

YSA

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Vol. 10 No. 5
March 1967

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(Submitted February 22, 1967)
2. Negro Struggle Report--Approved by the September
1966 National Committee plenum. (as reprinted
in the October-November 1966 Young Socialist)

25 cents

YOUNG SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

YSA, BOX 471, COOPER STATION, N.Y., N.Y. 10003

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This bulletin contains both the text of the report on the Negro struggle given at the YSA National Committee plenum in September, 1966 and a draft resolution passed by the NEC February 22, 1967. The general line of both these documents brings our assessment of the Negro struggle up to date and are an extension of our two previous resolutions in this area.

February 22, 1967

Draft Negro Struggle Resolution

Introduction

Since the 1960 sit-ins ushered in a new upsurge in the Negro struggle the radicalization of the black community has continued to deepen although its progress has been uneven. The freedom now movement started in the South and quickly spread to the North where it first took the form of sympathy demonstrations with the southern movement and then turned to protesting the conditions of northern Negroes. 1963 and 1964 were years of heightened activity and ideological ferment. A wave of mass demonstrations swept the country, while the ideas of black nationalism gained a broader hearing and helped to push the whole struggle in a more militant direction. This culminated with Malcolm X's split from the Muslims and his development into a revolutionary internationalist.

With few exceptions all those involved in the struggle capitulated to class collaborationist politics in the 1964 election period and a moratorium was called on demonstrations. This, along with the assassination of Malcolm X, brought about a lull in the struggle. It was reinvigorated for a brief period with the Selma march in February of 1965 and then died down again until the much publicized discussions on last summer's Meredith march precipitated the spread of the ideas of black power.

The basic objective factors which led to the upsurge in the struggle in 1960 are still present. They continue to push the radicalization of the Negro people out ahead of the white workers. The economic conditions under which black people live continue to deteriorate relative to those of the white working class. The anti-imperialist struggles of colored peoples around the world, and the ever-growing concentration of Negroes in the major urban centers within the United States, continue to give black people an increasing awareness of their potential power, even as a national minority, to change society.

These factors, combined with the experiences of the movement during the past five years, provide the background for the present conjuncture in the struggle--nationwide ideological ferment around the ideas of black power. In the course of this black power discussion a new militant tendency has developed, a tendency which has absorbed many of the ideas of Malcolm X. Malcolm's ideas helped the militants in SNCC and CORE to re-evaluate their old methods of struggle and to conclude that black people must use the power of their own independent organization to gain freedom.

The acceptance of this idea by growing numbers of black people is of crucial importance because it can lay the groundwork for the independent mass political organization of the

American working class. This has never occurred before in American history and it is the necessary next step in the radicalization of the working class as a whole.

The objective potential for building a mass black political party, if the leadership can be developed, can be seen in the deepening radical consciousness of the black masses as a whole. This was clearly evident in the outcry of opposition in the black community to the Congressional moves against Adam Clayton Powell. The attack on Powell symbolized for many black people the fact that, despite the struggles of the past years, black people have made few gains, and in many ways are even losing ground.

The Vietnam War

As was predicted in the Negro report at the September, 1966 YSA National Committee plenum, the Vietnam war has become more and more a central issue within the black movement. Opposition to the war is regularly included in the speeches and literature of black power advocates. SNCC and CORE leaders speak regularly at antiwar rallies, and SNCC has printed a series of leaflets and pamphlets directed specifically to the war and the draft. Even the focus of a rally at the Capitol for Adam Clayton Powell turned to the question of the Vietnam war when people started burning their draft cards on the Capitol steps.

The black community is well aware that the oppressed position of black people in this country forces them to assume an unequal burden in financing and fighting the war. This is reflected in statements by such figures as Adam Clayton Powell and Martin Luther King condemning the discrimination inherent in the Selective Service System, and it has led to the picketing of draft boards by SNCC and the call by Stokely Carmichael and other black militants to say "hell no" to the draft.

Black people tend to be more skeptical than whites about the basic role of the U.S. in Vietnam, not only because it is a war against a colored people, but because of the contrast between the efficiency and determination with which the government is fighting in Vietnam and the ineffectual "war" on poverty and racism at home. And the Vietnam war, when seen against the background of the colonial revolution and American interventions in such places as the Congo and the Dominican Republic, has been important in bringing black power advocates to the view that the United States is fighting in Vietnam to safeguard its ability to exploit the non-white peoples of the world.

Although the antiwar sentiment in the ghetto is continuing to deepen, it is still unorganized. Few viable independent black antiwar groups have grown up and, despite their propagan-

da work in opposition to the war, SNCC and CORE have not been able to organize any significant antiwar activity. Although it is motivated by the radical view that black people should not kill and be killed in a war against their brothers in Vietnam, SNCC's call for individual defiance of the draft is not the road toward building an effective antiwar movement and may lead to the victimization of black militants.

Up to this time participation by black people in the established antiwar movement has been minimal. Black militants consider organizing in the black community their primary task and this is reflected in their attitude toward the predominantly white antiwar movement. But, the growth of the antiwar movement over the past months is opening up new opportunities for organized Negro activity against the war, both through participation in such events as the April 15 demonstrations and through separate all-black antiwar protests. Black power leaders have already participated in the building of the April 15 mobilization more than in any previous demonstrations.

