and most important, the BPP rank and file’s principal achievements included the establishment and operation of such programs as free breakfasts for children, food and clothing giveaways, busing to prisons, health clinics, political education classes, and the perhaps better-known community patrols.

The essays explore the particularities of each branch, and midwestern chapters enjoyed their own special triumphs. The work of the Black Panthers in Milwaukee, for example, led to a heightened awareness of childhood hunger in that city that had lasting impacts beyond the twentieth century; in Cleveland, many of the alternative institutions put in place by the party remain active long after the branch had disbanded. The Indianapolis chapter stood out for the mere fact of its presence in a city noted for its reserved and calm response to racial issues. Though it suffered like every other BPP chapter from harassment by law enforcement agencies, the Indianapolis branch was considered “the most non-violent chapter in the country” (p. 147) and the authors tie both its successes and its demise to interracial alliances as well as to the relative comfort Indianapolis blacks enjoyed vis-à-vis those in other large midwestern cities.

With a clear structure, compelling photographs, and an honest introduction that brings the entire work together, Comrades’ only major shortcoming may be the brevity of its histories. Even as African Americanists diligently work at writing histories of the 1960s and 1970s, future historians will need to write fuller histories of these chapters. As the book’s conclusion notes, historians should consider each branch’s history and social service components in light of the “rightward transformation of American political culture [that] set in motion the erasure of the meaning and significance of the Black Panther Party” (p. 294).

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Interstate 69
The Unfinished History of the Last Great American Highway
By Matt Delliger

A current road map reveals that Interstate 69, part of the nation’s limited-access highway system, connects Port Huron, Michigan, on the north with Indianapolis on the south, skirting Fort Wayne along the way. Since the late 1980s, however, promoters have envisioned extending the road from the Hoosier capital to the Gulf Coast of Texas, while also realigning its
numbering in Michigan to favor existing freeways serving Detroit. Journalist Matt Dellinger provides a detailed history of the various strategies employed by states along this route to promote the expanded road—sometimes dubbed the “NAFTA Highway”—as a corridor for economic development across the United States connecting Canada and Mexico. To date, this idea has been sustained by some $2.5 billion in federal and state funds, most for pre-construction planning. Importantly, Dellinger also details the ways in which opposing forces in the affected states have sought to block the highway. In sum, he uses the history of I-69 to assess larger issues: “The magnitude of the project has made Interstate 69 a faultline for many of the key questions confronting Americans: not just matters of transportation policy, macroeconomics, and land-use planning, but also the tug-of-war between urban and rural, and the blurry distinction between standard of living and quality of life” (p. 9).

The book’s key discussion focuses on Indiana, where opposition to the proposed highway has been most intense. Historians will appreciate how the author roots his discussion in the past, starting with the members of the Graham family of Daviess County. Early in the twentieth century the Grahams, who produced motor trucks and passenger cars, promoted the Pan-American Highway. It was David Graham of Washington, Indiana, who helped energize the Southwestern Indiana Regional Highway Coalition (SWIRHC), the organization that first advocated a new, shorter-distance freeway connection between Indianapolis and Evansville. Dellinger’s interviews with Graham begin and end the book, framing the discussion and setting the tone for a book that is as much a product of investigative reporting as it is a work of history.

Each state (Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas) provides Dellinger with distinctive stories to tell. But he returns to Indiana for his basic reference point, especially regarding the history of opposition to the road. South-central Indiana group Hoosiers Opposed to Wasting Land (HOWL) was begun by activists Scott and Jackie Wilson, who disparaged still another mammoth highway project at the expense of rural landowners. Citizens for Appropriate Rural Roads (CARR), another Indiana group, adopted “Fix the Roads We Have” as their slogan. In Indiana and elsewhere, these and other organizations have resisted the pro-development mentality that favored massive engineering solutions to economic problems—solutions that threatened to bring undue environmental damage and further skew differences between society’s haves and have-nots.

To date, the pro-development mentality has held the upper hand in Washington, D.C., in state legisla-
tures, county board rooms, and in the courts. Already in Kentucky, hundreds of miles of former toll road labeled “Future I-69 Corridor” await upgrading to current interstate highway standards. In Indiana, state road maps plainly label the future corridor as a fait accompli. In his conclusion, the author considers what might happen if the enterprise fails: “What if it remains an awkward, half-finished monument to the people who’ve tried to build it and the people who’ve tried to stop it? . . . Whatever places are revived or destroyed or left alone life will adapt, and people will forget” (p. 309). No matter the outcome, Matt Dellinger’s book will remain an insightful reminder of one of the nation’s current preoccupations—automobility as a kind of highway to economic development.

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