

The Ominous Malcolm X Exits from the Muslims

by **MARC CRAWFORD**

Last week the Negro civil rights movement was shaken by a rift in the strong and mystical ranks of the Nation of Islam, the "Black Muslims." Malcolm X, the shrewd and personable Harlem leader of the sect who has been its most prominent national spokesman, abruptly announced he was quitting his ministry and organizing a black nationalist political movement of his own.

Of far greater impact on Negro civil rights leadership than the Muslim split itself was Malcolm's surprising decision to join the civil rights fight this summer—and even try to lead it. Up to now he has been a sideline critic of civil rights

demonstrators. He has sneered at them both for their methods of passive resistance and their ultimate aim—integration. Malcolm X, like the leader of the Black Muslims, Elijah Muhammad, is an adamant archsegregationist who insists American Negroes must separate from whites—as an independent state in the South or through mass migration to Africa.

The schism between Malcolm and Elijah Muhammad has been growing for months. Elijah, little known personally outside of the Islam movement, suffers from asthma and several times during the past year was rumored to be close to death. Malcolm X had become the Muslims' spokesman and dynamo. And this has reportedly aroused the jealousy of Elijah

Muhammad's own family, who expect to inherit the leadership.

Last December Malcolm was temporarily suspended from duties in Harlem's Temple No. 7, ostensibly for intemperate remarks he made after President Kennedy's assassination. During the suspension he scored a coup when Cassius Clay, the new champion, revealed he was a Muslim and that Malcolm had converted him. Shortly after, Malcolm said he was suspended indefinitely from his duties—and he promptly quit the movement.

He took pains to swear continuing loyalty to Elijah Muhammad and to reaffirm his religious faith as a Muslim. But, said Muhammad, "whenever a brother walks away from us, all is gone. Malcolm's doing more running off at the mouth than he can back up."

Many Negroes agree with Muhammad that Malcolm has unplugged himself from his power source and that his fortunes will suffer. But predominant opinion, particularly in Harlem where he is known best, is that Malcolm's violent opposition to white men will prove compelling to many Negroes who until now have gone along with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s peaceful approach.

"I don't believe in passive resistance," Malcolm X explains, calmly enough. "Every Negro ought to have a weapon in his house—a rifle or a shotgun. Any Negro who is attacked should fight back; if necessary he should be prepared to die like a man, like Patrick Henry. Any Negro leader must be prepared—and must tell the people who are following him to prepare—to go either to jail, the hospital or the cemetery. But not without a fight, not without a reason."

Malcolm expects for the present to find his financial and political base in Harlem where, he contends, "Ninety percent of the people feel as I do, admit it or not."

ELIJAH MUHAMMAD. Now 66, he was born Elijah Poole in Sandersville, Ga. He took over the Black Muslims from a silk peddler named W. D. Fard who founded movement in 1931 and disappeared mysteriously soon after.