The January 21 black antiwar conference in New York which was attended by 80 people from five different cities indicates the interest which exists for organizations of black militants against the war, if the leadership can be found. And the fact that Southern Christian Leadership Conference leader James Bevel has become director of the Spring Mobilization Committee indicates the importance with which even the Negro moderates now regard the antiwar movement and the pressure they feel to concede something to the antiwar mood in the ghetto.

While it is important for the greatest possible number of black people, including the moderates, to become involved in the organized antiwar movement, it is especially important to help build the antiwar activities of the pro-black power militants. This not only helps to build the anti-imperialist wing of the antiwar movement, but it helps build black power organizations by giving them a broader arena in which to work and spread their ideas.

Black power advocates are beginning to tie in antiwar activity not only with the protest against conditions in the U.S., but with the whole role of U.S. imperialism around the world. Carmichael's trip to Puerto Rico where he signed a "protocol of cooperation" between the advocates of black power and the Puerto Rican Pro-Independence Movement and his announcement of future plans to put the case of American Negroes before the U.N. are indications that some black power advocates are beginning to adopt an internationalist perspective for struggle. This type of use of the U.N. is valuable only if it is remembered that it is only of value propagandistically and the U.N. cannot be relied on to solve the problems of black people anywhere.

White Opposition to the Struggle

Over the past year there has been an increase in the open expression of racism. This was reflected in the 1966 election campaigns when liberal and supposedly pro-civil rights congressmen ignored the Negro question while conservatives ran on blatantly racist platforms. White New Yorkers showed their anti-Negro prejudices when they voted solidly against even a token civilian police review board. The elections gave the Republican-southern Democratic coalition more strength in Congress and this is already being used by liberals to excuse the government for anti-Negro policies.

By referring to the increase in naked racism as the "white backlash" the politicians and the press have attempted to place the blame for racism on its victims-- the black people. Liberals and conservatives alike are blaming the so-called backlash on the ideas of black power. In reality the "backlash" first began on a smaller scale before the 1964 elections when the struggle had spread to the North and was turned from an emphasis on legal equality and token integration to battling against the basic economic and social conditions of the black masses.

The northern press and the liberal politicians were willing to adapt their rhetoric to support of the Negro movement so long as its goal could be presented as gradually achievable within the capitalist system. But, when black people demanded an immediate end to their oppression, and especially when the outbreaks in the northern ghettos showed their readiness to fight for this, the wrath of the ruling class and the liberal establishment came down on them. The slanted press coverage of the ghetto outbreaks and the calls by politicians for "law and order" were used to whip up the racist feelings and fears of the white workers and to turn the Negro into the explicit scapegoat for the whites' own frustrations bred by the capitalist system.

Thus, the groundwork was well laid for the campaign against black power even before the slogan was raised last summer. The speed and viciousness with which the politicians and moderate Negro leaders launched their attacks was an indication of their understanding of the potential threat which the ideas of black power pose to them.

The campaign against black power was an attack on the whole black community and was calculated to further stir up the fears and hostilities of the white workers and middle class. The resulting "backlash" was then used to intimidate black people and to put the blame on them for the government's failure to improve the conditions under which they live.

The ruling class is conscious of the potential threat posed to them by the strategic concentration of the black working

class masses in the hearts of the major American cities--and they are considering ways to deal with this. They have set up numerous bodies such as the Ribicoff hearings to study the "crisis in the cities" which in reality studies the crisis posed by the resistance of the Negro people to oppression.

This explains the continuation of the war on poverty which, despite its token nature, poses a financial inconvenience for the government which faces increased war spending. The poverty program serves a dual purpose--it keeps up the appearance that the government is doing something for poor people and it buys off potential militants and black radicals by providing them with jobs.

The government is also concentrating its efforts on building a better apparatus to deal with those militants it can't buy off and to put down ghetto uprisings. While Johnson's state of the union message had only forty words on civil rights, he emphasized the need to beef up the police forces in this country and immediately sent a special message to Congress to generate Congressional action along these lines. The President's message was quite a contrast to his "We shall overcome" speech delivered at the time of the Selma crisis and reflected a shift in the government's tactical approach to the Negro struggle.

The movement of the government away from even its former verbal support of the Negro struggle is reflected in the actions of Congress. In 1966 Congress passed no civil rights legislation and it looks like the legislation proposed for this year will not be passed. This year's session began with a series of moves against Adam Clayton Powell while HUAC is initiating an investigation into the 'radical agitators' who "instigated" the ghetto outbursts.

In the face of these actions on the part of the government, the more conservative Negro leaders have had to unite with the militant wing of the movement in at least verbal opposition to such things as the HUAC investigations and the ouster of Powell from his chairmanship in order to maintain even their moderate positions and to avoid losing their following.

At the same time, the motion to the right on the part of the government has helped to illustrate the validity of the view of the black power advocates that black people must rely on their own organized power to gain freedom.

Black Political Action

The same events which are bringing militants to the conclusion that black people must rely on their own power are forcing them to reconsider their relations with the Democratic Party. The experience of the Johnson-Goldwater election

campaign, the treatment of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegates at the 1964 Democratic convention, the struggles of the Black Panther Party, and the record of the Democratic Party over the last few years has undermined lesser-evilism. For example, many of the statements made after the moves against Powell in Congress condemned the Democratic Party. Stokely Carmichael used the occasion to point out that the Democrats can no longer take the Negro vote for granted, and 200 southern civil rights leaders, including many moderates, signed a statement charging that the Democratic Party was not serious about meeting the problems of the Negro people.

