the part of an underclass, much the same kind of riotous looting could erupt in almost any other city in the U.S.



DISTRAUGHT OWNER AT SHOE STORE LEFT RAVAGED ON MANHATTAN'S UPPER WEST SIDE
From the ghettos, cries of "It's Christmostime, if's Christmastime!"

Reported TIME's Lou Dolinar: "In Brooklyn's middle-class Clinton Hill, black, white and Hispanic homeowners sat on their stoops, sharing cigarettes, candles and flashlights, and occasionally pulling up crabgrass to pass the weary hours before dawn. Half a dozen teenage Italians, armed with baseball bats and iron pipes, helped merchants guard a five-block section of Myrtle Avenue in Brooklyn. At an A. & P. supermarket in Brooklyn, a burly, 6-ft. 8-in. Jamaican security guard brandished a pearl-handled machete and, with four clerks and the manager, chased away a gang of 30 youths." Many owners armed themselves with pistols, rifles or shotguns and sat up all night by candlelight in their stores. Surprisingly few shots were fired. Indeed, there were remarkably few fatalities during the disturbances: three people died in fires, and in Brooklyn, a drugstore owner gunned down a man who was brandishing a crowbar at him while leading 30 youths past the store's accordion-like security fence.

Eugene Riback, the owner of Harlem's Simon Furniture Co., took stock of his wrecked four-story store, behind the protective armor of private guards toting pistols and leashing attack dogs. Two brazen thieves ran in, grabbed a washing machine and headed to the street. One of the guards pointed his gun at a looter's head, three feet away. The intruder snarled: "You either kill me or I go out the door with the washer." He kept going, and

the security man sheathed his gun. On Utica Avenue in Brooklyn, Ernie Blye, a black man, stayed at his tailor shop all night long, grasping a gun, his German shepherd at his heels. A gang of men began to menace him. He cried out: "If you shoot me, my dog will get you!" They closed in relentlessly. Blye shouted again: "I got ten cans of potash upstairs! I'm goin' upstairs now! I blind you, you come up the stairs after me! I blind you!" The crowd left him alone.

Many looters seemed scarcely aware that they were stealing. Said one of two black boys standing outside a stripped bicycle shop near Columbia University, "We're just out shopping with our parents. This is better than going to Macy's." Some blacks resented all the fuss over the looting. Said Lorraine, 14, who had helped plunder a drugstore in East Harlem: "It gets dark here every night. Every night stores get broke into, every night people get mugged, every night you scared on the street. But nobody pays no attention until a black-out comes."

A few boasted of their thefts. P.F., a 28-year-old Hispanic in Harlem, sounded like a shipping clerk reading off an invoice list as he told TIME Writer B.J. Phillips: "Well, I got a stereo worth \$400, a dining room set that said \$600 in the window, and some bedroom furniture, but not a whole suite. I got some tennis shoes, and a few things from the jewelry store, but I got there too late for anything really good. I got it all done in half an hour, that's how quick I was

working." He paused to add it all up. "I'd put the total somewhere between \$3,200 and \$3,500." Any remorse? "I've got three kids and I don't have no job. I had the opportunity to rob and I robbed, I'd do it again. I don't feel bad about it."

Others offered strained justifications. Said a young woman who called herself Afreeka Omfree: "It's really sort of beautiful. Everybody is out on the streets together. There's sort of a party atmosphere." Declared a young man in Bushwick: "Prices have gone too high. Now we're going to have no prices. When we get done, there ain't gonna be no more Broadway." Said a man in his 30s, grasping a wine bottle in one hand and a TV set in another: "You take your chance when you get a chance." Added Gino, 19, a father of two: "We're poor, and this is our way of getting rich."

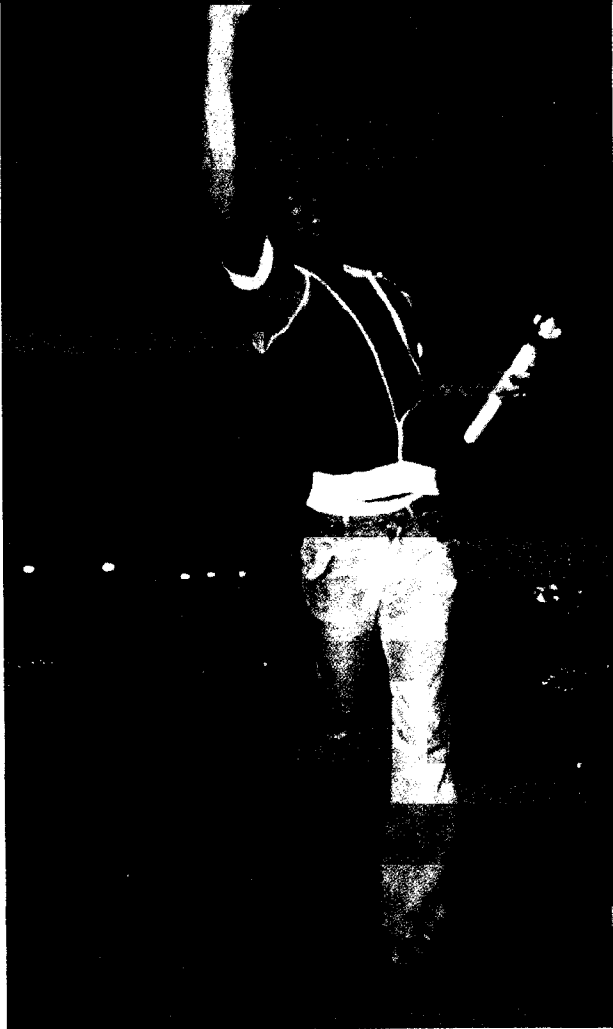
The Rev. Vincent Gallo, an activist Catholic priest, summed up the attitudes of people roaming his Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood. "When the lights went out, people just said, 'Here's our chance to get back at the mothers who have been ripping us off.' There also was a herd mentality, and many of the kids were egged on by adults who said, 'Hey, go get me this. Hey, go get me that.'"

