

Black America: Organize and Struggle

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I accepted the responsibility to write a column every other week for the Guardian because I am in basic agreement with its general direction: (1) Its effort to build an independent Marxist-Leninist newspaper is invaluable. The making of a revolution demands constant propaganda and clarification of important political issues. (2) Its action to help build a new communist party in the United States that will serve as a guide and leader of the working class and its allies is unquestionably correct. The line, policies and general bankruptcy of the old Communist party USA discredits that organization with each passing day. (3) The efforts of the Guardian to uphold Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism and to criticize revisionism and social-imperialism is a principled struggle of supreme importance.

From my viewpoint the Guardian has suffered in recent years from an inadequate coverage of third world struggles in the United States. The Guardian staff is aware of this weakness and efforts are underway to overcome this handicap. Yet, this is not just the responsibility of the staff. Those of us who support the Guardian must do our share to strengthen the paper. As one supporter said: "Imagine what a mess we would be in if we didn't have the Guardian."

Historically, from its inception and despite changes in its leadership, the Guardian has always supported the Afro-American struggle and the struggles of other third world people. In 1958, in Little Rock, Ark., when I was taking my first active steps on the revolutionary path, I had the opportunity to meet Louis Burnham a Black revolutionary and writer for the Guardian at that time. Through his exemplary actions in Little Rock, I came to have some understanding and respect for the Guardian.

Burnham and I shared a few experiences as we interviewed some Black students in Little Rock. In young, Black, Southern youth he saw sparks that could ignite a mass movement, continuing the work he and others had started with the Southern Negro Youth Congress.

He told me of his plans to write a history of that organization. We both agreed it was vitally important for Black people to record and publish their histories of struggle so that future generations will learn from the past. This is important for all revolutionaries, regardless of race or nationality. A critical weakness in the United States today is that many people with long years of active struggle have not yet found the time and method to summarize and publish some of their experiences.

Unfortunately, before Louis Burnham had the opportunity to finish his history of the Southern Negro Youth Congress, he died at an early age, a great loss to the revolutionary forces.

Later, during the early 1960s, Joanne Grant, another Black writer for the Guardian, not only served as its reporter of the Southern civil rights struggle but actively participated in helping to build that movement into the massive effort it became, performing significant services on many different fronts.

During the turbulent years of the Black struggle in the late 1960s when there were many sharp clashes over the role of whites and the working class in the revolutionary process, the Guardian still upheld its tradition of supporting the mass struggles of Black people. Two militants from the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) contributed columns to the Guardian during this period: Julius Lester and Phil Hutchins.

The current disorder in the world and the developing crisis of U.S. monopoly capitalism is a far different situation in 1974 than the one in the 1960s.

Faced with a tremendous rise in the political consciousness of the people, sections of the monopoly capitalists are resorting more and more to fascistic measures to constantly maximize their profits and preserve their rule. This rise in consciousness has been accelerated by the struggles of Black America since 1956 and the massive

antiwar movement. Having won many fundamental democratic rights throughout the United States and especially in the South, the conditions, problems and struggles of Black America, therefore, are at a qualitatively different stage today.

For me and many others this is not a "textbook" analysis. Rather it comes from the "tortuous and complex" struggle in which many of us are directly participating and in which millions of people have made sacrifices to advance the course of history.

In addition to other aspects of a program of action, unless we organize and struggle around the concrete material needs, the survival issues, the right to work, our basic civil liberties and democratic rights—we cannot defeat the continuous galloping repression and trend toward fascism, a trend that has been quite evident in Black America since 1967.

Within Black America and throughout the population there are many sincere and reliable people with long years of experience in revolutionary activity, experience that extends back into the 1920s and 1930s. Many of these are consistent supporters of the Guardian. In sharing experiences with some of them about their efforts to help build the American labor movement and other militant fights—it is clear to me they understood the need to fight back, to organize and struggle, to fight on survival issues, to mobilize the masses. Through this process many of them came to Marxism-Leninism.

As a direct participant in various mass movements and political formations over the last 15 years, I know from concrete experience that many Black people and others are coming to the science of Marxism-Leninism based on their efforts to organize and struggle. This is certainly true for myself. Through trial and error, serious mistakes, painful setbacks, and many positive achievements, more and more Black revolutionaries are trying to integrate the principles of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete realities of all of the United States and to uphold the interest of the majority of the people. Our understanding of many aspects of this science is still very limited. But we are eager to learn, to overcome any negative tendencies and to constantly advance.

In 1971 I had the privilege to visit the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of China along with two dear friends. The experiences of the Vietnamese people in their valiant struggle against the brutal war unleashed by U.S. imperialism and the South Vietnamese reactionaries had a profound effect upon me and many others in this country. Prior to making this trip, I read and studied some sections of Le Duan's book, "The Vietnamese Revolution: Fundamental Problems, Essential Tasks." A portion of the title for this column comes from words in that book:

"To organize and to struggle, to struggle and to organize, again to struggle. . . One battle leads to another, and once the masses have gone into battle, they will grow all the more politically conscious, and their own experience will open their eyes to the truth and teach them which way to act."

While this column will concentrate on conditions, problems and struggles in Black America, it will also strive to help organize and to advance the whole, united revolutionary struggle in the United States. Consequently, no space will be devoted to sectarian squabbles, gossip, rumors or distortions of reality. Every effort will be made to concentrate on facts, to strengthen and to unite. Regarding questions of the ideological and political line, whether on the overall situation or major theoretical issues confronting the movement in the United States, this column will set forth positions from time to time in a search for clarity. This approach is the current practice of the Guardian. Criticisms and suggestions are welcome at anytime.