But it is a long step from this anger to building an independent political party. Some of the leading advocates of black power are now coming out more consistently in opposition to the Democratic party but they are much less clear about what constitutes a viable alternative. No group as yet has consistently and clearly projected and worked for the formation of organizations similar to the Lowndes County Freedom Party on a nation-wide basis and this has helped to maintain the general vacuum of independent organization and leadership in the ghetto.

Although independent black political action can be supported even by reformists, it will no doubt be those who come to understand the revolutionary content of the ideas of Malcolm X who will be first to project a clear alternative to the Democratic Party. It was Malcolm's understanding of the thorough-going exploitative and racist nature of this society which led to his consistent rejection of and organization independent of the ruling class and its two capitalist parties.

In order for black power to be meaningful it will have to be linked with an alternative to the Democratic Party. So long as black people have no independent political alternative to the Democrats they will be beholden to the ruling class. Because the Negro movement is a political movement, each issue that arises such as the Powell issue, will continue to raise the Democratic Party question and can be used to educate people on the need to build an alternative.

At the SNCC conference in December the delegates arrived at the conclusion that the Lowndes County Freedom Party lost because of its isolation in one county and they projected the perspective of building "freedom organizations" in the North. These organizations are to "carry on political, economic, educational, and cultural activities," and consequently will face the question of their relationship to the Democratic Party.

It is very important for us to continue to take part in the discussions on independent political action which are occurring. The experiences of the Freedom Now Party and the Lowndes County Freedom Party can be used to explain our position in

support of a clear break with the ruling class. We can also use coverage in our press of black political campaigns to promote our ideas in support of black political action, so long as these campaigns are run independent of the capitalist parties and have the support of significant forces which we can reach out to.

The Organized Movement

The Negro leaders in the right wing of the movement, including such social democrats as A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, have written numerous articles in liberal, trade union and civil rights journals attacking black power. These articles have helped to expose the fact that the class collaborationists have no real answer to the basic assertions of the black power advocates. Their call for a \$10 billion freedom budget is simply a continuation of their orientation toward dependence on the ruling class.

The bankruptcy of those organizations who follow the policy of reliance on the Democratic Party is illustrated by the difficulties the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is having in its Northern pilot project in Chicago. Martin Luther King moved into Chicago in the fall of 1965 with the hope of showing black people the way to deal with the problems which spawned the ghetto outbursts and the rise of the black power slogan.

The SCLC project organized demonstrations for open housing followed up by negotiations with city hall. When these failed to make any progress, SCLC brought in new organizers from the South to launch a voter registration drive to organize "political power in the Negro community." No particular candidates are being endorsed, nor is SCLC putting up any candidates of its own. Needless to say, the drive has received an apathetic response in the ghetto.

Organization of Black Power Groups

The organization of black power forces has lagged behind the growth in the number of militants who espouse such ideas as the concept of self-defense, black pride, black power, and solidarity with the colonial peoples. The degree to which these ideas have spread without the formation of a strong organization is an indication of the objective potential for building a strong black power movement if a leadership can be developed.

Many of the small local militant groups which have grown up around the country during the past year have suffered serious damage from government harassment and frameups. The systematic campaigns in the press which picture black power advocates as "rioters" and "violent madmen" have helped to lay the groundwork

for harrassment and arrests.

The unqualified hostility of the government to black power groups will make their ability to defend themselves and to rally community opinion in their defense one of the most important tasks in the period ahead. SNCC's dissemination of the truth about the Atlanta events in the form of detailed press releases is a good precedent.

The harrassement of black militants and the frustration resulting from the organizational vacuum in the ghetto has led to increased support for the idea that black radicals must build underground organizations. Although provisions must be made for defense against government attacks, "undergroundism" is not the answer. It will only lead to black militants unnecessarily isolating themselves from the necessary open contact with the masses, and it will be used by the capitalist rulers as a pretext for victimizations of black radicals in crude racist frame-ups.

A deeper awareness of the repressive nature of the system in this country has led many Negro militants to voice the opinion that the U.S. is becoming fascist, or is entering a period of reaction similar to that experienced after reconstruction. Faced with a barrage of propaganda which blames the "white backlash" on the ideas of black power, many black people are seriously questioning whether "going it alone" will risk the danger of isolation and an unleashing of white terror.

Just the opposite is true. The only way to prevent the victory of fascism in the future, and the growth of white reaction and the police state today, is through the independent organization and mobilization of black people, who are showing signs of moving toward anticapitalist radicalization and of white workers who are now beginning to manifest an increasing tendency to fight against the status quo.

So long as the conditions exist which brought about the ghetto outbursts, black people are going to rebel as they did last summer and the two summers before. The key question is whether this willingness to fight will be organized. History has shown that failure to lead the masses away from dependence on the liberal section of the ruling class and on the anti-capitalist political road lays the groundwork for the victory of fascism.

The false assumption that this country is fascist, coupled with a recognition of the present potential for radical action in the black community, can easily lead to sectarianism and the lack of a clear long run perspective for struggle. Few people as yet understand that in order to build a revolutionary movement certain painstaking steps are required --including the determination of a clear program, systematic propaganda work and

recruitment, and the education of cadres.

The militants in SNCC have taken a few small steps toward the concept of building the type of cadre organization needed to carry out these tasks. They have rejected the white liberal notion that organizations of struggle exist mainly to save the "souls" of the participants. But they have yet to overcome many of the organizational conceptions that were inherited from the earlier days of SNCC, such as a prejudice against the development of a recognized leadership with continuity from one year to the next.