Whatever the cause of the looting, New York's massive show of police force, and the cops' restraint, helped keep the nightmare from becoming even worse or continuing after the lights went back on Thursday. Canceling all leaves, the department mustered about 8,000 of its 26,000-person force, twice the number that would normally have been on duty.

Ever since the student uprisings at Columbia University a decade ago, New York cops have been instructed not to heat or shoot at rioters. Said Deputy Commissioner Francis J. McLoughlin last week: "They were under orders to break up unruly crowds or looters by charging with their night sticks but not shooting over their heads." The cops were responsible for few beatings, no indiscriminate shooting and no killings. About 18 policemen suffered serious injuries.

Reported TIME Correspondent Jack White, who covered the 1968 racial uprising in Washington, DC.: "The cops have learned a lot about riot control in the last decade. In the past, officers hopelessly outnumbered by angry crowds frequently fired on them and increased their anger. But in New York, large numbers of calm, well-disciplined officers avoided adding to the violence. In Bedford-Stuyvesant, for example, the situation gradually came under control as enough police arrived to station four or five cops on every corner of the most troubled area, while other cops prowled in marked and unmarked cars. One worn-out sergeant told me: 'My ass is numb and my shoulders are scrunched

DIRCK HALSTEAD



HALSTEAD



BACK STAIRS

DOING THEIR **BIT** TO EASE THE EMERGENCY, SOME NEW YORKERS EAGERLY, AND OFTEN SKILLFULLY, BECOME TRAFFIC COPS FOR A DAY-OR A NIGHT TO LIFT THEIR SPIRITS, A GROUP IN GREENWICH VILLAGE HOLDS ONE OF MANY IMPROMPTU PARTIES AS DARKNESS SETTLES OVER THE CITY



BY APPEAL



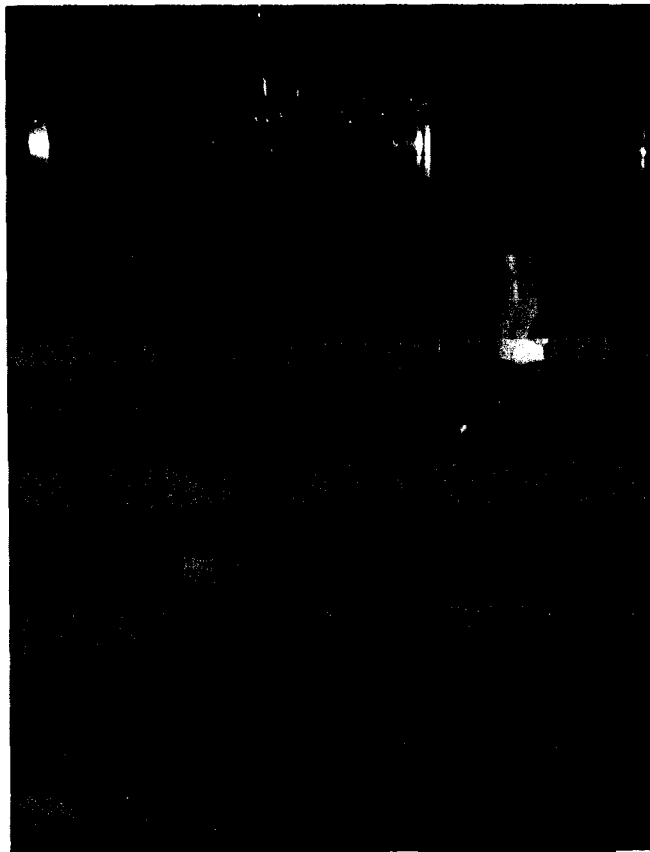
STRANDED WOMAN CAMPS OUT IN LOBBY OF AMERICANA HOTEL

DERCK HALSTEAD



GREETING DARKENED BROADWAY FROM GEORGE M. COHAN STATUE

WHILE OTHERS STAY UP AT 4 A.M., A MAN TURNS A BAR INTO A BED FOR THE NIGHT AT THE AMERICANA



HOWARD

from riding with five other men in a Pontiac Tempest.' But it worked. As tensions eased, the police avoided making arrests as much as possible to help cool things off."