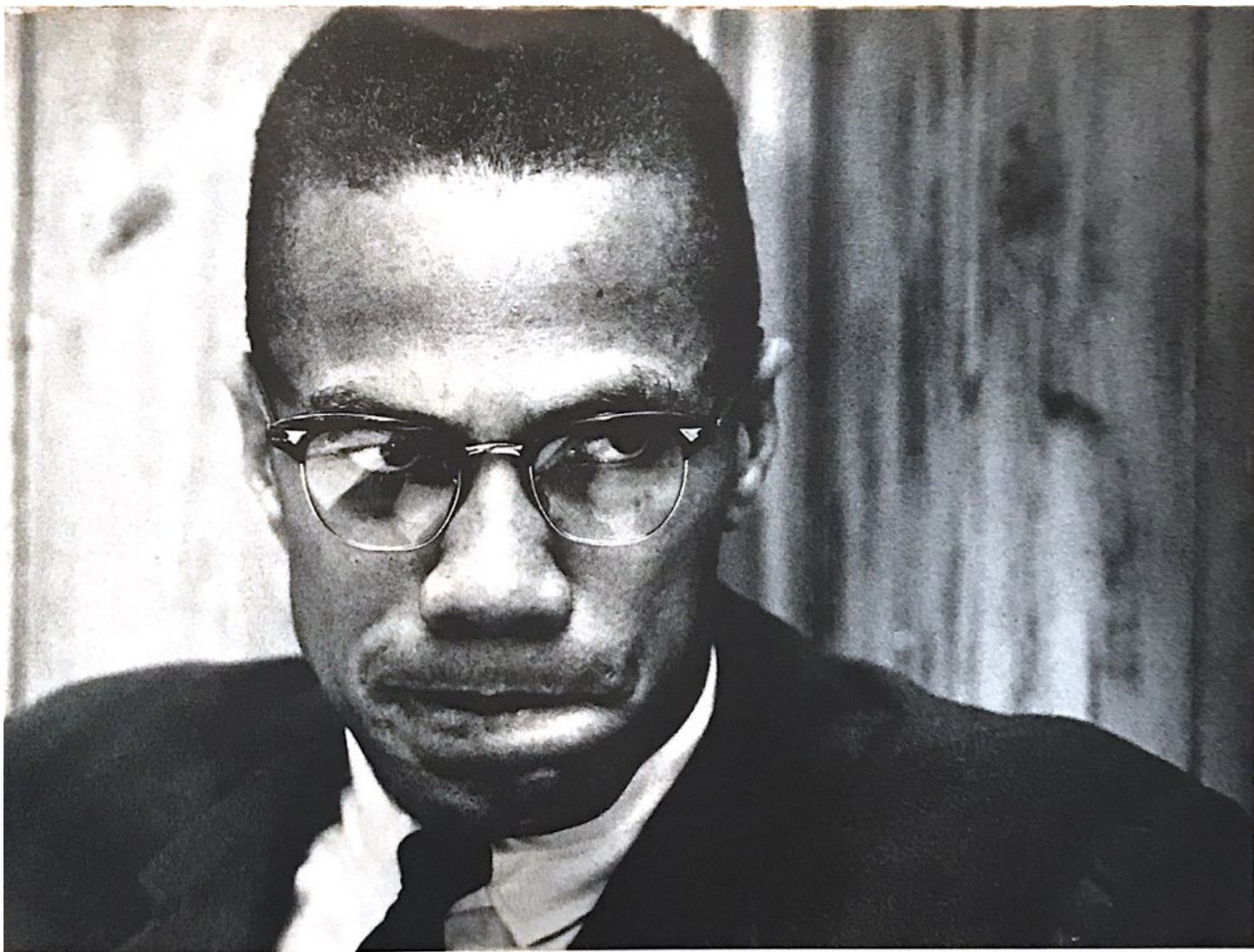


Then, having announced his move, Malcolm went into seclusion to map out his organizational structure. But already his dialogue was taking form:

► On Negroes in the Armed Forces: "If [Martin Luther] King and the others can tell Negroes to boycott buses or industries or schools, I see no reason why they cannot boycott the Army, Navy and Air Force. I don't think any Negro should fight for anything that does not produce for him what it produces for others. Whenever a Negro fights for 'democracy,' he's fighting for something he has not got, never had and never will have. If I'm wrong, then all the other boycotts and civil disobedience are wrong too."

► On paying taxes: "If I'm to ride second class on an airplane, I don't pay first-class fare. If I'm a second-class citizen, I should not have to pay first-class taxes."

► On separatism: "The American Negro has been unhappily married to the U.S. for 400 years. We can't get along, so let's be intelligent and get a divorce. But let's



MALCOLM X. Now 39, he was converted to Black Islam while in prison for larceny. In nine years he became

head of Islam's biggest congregation. He is married to a nurse, has three children with another on the way.

have a property settlement. Give us our share of what the over-all joint property is worth."

► On Americanism: "A cat can have kittens in an oven but that doesn't make them biscuits. I was born in Omaha; that doesn't make me an American. Africa is home."

► On the Washington March: "It was a gimmick to hold things in check. It was like putting Novocain in a sore tooth. If the tooth hasn't been pulled or fixed, it's hell when it wears off. The Negro leaders got the people there, put on a show, promised we'd be back in September if there was no civil rights bill. There's still no bill—and no more marching."

► On nonviolence: "If you think I'll bleed nonviolently, you'll be sticking me for the rest of my life. But if I tell you I'll fight back, there will be less blood. I'm for reciprocal bleeding."

► On the South: "When I speak of the South, I mean south of Canada. The whole U.S. is the South."

► On police brutality: "Any dog sicked on to any Negro should be shot. I think there will be dead po-

lice dogs before the year is over."

Malcolm X will find scant welcome when and if he offers his help and his ominous philosophy to other Negro leaders. "I think it is very unfortunate," says Martin Luther King, "that Malcolm X continues to predict violence . . . in the past the constant prediction of violence has been a conscious or unconscious invitation to it."

"But if the civil rights bill is watered down at any point, it can lead to a despair and discontent in the Negro community that may well bring about a dark night of social disruption. And responsible Negro leadership will find it much more difficult to keep the struggle disciplined and nonviolent."

Malcolm X puts it more savagely: "This is going to be the hottest summer in history."

CASSIUS X. Though converted by Malcolm, the heavyweight champion (being crowned at Louisville homecoming) is loyal to Elijah Muhammad. Following Muslim practice, he plans to call himself simply Cassius X.