The Lowndes County Freedom Party remains the best living example of a black organization built around a class struggle program, although its existence in only one county means that it does not have to deal with many of the problems faced by a national organization. It has developed leaders who take responsibility for the organization, fighting within the party for the ideas they think are correct. At the same time the freedom party is organized so that all the members can be involved in the decision making, and the education of the membership is a primary activity of the organization.

The Lowndes County Freedom Party has also set an example of how a working class movement can be basically self financed-- a question which SNCC and CORE are facing now because of the precipitous decline in white liberal financial contributions to the movement.

Black Power and White Radicals

During the last year there has been a big decrease in white student participation in the Negro movement, North and South. With the rise of the black power concept, whites have left such Negro organizations as CORE and SNCC, contributing to their general over-all decline in membership. Now, instead of entering the civil rights struggle, as used to be the case, young radicalizing students are turning to the antiwar movement, campus student protests and various types of community work. A good share of the whites who are still active in the Negro movement are working in government financed social work type projects.

Although many antiwar activists and young radicals do not support the ideas of black power, the rise of black power has brought numbers of newly radicalized white youth to a better understanding of some of the aspects of black nationalism and black radicalism including black leadership, black pride, black organization, and self-defense. At the same time, the continuing development of radicalism among white youth, especially as it is expressed in the antiwar movement, is a source of encouragement for black militants as proof that there are at least some whites who can oppose the policies of the government.

The general tendency for increased support to nationalist ideas among the new radicals is reflected in the attitude of SDS which was completely hostile to Malcolm X and black nationalism a few years back. Articles favorable to black power have appeared in New Left Notes and SDS has made a formal declaration in support of SNCC--but most SDS members try to fit SNCC's politics into their own political perspective. SDS's emphasis on community organizing in the ghetto has receded somewhat. Many of them have learned through hard experience that community organizing on a social work basis has not built lasting organizations or contributed to the struggle, especially when attempted by whites.

The Communist Party and the DuBois Clubs remain sympathetic to the Martin Luther King wing of the Negro Movement, but they have adapted to the rise of black power by adopting some of the rhetoric of the black power advocates. While disguising their support to the moderates with radical phraseology they do what they can to channel the black power tendency into support of the Democratic Party. The unclear stand of the black power advocates on the Democratic Party has allowed reformist groups such as the CP to agree on a demagogic basis with black power without facing its revolutionary implications. The CP has had to be extremely careful about opposing the black power advocates outright, because some of their youth, particularly the black DuBois Club members opposed their anti nationalist attitude at both the CP and DuBois Club conventions.

Most new white radicals do not understand the revolutionary implications of black power and this is something we must continually point out. By teaching whites about the Negro struggle, about the progressive nature of black nationalism, and about the Black Panther Party and Malcolm X we can help them to understand better the class perspective which determines our politics in all our work, including our work in the anti-war movement. It can help them to understand why we oppose "work" in the Democratic Party, and do not support middle class electoral formations even when they are outside of the two capitalist parties.

The Tasks of the YSA

The development of the black power ideology and its rapid spread is another confirmation of the basic Marxist view that the 22,000,000 black people in this country are going to be the vanguard of the American revolution. They are moving first and faster than the white workers, providing an example for them in their ideas, in the development of leadership and cadres and in their thrust toward organization independent of the ruling class.

Thus, regardless of the ups and downs in the intensity and

level of the struggle, the Negro movement is always one of our primary areas of concern. This should be reflected in our press, in our national activities, and in the day to day activities of each local.

1. Education: Our first task is to educate ourselves about the Negro movement--to follow the development of the various civil rights and black power organizations and to read their literature. All YSAers should be familiar with the speeches and statements of black power advocates such as Stokely Carmichael. YSAers should also learn Negro History and be familiar with Negro literature. The ideas of Malcolm X, including his internationalism and his uncompromising opposition to the ruling class, will continue to play an important role in influencing the development of a black revolutionary movement. YSAers should study both the speeches of Malcolm X contained in Malcolm X Speaks and the new book by George Breitman, The Last Year of Malcolm X.

The history and traditions of revolutionary socialism embodied in our movement have enabled us to contribute to the understanding of the Negro struggle in a unique and profound way. YSAers should be familiar with our basic literature outlining the history of the struggle, our view of black nationalism, and our concept of the vanguard role of the Negro people. These include How A Minority Can Change Society by George Breitman; the pamphlet, Freedom Now: New Stage in the Struggle for Negro Emancipation which is the text of the 1963 Socialist Workers Party resolution; Robert Vernon's "White Radicals and Black Nationalism" in the Winter 1964 International Socialist Review and his pamphlet The Black Ghetto.

YSAers should also be familiar with the "Resolution on the Negro Struggle" passed at the 1964 YSA convention. It not only states many of our basic views on the Negro struggle, but gives a picture of what the struggle was like in the period of upsurge in 1963-1964.

The Marxist analysis of the revolutionary potential of the Negro struggle and the progressive nature of black nationalism has been developed over the years. Part of the history of this development has been recorded in Documents on the Negro Struggle.

2. Propaganda: We should continue to participate in the discussions going on in the Negro movement through our public meetings and tours, through participation in black organizations and individual contact work, and through our literature and press. We can learn from the experience of our publication and sales of Malcolm X literature just how important our literature can be. Our movement played a key role in helping the ideas of Malcolm X to become known.