Sometimes looters were let go with a warning. One experienced pair of 26-year-old cops, with modish long hair and sideburns, spun around Bedford-Stuyvesant in a battered 1970 Dodge painted to look like a gypsy taxi. They spied a young boy carrying a big box. The frightened kid dropped the carton, and glass tinkled. "What's in the box, Johnny?" asked one of the policemen. "Booze, man, liquor," replied the kid. "Where'd you get it, Johnny?" "I bought it, man, paid money for it." The cop peered into the box and saw the markings of a newly looted liquor store on broken bottles. Then both policemen advised the kid to "take the box and go home. And by the way, maybe you can do us a favor some time."

But arrests were common. Officers collared more than 3,500 people between the time the blackout struck and 7:40 a.m. Friday, when Beame declared the emergency over. The figure was about eight times the number of arrests in the riots of 1964 and 1968.

The city's courts and prisons were swamped. At Beame's urging, prosecutors refused to plea bargain with suspected looters and arsonists or agree to release them without bail. As a result, police station houses and courthouse holding pens were jammed with prisoners-up to ten in small cells designed to hold one person.

At the Manhattan criminal court, some prisoners shouted protests against the heat and overcrowding. To handle the overflow, the city reopened the Tombs, a Manhattan jail that had been closed by federal court order in 1974 as too decrepit. Feeding the prisoners was a serious problem at first because most restaurants had closed for lack of electricity. Many families brought food to relatives behind bars. Others subsisted on coffee and rolls.

As evening fell on Thursday, the ghettos gradually returned to normal. On some streets there was almost a sense of camaraderie between the cops and the black and Hispanic youths. Some of the officers in Bedford-Stuyvesant swung their long riot sticks like golf clubs, sending tin cans and other debris flying out of the gutter. "Hey, man," called out a black youngster with a chuckle. "your grip is all wrong." In the South Bronx, a brightly lit Ferris wheel slowly revolved in the night sky, its two-passenger chairs filled. Sporting shiny new Adidas jogging shoes, a young teenage boy in Harlem said with a trace of wistfulness: "Christmas is over."

For the owners of the 2,000 stores that were plundered, Thursday was a day of reckoning their losses. It was a day of sweeping up debris, nailing plywood across jagged, broken windows



BROOKLYN JEWISH HOSPITAL SURGEONS WORKING UNDER SPOTLIGHTS IN PARKING LOT
Cleaning and stitching wounds that were mostly caused by knives and glass.

and pondering whether to reopen. Alan Rubin, owner of the Radio Clinic discount center on Manhattan's upper West Side, told a reporter: "I'm responsible for 25 families—the families of the people who work for me. What's going to happen to them if I pull out? As bad as I got hit, there are other guys who got wiped out. What's going to happen if they can't reopen?"

Those willing to reopen were eligible for low-interest loans of up to \$500,000 from the Small Business Administration. More than 400 store owners asked for information about the loans, but many others were skeptical. They said that they had been stripped bare and demolished, that all they had worked and saved for over the years was gone, that it was financially and emotionally impossible for them to start again. Declared Stanley Schatel, owner of Nice & Pretty, a badly damaged sportswear store in Brooklyn: "Get a loan? Are you crazy"? You think anybody in his rightful mind would want to get back to this neighborhood?" Yet quite a few merchants were thinking of doing just that. "I have to pay off the creditors," said Gary Apfel, owner of Lee's Store, a men's clothing store in Harlem. "I want to close, but I can't afford to close."

More people than just store owners had to make fresh starts on the morning after the night of darkness. Rose Stevens, an elderly widow, wandered weeping down Broadway in Brooklyn, looking for a new place to live after

spending the night alone in her \$57-a-month apartment above a meat market that had been burned out by vandals "I wish I died," she cried. "I'm almost 70 years old, and I have no place to go."

Many black and Hispanic leaders across the country were dismayed by the rioting. In a typical comment, Carlos Castro, president of Chicago's Puerto Rican United Front, noted that the plunderers were poor and lived in slum housing, though he said of the violence: "You can't justify it." So far, there were no signs of a white backlash, even though many broadcast and newspaper accounts of the power failure emphasized the disorders. Sample headline from the Los Angeles Times: CITY'S PRIDE IN ITSELF GOES DIM IN THE BLACKOUT. Newspapers abroad also focused on the looting. A headline from Tokyo's *Mainichi Shimbun*: PANIC GRIPS NEW YORK; from West Germany's *Bild Zeitung*: NEW YORK'S BLOODIEST NIGHT; from London's *Daily Express*: THE NAKED CITY.

Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of New Yorkers and visitors responded to the crisis with some of the same good humor and willingness to help each other that they had exhibited twelve years earlier. At Beame's request, stores, banks and most offices closed, reducing traffic on the city's streets. At the intersection of Park Avenue and 79th Street in Manhattan, an athletic young man wearing a cape and holding a pink Rare controlled traf-

tic like a matador handling a bull. On the other side of the island, traffic was directed on Riverside Drive by David Epstein. 17, he joked: "My mother told me to go out and play in the traffic, and here I am." Sixteen passers-by turned Coney Island's 50-ft.-high Wonder Wheel by hand, enabling stranded riders to reach the ground.

Most of the city's 17 hospitals switched smoothly to emergency generators. But Bellevue's back-up system failed, and doctors and nurses had to squeeze bags of air with their hands to keep several patients alive until resus-



NEW YORK MAYOR ABRAHAM BEAME UNWINDING An emergency and a hunt for blame.

citators could be turned on again. When back-up generators broke down at Brooklyn's Jewish Hospital and Medical Center, about 100 people had their wounds—mostly cuts from knives and broken glass—cleaned and stitched at a makeshift field hospital set up in the parking lot under high-intensity spotlights powered by fire-department equipment.

Hotels were jammed with tourists, conventioners and suburbanites who could not make it home because the electric-powered commuter trains were out. At the Algonquin, guests were unable to get into their rooms for an hour because the doors lock electronically. Many spent the night partying at the round tables in the dining room that was made famous by Robert Benchley and Dorothy Parker. At the New York Hilton, switchboard operators phoned each room to tell guests that two can-

dies were in every bureau—fixtures since the 1965 blackout. The hotel offered free coffee and food through the night to hundreds of people who milled through the lobby: employees clambered up the stairs each hour with food for the guests on the upper floors. "Alors, c'est extraordinaire!" exclaimed a Swiss tourist, Irene Baillo, after trudging down from her 39th-floor room only to find that she had left behind flashcubes for her camera.

Some 500 diners at Windows on the World, the restaurant on the 107th floor of the World Trade Center, finished their meals by candlelight and rode to the ground on a service elevator that was served by an emergency generator. But 35 people were stranded for the night on the 86th-floor observation deck of the Empire State Building. After a free breakfast provided by the building's management, half of them walked down the stairs to the ground, while the others waited until the elevators began operating again Thursday afternoon.

On Broadway, Tom Courtenay continued in *Otherwise Engaged* by flashlight, with an actor shouting "Bring!" when a phone was supposed to ring and humming the overture to Wagner's *Parsifal* in place of a recording. About a quarter of the 2,000 people who were watching the stage show *Salute to New York City* stayed on at Radio City Music Hall after the lights went out, snacking on pretzels and Italian ices bought from street vendors who crowded into the foyer. At Shea Stadium, play stopped in the sixth inning, with the Chicago Cubs leading the New York Mets 2 to 1. For about 45 minutes, the 22,000 fans sang along with Organist Jane Jarvis: to take their minds off the heat, she played *White Christmas*.

Doormen at some high-rise buildings gave tenants candles and flashlights to help them climb to their apartments, but others groped in the dark. Anyone living on the upper floors was without water because pumps had stopped and rooftop tanks were quickly emptied. Some people preferred to bed down in the lobbies or walk the streets. Others sat in their cars, listening to the news—any news about the blackout.

Few bars remained open, and they were packed with thirsty people even though their ice supplies were rapidly melting. Said one woman who had visited three other bars before she stopped at P.J. Clarke's, a well-known East Side watering place: "We're typical New Yorkers. We're going to get smashed." At Elaine's restaurant on Manhattan's upper East Side, tables were moved outdoors for a block party. The guests included Woody Allen. At Pacino, Andy

Warhol and Designer Calvin Klein. At One Fifth, a Greenwich Village restaurant decorated with fittings from the cruise ship R.M.S. *Caronia*, a patron quipped: "We've hit an iceberg." Pianist Nat Jones scrounged a candle to light his keyboard and played *It Ain't Necessarily So*. Unfortunately, it was.

There was some fast free enterprise—and some gouging. At a fancy East Side high-rise apartment building one block from Gracie Mansion, the mayor's residence, two boys with flashlights offered to escort people up the stairs at \$1 each. Some cabbies cruised with their off-duty lights on, trying to negotiate high-priced deals, charging as much as \$50 for the trip from Shea Stadium to Manhattan, which normally costs about \$10. Cold cans of beer and soda went for \$3 in Forest Hills, Queens. An ice-cream vendor in Greenwich Village did a brisk business. As the temperature in his refrigerated case dropped, so did his prices—until he finally gave away free but slightly soggy cones.