One of our main tasks is to educate on the need for a break with the two party system. In carrying this out we should continue to support the Black Panther Party and to follow its development closely.

We should continue to sell the pamphlets and books by and about Malcolm X, especially the recently published book by George Breitman, The Last Year of Malcolm X.

3. Recruitment and Collaboration with Black Militants: The number of black radicals who sympathize with our views has increased during the last year. But at the same time recruitment of black YSAers has been difficult because of our predominantly white membership and the increased influence of nationalism among black radicals. Despite the difficulties, the recruitment of black YSAers remains one of our most important tasks.

It is important for us to do everything we can to spread Marxist ideas to black militants, including those who are not willing to join a revolutionary organization which is at this time, predominately white. Interest among black radicals in the colonial revolution, in Malcolm X, and in revolutionary ideas in general, makes us a source of ideas and information. The MILITANT is our main vehicle for spreading ideas, and we should be especially conscious of selling individual copies and subscriptions to black radicals.

4. Participation in Negro Organizations: Black YSAers carry out the bulk of our activity in black organizations, but it is important for all YSAers to be informed about the developments within the Negro movement in their cities, and to do all that can be done to help in this work. All YSAers should collaborate with black radicals in joint efforts such as defense and antiwar activities wherever possible.

5. The YSA should try to teach the new white radicals the revolutionary character of the ideas of black power and Malcolm X. For those white radicals who want to know what they can do to aid the struggle, the activities of white YSAers provide good example. They can learn about the ideas of black power and defend and explain them to other whites. They can carry out activities and circulate literature in support of the Black Panther Party and black power, and they can support such activities as the fight to get Negro history taught at Wayne State University in Detroit. They can unite with Negroes in common antiwar activities, and most important, they can join the YSA to fight for socialism which is the long run answer to the cancer of racism.

Submitted February 22, 1967

NEGRO STRUGGLE REPORT TO THE YSA PLENUM

by

Derrick Morrison

September 1966

(Reprinted from Young Socialist Oct.-Nov., 1966)

The Negro freedom struggle is taking on new and more militant dimensions with the upsurge around the demand for black power. The event that provided the launching pad for the black power idea was the Meredith Mississippi march. Lasting for two and a half weeks in June, the march enabled the demand for black power to start a nation-wide controversy outside and inside the civil rights organizations.

The black power demand has split the already divided civil rights organizations into left, center and right wings. SNCC and CORE, the chief advocates of the idea, occupy the left. SCLC, while trying to adopt some of the rhetoric of black power, condemns the use of the term and tries to keep lines of communication open with both the right and the left. The NAACP and the Urban League, especially the former, viciously attack the demand for black power to the point of cutting off any collaboration with the militants, and thus, they occupy the right wing.

The national conventions of CORE and the NAACP, which took place right after the march, stimulated and deepened the debate. Everybody from newspapermen on up to the president of the country became interested in the Negro struggle and began to express opinions on the strategy and tactics arrived at by the movement. White and Negro liberals began to openly disavow the new turn, condemning it as black nationalism, racism-in-reverse, and anti-white....

The critics of the black power concept point out that it can be interpreted in many ways, that despite the definition Negro leaders may give the idea, the ghetto rebel on the street will interpret it the way he wants in order for it to fit his rebellious mood. This, in essence, reveals why the term black power is anathematized so much by the ruling class. It is the beginning of the articulation of the needs and the aspirations of the ghetto masses North, South, East and West. The battle cry on the lips of the participants in every ghetto explosion this summer has been black power.

It is true that the slogan of black power does not elaborate a concrete program, but as expressed by the new militants it does have certain definite characteristics. It cuts across the differences between the northern and southern struggles and unites them as one. It draws the line much more sharply and distinctly between the demands and interests of the working class and the demands and interests of the Negro middle class.

Black power is an expression of the independence of the new movement, independence in thought and action from the government, white liberals and white liberal money. The more independent the movement is, the more militant and uncompromising it becomes, expressing the interests of the black ghetto masses in the cities and in the poverty stricken rural areas of the South. As a result of this independent thrust, the adherents of black power say that black people should control their own political, economic and social organizations.

The movement for black power also sees the connection between the liberation struggles of black people here in the United States and the liberation struggles conducted by the colonial masses in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The new militants see the problems of black people as a result of exploitation by white society. From this arise the conditions of segregation, discrimination and the other ills that go along with being a second-class citizen. Demanding self-determination for black people as well as self-determination for the Vietnamese, SNCC and CORE call for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.

One idea expressed by the new militants that received considerable attention in the white press, especially during the CORE convention, was the idea of self-defense. As in the past, anybody espousing the simple concept that black people have a right to defend themselves against racist violence has received a barrage of hysterical outbursts from the press. However, because large layers of the movement have accepted this idea, the capitalist press has been able to do little with its verbal assaults. Just recently, on a Meet the Press program in which Carmichael, McKissick, Wilkins, King and Young participated, James Meredith insisted that instead of relying on the courts of the federal government, black vigilante groups should be formed in the South to deal with racist killers.

On the question of alliances, the new militants say that it is useless to call for unity among blacks and whites when there is no motion whatsoever among the masses of whites. Beside, before there can be any real collaboration between black and whites, black people have to get themselves together into a national organization that acts and speaks in their interest. This national formation has yet to come into existence.