The cost to New York is more difficult to reckon. There was no official estimate of the loss, but some city officials thought the total—including damage to buildings and theft of their contents—might be a staggering \$1 billion or more. Because of the blackout, the city lost \$4 million in tax revenue and had to pay \$5 million in overtime to policemen and firemen. Estimates of business losses—beyond the looting—included up to \$15 million in lost brokerage commissions for Wall Street and \$20 million for retail stores.

Most of these could be made up later, when banks, brokerages and other businesses reopened. But the far more important price cannot be tallied. What had the city lost in terms of morale and image? Deputy Mayor Osborn Elliott, in charge of keeping old jobs in the city and bringing in new ones, announced the blackout at least had not caused a group of oil suppliers from Houston and New Orleans to drop consideration of moving some of their offices to the city. But how many businessmen thought of moving out? How many will become more difficult to sell on moving in? At best, Elliott's job has been a holding action, and last week's crisis, he said with great understatement, "doesn't help."

Speaking of the emergency procedures that were supposed to have kept the electricity from failing, Federal Power Commission Chairman Richard Dunham remarked, "Quite obviously something didn't fit." The same might be said of the city's comity of neighborhoods, the uneasy web that both binds and separates rich and poor, white and nonwhite. As in all big-city riots, the chief victims of the long hours of darkness were the people who live in the devastated ghettos and have no other place to go. No amount of booty can compensate the looters for what they have lost.

WHY THE LIGHTS WENT OUT

How could a power system that many people thought was made fail-safe after the Northeast's great 1965 blackout plunge New York City into helpless darkness once again? It may take months of investigation to get the complete answer. But at week's end, an outline of the falling-domino sequence of failures that led to the total collapse had begun to emerge.

Like other major utilities in the U.S. and Canada, New York's embattled Consolidated Edison Co. (*see ECONOMY & BUSINESS*) not only has its own electrical generating plants but is plugged into a larger regional pool of power producers. Depending on the electricity needs of its 9 million customers in New York City and neighboring Westchester County, Con Ed can either 1) rely largely on its own generators, or 2) buy power from neighboring utilities if the load-or demand from its users is high, or 3) sell off surplus electricity to other com-

panies. Yet those choices are complicated by another fact: electrical energy cannot economically be stored. Even a relatively small variation in load in one part of the system must be quickly compensated for elsewhere along the line. Indeed, the decisions of controllers to buy or sell electricity, or to switch in additional generators, require such split-second timing and are so complex that large utilities like Con Ed have increasingly computerized their operations.

On the night of the blackout, the New York metropolitan area was sweltering under a blanket of hot, humid air. With air conditioners whirring everywhere and electrical load high though still far below the levels expected later this summer—Con Ed was importing from neighboring utilities about one-third of the electricity it was delivering to its customers. That in itself was not unusual. In the battle to keep its rates from soaring even higher, Con Ed has

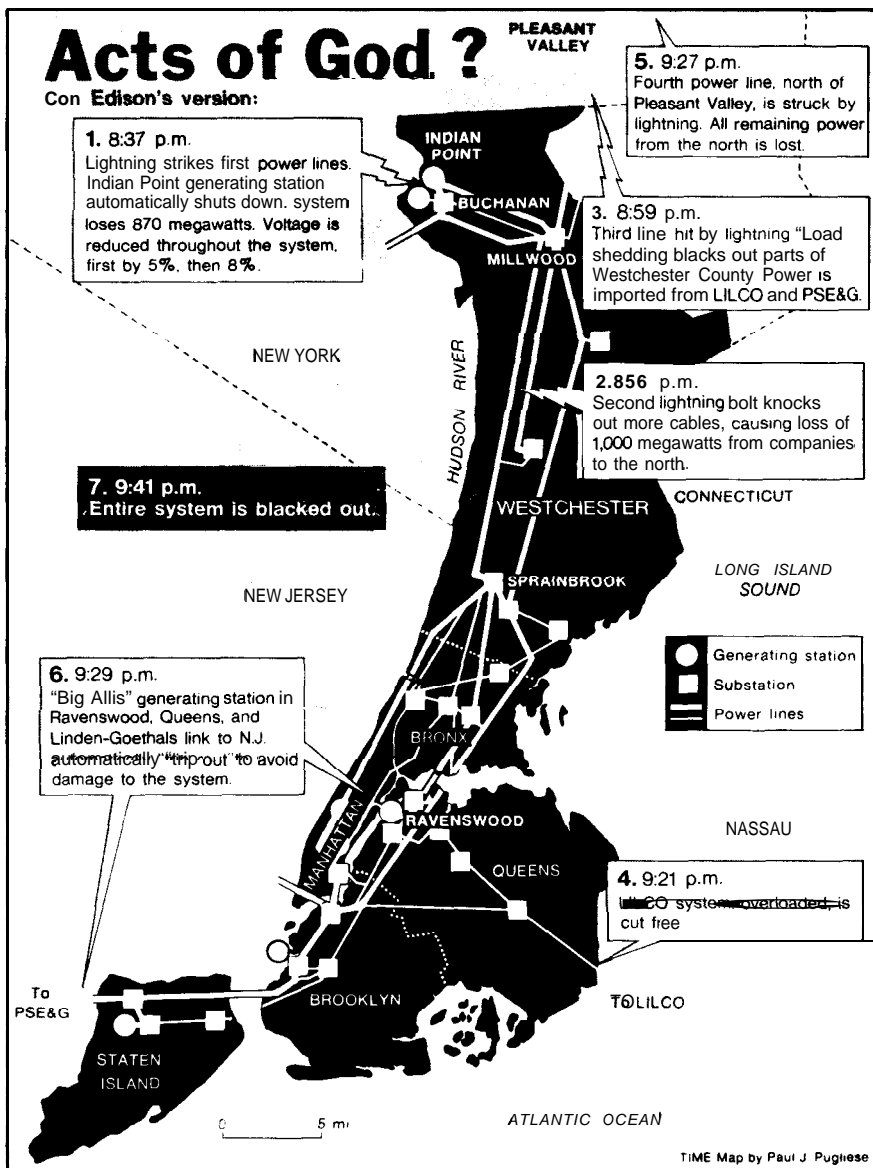
lately been buying more and more electricity from nearby companies that can provide cheaper power. Yet what made Con Ed especially vulnerable that soggy evening was a series of highly improbable natural events—"acts of God," as one spokesman called them.

A severe summer thunderstorm had just swept across the green suburban hills of northern Westchester in the vicinity of the Indian Point No. 3 nuclear power plant overlooking the Hudson River. At 8:37 p.m., according to Con Ed's preliminary analysis, flashes of lightning knocked out two 345-kilovolt lines. That immediately cut off all the electricity from the 900-megawatt Indian Point facility, and the nuclear plant was promptly and safely shut down. Then, while duty officers at Con Ed's main control center in Manhattan—a huge, display-filled room somewhat like Mission Control in Houston—scrambled to make up for the power loss, lightning struck again. At 8:56 p.m. bolts knocked out two more upstate 345-kilovolt lines in Westchester that bring in power from upstate New York and New England. Three minutes later, lightning knocked out yet another line. Worse still, circuit breakers designed to reset automatically after the enormous voltage surge caused by a lightning bolt apparently failed to close. By now the utility had suffered a massive loss of some 2,000 megawatts—more than a third of its electrical load that night.

In the past, this deficit might have kayoed the entire Con Ed system and blacked out nearby areas as well. But safety devices and procedures adopted after the 1965 blackout automatically went into action—at first reducing voltages supplied to customers by 5%, then by 8%. Lights flickered and television pictures shrank. Still, the maneuver temporarily staved off the complete shutdowns that the devices would otherwise have ordered to protect the generators and transformers from being burned out by dangerous overloads.

The voltage reduction also gave the control center time to call upon other power plants in the city to feed in more electricity. By revving up their turbines, they were quickly able to make up about 1,000 megawatts. Still, that was hardly enough. So the computers, acting on pre-programmed instructions, made a calculated trade-off: to keep the city's vital subways, hospitals, elevators and other services running, they began "shedding load"—reducing electrical demand by blacking out several less populated suburban bedroom communities in Westchester. Presumably, that would give Con Ed controllers time to call in more energy from elsewhere.

For a few minutes, the stratagem worked. But a new problem developed on the utility's eastern flank. Because Con Ed's great drain of power was overheating their connecting cables, the neighboring Long Island Lighting Co.





SUPPORTERS OF ANTINUCLEAR CLAMSHELL ALLIANCE MARCHING IN PROTEST OVER GENERATOR CONSTRUCTION AT SEABROOK, N.H.

unplugged from the system. That left Con Ed with only three major sources of electricity: its often troublesome 1,000-megawatt "Big Allis" (for Allis-Chalmers) generator in the borough of Queens and two remaining out-of-state links—one to New Jersey's Public Service Gas & Electric Co., the other to up-state and New England utilities.

Incredibly, at about 9:27, still more lightning in Westchester cut off Con Ed's last remaining hookup to the north. Moments later, as they staggered under this additional demand, Big Allis was shut off by its automatic switches, and New Jersey also cut itself free. Thus the city was isolated from any outside sources of power because of the very safety arrangements made after the 1965 blackout. Only a handful of small local power stations were left to meet the overwhelming electrical load. By 9:41 even the last of these shut off.

The breakdown took little more than an hour, but the restoration of power was far more tedious. Though the equipment itself was undamaged, protective circuit breakers—many of them underground—automatically tripped and had to be individually examined and reset. In addition, since 1965, Con Ed has shut down several of its old local coal-fired plants. Thus it is forced to draw on generators far outside the city that are more difficult to reconnect into the system. Finally, no more than a single section of the city could be powered up at a time for fear of a new overload. In all, it was 25 hours before all the equipment could be brought back on line and the lights came on again.