Black Power and Black Nationalism

The characteristics attributed to the black power movement are the same ones that the Young Socialist Alliance has used to characterize the phenomenon known as black nationalism. Although black nationalism means many different things to different people, it can be given a central definition from which these different viewpoints flow. Disregarding the hysterical definitions of black nationalism handed down by the

newspapers and mass communication media, black nationalism can be defined objectively as the striving of black people to take over the direction and control of their own struggle for equality. The ideas of self-defense, race pride, black organization, black leadership and identification with the colonial revolution, were ideas held only by black nationalists two and three years ago. The black power movement itself is the result of the absorption of these nationalist ideas by the civil rights movement.

George Breitman, the editor of Malcolm X Speaks, in a talk given at a Malcolm X memorial meeting of February 11 of this year, summed up the paradox of black nationalism this way: "While organizationally the black nationalist tendency has suffered serious setbacks in the last year or two, ideologically its influence has spread far, wide and deep." Thus, it is not surprising that the black power slogan, initially raised in the South, received such an enthusiastic reception in the black ghettos of the North.

Although SNCC and CORE refuse to designate themselves as black nationalist because of the bad connotation given to this term by the white press, they do not refuse, but welcome collaboration with nationalists.

The black power movement has also forced white radicals to shed outmoded views and conceptions about the Negro struggle and to arrive at new conclusions about their strategy and tactics in regard to the black community.

Many white radicals now understand that race consciousness and pride, rejection of white society and Western culture, and the ideas of black leadership, all-black organization and black control of the ghetto, are essential to the efforts of black people in mounting an effective struggle against this racist society. Acceptance of these ideas has radicalized their thinking about the Negro struggle, increasing their interest in such formations as the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, and other organizations that are arising out of the new nationalist mood.

The Struggle in the North

Over the past two years, the northern ghettos have become increasingly explosive. Black people who live in the ghetto have become fed up with the inhuman conditions that prevail. Eruptions have occurred not only in the big ghettos but in small ones as well. Little known towns where everybody thought all was well have been put to the torch. No city or town with a sizable Negro population can escape the specter of a black rebellion. The local law enforcement agencies have replied brutally and harshly to any manifestation of discontent.

Owing to the explosive and rebellious atmosphere, the city and state governments, and especially the federal government, are trying to put a lid on imminent explosions by providing

safety valves of various sorts. One of the most important of these is the war on poverty program. This program was designed to capture ghetto militants and potential militants by giving some a chance to go to college, by sending some to workcamps to learn a so-called trade, and by involving a great many in community work.

The community work consists of providing recreational centers for teenagers, showing Negro youth various areas of job opportunity, bringing this or that aspect of ghetto life to the attention of the local administration, helping Negro dropouts to complete their high school education, tutoring students that go to ghetto schools and a host of other projects that get some people into motion, and raise the hopes and expectations of many others. None of them, however, really get to the root of the problem or change conditions in a fundamental way.

In 1965, the year it was initiated, the poverty program reached its height of attraction. That was also the year that saw few really militant activities or mass demonstrations. The only exceptions were the Selma to Montgomery march in February which forced the voting rights legislation, and the explosion in Watts.

One of the main reasons for this turn from militant activity toward reformism in 1965 was the big support drummed up for LBJ by the civil rights organizations (in order to defeat Goldwater), and the default of the nationalists in building a really viable independent black political organization. This default was reinforced by the tremendous pressure to support Johnson, and afterwards by the electoral defeat suffered by the Michigan Freedom Now Party. The finishing touch was the assassination of Malcolm X.

When the anti-Vietnamese-war movement burst on the scene, the civil rights organizations shied away from the war question, and the nationalists did not see the relevancy of the war question to the ghetto. The civil rights organizations did not address themselves to the Vietnam war until 1966. SNCC did so in January, SCLC in March, and the war began to be a big issue among militants in the ghetto. In the North, new layers of black militants were created as a result of the rising opposition to the war. At the same time, these new militants possessed a nationalist consciousness because of the widespread nationalist feeling that has permeated the ghetto over the past couple of years.

This consciousness was helped a great deal by the publication of two books on Malcolm--The Autobiography of Malcolm X and Malcolm X Speaks. The popularity of these two books is an indication of the depth of nationalist trends in the black community.

The new militancy was also spurred by the fact that the

poverty program did not make any really meaningful changes in the lives of ghetto dwellers. An indication of the hostility to the program was seen at a convention held in Washington, last May, of the people involved in the poverty program. Near the end of the convention those who were not supposed to speak grabbed the platform and began blasting the inadequacies of the program from top to bottom.

Nevertheless, despite this new consciousness, the northern militants still remain fragmented organizationally, lacking any real authoritative leadership and having no guidelines or orientation as to what to do. There are small isolated organizations in New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Detroit, Watts and other cities. There are also many independent militants or nationalists who are looking for something to do and who are not satisfied with the organizations that exist.

The organizational weakness of the northern movement has been alleviated somewhat with the left turn in CORE and this may open up possibilities for the future. However, even though CORE has taken on a new militancy in the ideological field, it has tremendous problems. The new turn has taken many members by surprise. A lot of them still carry around the ideas prevalent before the big change and do not understand what is going on; some have dropped out; and those who were purged from the organization in the past for their militancy are now being welcomed back.

CORE has entered upon a new stage, but it will take time and a great deal of discussion before it can project a program and an organization that will be able to make some headway into the problems of organizing the ghetto.