Could the disaster have been averted? In the immediate post-mortem after the blackout, some critics suggested that Con Ed should have appealed to the public to shut off appliances, thus reducing load on the overburdened system. But could the message have got out quickly enough—and would the city have responded? Others wondered why the controllers did not react more vigorously by blacking out more areas sooner to save the overall system. Some even suspected that there might be an undiscovered yet crucial flaw in the network's design or equipment. As investigators explore these and other nagging questions about New York's calamity, every major utility in the country will be carefully listening to the answers.

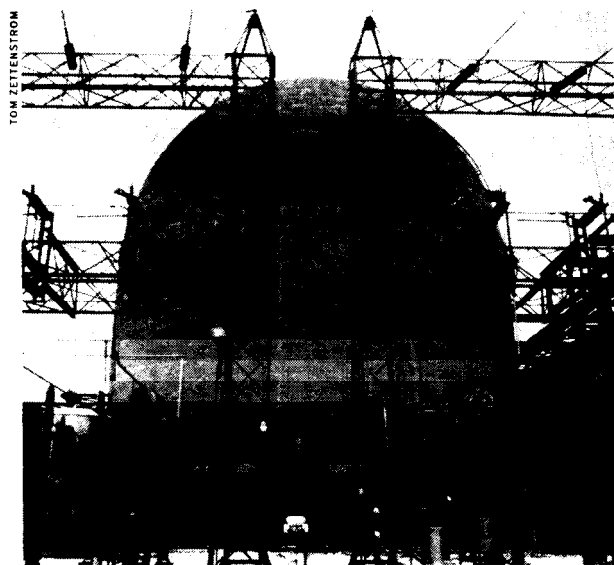
CAN IT HAPPEN ELSEWHERE?

Outside New York, there were quite a few cocky power company executives who said about the possibility of blackouts: "No, it can't happen here." There were some who pooh-poohed Consolidated Edison's "act of God" explanation as unconvincing. There were a number who blamed Con Ed's own defects and described with pride the superior safety features of their own systems. Yet on closer consideration, few power executives were willing to say flatly—and publicly—that they could offer ironclad security against the same sort of failure.

Systems from Boston to Los Angeles protect themselves with tie-ins to multistate power pools and with automatic "load shedding" controls that temporarily cut off some customers when overloads threaten. Yet New York too relied on those devices, and they were not enough.

Of course some of New York's problems are unique. Nowhere else in the U.S. is power failure likely to last as long as 25 hours; New York has more underground cable than any other system—80,837 miles of it—and it obviously requires more time to repair than do surface lines. And because each section of Manhattan's power grid sucks as much power as a small city, the restoration of power in each neighborhood had to proceed slowly and carefully to avoid sudden overloads on the system. Earlier this month, when fire destroyed an electric cable in St. Louis, it took only eight hours to restore power to the 40-block downtown area.

Power lines travel into most cities from several directions, but all the major cables connecting Con Ed to other pools of electric power run in a single corridor from the north. Last week a storm apparently knocked out all eight of these lines within an hour. Says an executive of Chicago's Commonwealth Edison: "If a major line goes out here, we can interchange a lot more easily and flexibly." One reason for the difference: Commonwealth Edison can more readily obtain right-of-way for power lines in Midwestern farmlands than can Con Ed in the crowded Eastern Megalopolis.



NUCLEAR PLANT AT HADDAM NECK, CONN.
"The reserve would fall to zero."

But to the extent that geography adds to the vulnerability of major power lines, New York is not alone. In the peninsular state of Florida, all the lines to power pools elsewhere run up and down in a fairly narrow corridor. Last May 2.5 million residents in five Florida counties (including Miami's Dade County) were without power for approximately four hours after the electric system short-circuited.

New York's blackout also focused attention on the intensely debated question of whether U.S. utilities have enough power-generating capacity. As oil and gas become scarcer and costlier, electricity will become an increasingly important energy source (it now accounts for 29% of U.S. energy). Many utility executives and their equipment suppliers argue that the U.S. will have to build many more coal-fired and nuclear power plants. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission reports that 84 nuclear plants will be completed in the next decade; the Federal Power Commission says that if the NRC's estimate is correct, the national power level will be "too low." As a consequence of the 1973-75 recession, utilities canceled orders for 14 reactors and deferred 96 oth-

THE NATION

ers. Among the reasons: harassment by environmentalists, government red tape and delays, the difficulty of financing. Says Robert Kirby, chairman of Westinghouse, the biggest builder of nuclear reactors: "We increasingly will be faced with brownouts and blackouts unless we do something to bolster our total power output."