The South

SNCC's promotion of the black power slogan, coupled with their abandonment of nonviolence, has opened a cleavage between SNCC and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, SCLC. Over the past few years SNCC has learned from bitter experience the futility of trying to integrate into white capitalist America, and the irrationality of using nonviolence in a country that was built and perpetuates itself on the element of violence.

The changes in SNCC started last winter when many members felt the necessity, as a result of concrete experiences, of using black organizers in black communities, and came to the conclusion that the idea of integration was utopian and irrelevant to the problems of the black people. They came to see more clearly the similarities between the situation of black people in this country and the people of the colonial world who have suffered centuries of exploitation by the imperialist powers.

This motion came to the surface when SNCC issued its statement condemning the Vietnamese war in January of 1966.

At the same time, Julian Bond was kicked out of the Georgia legislature when he expressed his agreement with the statement. SNCC again came under attack over the campaign of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in the latter part of April and early May. SNCC and the Freedom Organization urged Negroes not to vote in the Alabama Democratic primary on May 3 because the Democratic Party is controlled from top to bottom by racists. This precipitated a head-on collision with Martin Luther King and SCLC, who were urging Negroes to participate in the primaries and to vote for Attorney General Richmond Flowers rather than the more obnoxious Lurleen Wallace.

After the primary, in which Wallace won by a great majority, King made the statement that he might encourage Negroes to support Lurleen in November if she made some moves in the direction of the civil rights movement. That is the logic of lesser-evilism in politics.

At a SNCC conference held in Nashville in the middle of May, Stokely Carmichael was elected chairman of SNCC over John Lewis. This signified the predominance of those pressing for a militant nationalist course. Then, at the beginning of June SNCC assumed an even more independent direction with the denunciation of the White House Conference on civil rights as a fraud and a sham. And finally, the motion in SNCC received national prominence when the demand for black power was popularized in the Meredith Mississippi march.

Now, as a result of the course pursued by SNCC, it can relate more and more to the real interests of the black southern masses, and can address itself to, and get a following in, the northern ghettos.

SNCC and National Politics

At a meeting in Detroit, Stokely Carmichael came out and attacked the Democratic Party on a national and local scale, and declared it to be the most treacherous enemy of the Negro. Yet, in the same speech, he used Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, a prominent New York Democrat, as an example of real black power because Powell can supposedly say anything he wants. Carmichael also came out at the end of the speech and endorsed the Rev. Albert B. Cleage who was running for a Congressional nomination in the Democratic Party.

When Carmichael spoke at an informal meeting to a cross-section of the black nationalists in Detroit, he seemed to indicate that SNCC's main concern is with the South, and that the task of building a cohesive movement in the North will be up to the northern militants. He also said that what northern militants should be doing is organizing the Negro community around any and every issue that gets people in motion.

Carmichael's remarks at these two meetings make it clear that SNCC's attitude on independent political action is at best

a tactical one, and that for the moment, the southern organization does not intend to organize militants in the North. SNCC is still in the process of shifting and sifting its political ideas. Like CORE, it has come a long way, but still has a long way to go, and the organization is under tremendous pressures from within and from without. The resignations of John Lewis, former chairman of SNCC, and Julian Bond, former SNCC publicity director, are symptomatic of unsettled differences within the organization over the black power course.

Lewis stated that SNCC was guilty of "fumbling the ball" after the Meredith march, and that he adhered to nonviolence. Bond explained after he resigned that he was worried over SNCC's financial position, and that SNCC could say the same thing it is saying now but in a different way and thereby keep its financial support. With Bond out, more liberal funds will be cut off, putting more strain on the organization.

The recent arrests of Carmichael and other SNCC militants for supposedly causing the eruption in Atlanta have added more hostile pressures, and these arrests coincide with similar attacks on militants in Philadelphia, Detroit, and Chicago. This attack on SNCC is occurring after a witchhunt atmosphere has been created by the press and the federal government over the militant turn in SNCC and CORE. The ruling class has sought to create the impression that ghetto rebellions are ignited by black militants rather than the socio-economic conditions that exist in the ghetto. In the face of these attacks, a campaign should be mounted by black militants and sympathetic whites to raise funds for the defense of SNCC and other militants victimized by the ruling class.

The Black Panther Party

The Lowndes County Freedom Organization, popularly known as the Black Panther Party, is the most significant black political development since the Michigan Freedom Now Party. It is a genuine working class political organization, and since its inception in the latter part of 1965, the black people in Lowndes have build the organization and provided the leadership.

It was through Lowndes County that the Selma to Montgomery march took place in February of 1965. Lowndes was also the place where Mrs. Viola Liuzzo, a Detroit housewife, and Jonathan Daniels, a white SNCC worker, were brutally murdered by white racists. These killings probably played a big part in convincing the people of Lowndes of the need for self-defense.

On the initiative of the people of Lowndes, the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights was formed in March, 1965, to help register voters. SNCC came onto the scene in Lowndes at the time of the first meeting of the Christian Movement, and decided after that to stay and help organize the county.

A significant section of the black population participated in protest actions of various types for the next several months, and because of this, political lessons were learned collectively and in a militant manner. The fact that their protests did not wring any concessions from the racist administration forced the people to see the need to run and control their own community, and this realization was prompted by their numerical strength and voting capacity.

It is not a coincidence that this militancy and the formation of an independent black party corresponded with the radical changes that took place in SNCC in the fall and winter of 1965. In some cases, the formation of the new party inspired SNCC in taking its new black power course. Lowndes is the only real example of black power, where black people have declared their independence and are seeking to control the area in which they live. SNCC's accumulated experiences in the South, and its new course helped in generating and in articulating the positions that the people in Lowndes were taking.

One of the main reasons for the survival of the Black Panther Party is its leadership. This made the difference between success in Lowndes, and failure to build Panther parties in Dallas, Wilcox, and Green counties, three neighboring counties in which SNCC has worked. Most of the leadership in Lowndes has had previous experience in the civil rights struggle from the time of the Montgomery bus boycott to the present. As the only concrete manifestation of black power, the example of Lowndes should provide a source of inspiration for militants in other parts of the South and in the North. The best aid that black militants elsewhere can give to Lowndes is to begin to construct a national Black Panther Party.

King and SCLC

SCLC, King's organization, has not changed its general outlook or its direction, but feels the pressure of the new militancy. It still holds to the idea of nonviolence, becoming increasingly isolated as the movement makes the shift to self-defense. King has taken on the role of troubleshooter for the Johnson administration, trying to channel the potential for rebellion in the ghetto into nonviolent channels. His main efforts so far have been in Chicago where he has led open housing marches into the white suburbs.

When the explosions occurred in Chicago and Atlanta, each time King tried to counsel nonviolence and each time he was not listened to, although he was partially successful after repeated attempts in Chicago. In the upsurge around black power, King has tried to adopt some of the language and a few of the ideas but has condemned the use of the term black power. In actuality, he still believes that Negroes must rely on liberals and the federal government in order to get equality. Although he enjoys wide popularity North and South, King is coming under more open attacks and criticism by the militants.

Fannie Lou Hamer touched a nerve cord when she stated at the CORE convention that King was running too many errands for Johnson.

The Vietnam War

In the area of independent non-electoral political activity, the war in Vietnam can be expected to become a major focus as more and more black youth are dragooned into the armed forces and obliged to play a role in Vietnam that is all out of proportion to their numbers in the States. There have been estimates that put the percentage of black troops on the front line in Vietnam as high as 75 percent. When the United States government invaded Santo Domingo, 40 percent of the 20,000 troops were black. This points to the Pentagon's effort to make sure that black people identify with, and are well integrated into, the counter-revolutionary force that Washington is molding to stop the advance of the colonial revolution. But, while the role of the Negro in the armed forces is being intensified, the protests against Jim Crow conditions at home are becoming more militant, and a contradiction is being created that will eventually explode in Washington's face.

The mounting sentiment against the war among black people can be measured by the fact that the civil rights organizations, along with many nationalists, are addressing themselves to the war question. A year and a half ago, the civil rights organizations would not touch the war issue, fearful that some of their funds might be withheld or that their lines to the White House might be cut off. Many nationalists avoided the question because they felt that it was not relevant to the black man's problem and that the war was purely the white man's concern. The ghettos' opposition to the war will continue to deepen, but only when the organizational weakness in the North is overcome will there be a real vehicle through which black people can express themselves on the war.

Independent Political Action

The key to the next step in the Negro struggle is the recognition by black people of the need to break from the Democratic Party and to set up their own independent political organization. It was the failure to fully understand this idea that broke the back of the nationalist movement in 1964, and precipitated the relative quiescence among civil rights organizations in 1965. Conversely, it was the partial understanding of independent political action that led to an upturn in the nationalist movement in the latter part of 1963 and the early part of 1964; and right now, it is the existence of an independent black political party that spearheads the motion of SNCC and CORE towards black power.

However, the concept of independent politics is still unclear and confused in the minds of many militants. Most of them can see why a black political formation was necessary in Lowndes, but cannot see why such a formation is necessary for

the northern ghettos stretching from Harlem to Watts. In fact, some will say that independent political action is not only running candidates outside the Democratic Party, but running militant candidates inside the Democratic Party. This confusion on the question of independent politics can partly be attributed to SNCC's equivocation on the question, brandishing the example of Lowndes while at the same time supporting such figures as Powell and Cleage. More basically though, the reluctance to undertake the task of constructing a black political organization is rooted in the material circumstances of the ghetto. To build such an organization one would have to confront the powerful Democratic Party machine, the influence of which is widespread and deep as a result of its ability to capture and manipulate people with the almighty dollar. In addition, there is the Negro middle-class, which has a direct stake in maintaining the coalition within the Democratic Party, and which will blunt any effort to build a real alternative to the status quo.

The federal government's poverty programs also help to undercut the attractiveness of independent action. In addition, the ingrained idea that Negroes as a minority can never do anything by themselves and must depend on the willingness and readiness of the white majority to help is also a restraining element.

Coupled with these factors are the attempts by the ruling class to victimize militants it cannot buy out. Malcolm's assassination, the frame-up of militants in Detroit for inciting a riot the city said never happened and the arrest of Carmichael in Atlanta for supposedly starting the eruption in that ghetto, are just a few examples.

Before mass independent political action will occur in the northern and southern ghettos, there will have to be widespread protests in which the people will begin to understand that they must take over the direction and control of the ghetto. Along with these events, there will have to emerge a revolutionary leadership, conscious enough to stand up to the pressures and able to organize these mass struggles and provide a program that corresponds to the needs of the masses. The maturation of this leadership will be most important not only to the efforts of the black people, but also to the struggles unleashed by the whole working class. The combination of this subjective factor with the objective conditions can produce an organization that will directly challenge the hegemony of the white ruling class over the ghetto.

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