Nationally, the U.S. now has a 24% surplus of generating capacity, and that should suffice through the early 1980s if present rates of growth in demand and capacity stay the same. At present, many utilities expect that use of electricity will increase by between 4% and 6% annually. But before the surge in energy costs and the 1973-75 recession, the growth rate was 7.2% a year; so far this year demand for electricity is up, to 7% annually in the first quarter. An FPC advisory commission warned that if the growth in demand returned to 7.2%, "the industry reserve margin would fall to zero by 1983, and the risk of power outages would be vastly greater than today."

The Northeast appears to have more than enough reserve electrical capacity, but there is a power squeeze in parts of the rapidly growing Sunbelt. In South Texas, for example, the requirement that utilities convert the fuel for their generators from natural gas to coal at the same time that industry is converting from gas to electricity often forces Houston Lighting & Power to buy power from other companies. Completion of two large nuclear power plants in Texas in the early 1980s is expected to ease the squeeze.

Output Threatened. In the Northwest, drought has threatened the output of river-based hydroelectric generators. "The future for the Pacific Northwest is very grim," says Dan Schausten, an executive of the Bonneville Power Administration, which services Washington, Oregon, Idaho and western Montana. If the drought persists next year, B.P.A. may impose electricity cutbacks and, in the worst case, rotate scheduled blackouts among the communities it serves. A similar rotation of brief blackouts was imposed on Jan. 17 by Virginia Electric & Power and the Southern Co. when demand for heating during the big freeze combined with equipment shutdowns elsewhere due to the freezing weather threatened to overload their systems.

A flat prediction of trouble is offered by Frank Zarb, former head of the Federal Energy Administration: "There will be a lot of brownouts starting in 1981 and 1982 in various parts of the country due to a lack of capacity." That concern is shared by Jack L. Weiss, acting chief of the FPC's Bureau of Power. Says he: "If plants now scheduled are completed, if there's adequate fuel, if there's adequate transportation [for the fuel], then, yes, we'll have sufficient electricity. But there's a real possibility that all of the 'ifs' might not happen."



PENSIVE BUDGET DIRECTOR BERT LANCE IN HIS WASHINGTON OFFICE

THE ADMINISTRATION

Going to Bat for Beleaguered Bert

The financial and political troubles of former Georgia Banker Bert Lance reached the point last week where Jimmy Carter himself had to come to the rescue. The President recommended that the director of the White House's Office of Management and Budget be released from a promise that, if kept, could destroy Lance's already shaky financial position.

As first reported by TIME (May 23), in a story filed by Correspondents Rudolph Rauch and Philip Taubman, the state of Lance's finances has grown increasingly parlous. But in coming to the aid of a longtime friend, Carter was compelled to compromise the ultralofty ethical standards that he had set for members of his fledgling Administration.

Carter's charitable move must still be endorsed by members of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, which originally confirmed Lance in his job. At week's end the 17-member group had not reached a decision. But from the tenor of proceedings, there is little doubt that the Senators are strongly inclined to follow Carter's lead when they do reconvene this week. Even if they do, however, some observers believe that Lance will still be in trouble because of a number of questionable judgments that he has made since taking office.

Undoubtedly, Lance's debts were the main thing. Last January, before he was confirmed as OMB chief, Lance looked prosperous enough. He filed a statement with the Senate committee listing his "direct liabilities" as \$5,343,797, his assets as \$7,968,354 and his net worth as \$2,624,557.

The key to Lance's problem is his ownership of 200,767 shares in the National Bank of Georgia, where he presided before going to OMB. Lance, at

Carter's request, promised the President and the Senate that he would divest himself of his shares in the bank before Dec. 31. (Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal made a similar pledge to divest himself of Bendix Corp. stock by Oct. 31.)

Lance's shares, bought largely at a premium price, cost him more than \$3.3 million in borrowed money. At one point last week their value had sunk to \$1.7 million. One reason for the steep decline was that National Bank of Georgia officers decided earlier this month to write off \$2.3 million in loan losses for the first half of 1977. Another was the prospect of Lance's promised divestiture. Since his shares amount to roughly 16% of the bank's stock, the anticipated sale has had an understandably dampening effect on the market value.

Making Do. The stock squeeze is not the only drain on Lance's resources. The genial Georgian, who made \$450,000 the year before joining Carter's Administration but now must make do with his \$57,500 Government salary (plus at least \$150,000 in investment-related income), pays rent of \$15,000 a year for a handsome town house in Georgetown. He owns an elegant 40-room mansion in Atlanta, a \$100,000 house in Calhoun, Ga., and a vacation home on Georgia's exclusive Sea Island. Nor does Lance stint on entertaining. In June, with his financial position steadily decaying, Lance and his wife LaBelle threw a star-studded party at Washington's Georgetown Inn for members of the Carter Cabinet, plus such other guests as Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger, Publisher Katharine Graham and Mr. and Mrs. Averell Harriman.

The deadline on the sale of Lance's