

CROSSROAD

A New Afrikan Captured Combatant Newsletter

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Spear and Shield Publications

ON NATIONALITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION

By

Taliba Safidi

Comrads, Brothers and Sisters,

In the spirit of true struggle and solidarity, We greet you all.

The cadres here have just completed the July 1987 issue of CROSSROAD and devoted special attention to Part Two of Comrade-Brother Jalil Abdul Muntaqim's A CASE AGAINST U.S. DOMESTIC (NEO) COLONIALISM (We gave similar attention to Part One in the May 1987 issue of CROSSROAD). We were moved by both excerpts and in the course of discussing them several questions arose:

- 1) Why do so many of us still allow ourselves to be arbitrarily labelled and called "negro," "black," etc.?
- 2) Why does (neo) colonialism go un-detected in our communities?
- 3) What can we do about (neo)colonialism in terms of our youth?

These are complex questions and by no means are we equipped to give definitive answers to them. Yet, if we may, we would like to share some of our feelings toward these subjects.

Our discussion began with the question: Why do many of us still allow ourselves to be arbitrarily labelled and called "negroes," "blacks," "Afro-Americans," as well as other brandings to this effect? We all know that we are the direct descendants of the millions of Afrikans barbarically stolen, beaten and imprisoned under amerikkkanism, and that the coming together of the different enslaved Afrikan tribes ("nations") as well as the conditions that they/we were forced to live under, is what makes us "New Afrikans". We are still a nation, and we have always been a nation. We must remember that, and never allow ourselves to be called anything but that which we are: New Afrikans.

There is nothing logically that we can see which makes us "negroes" or simple "black people," and by all means all of us, if not very few of us, have dark enough skin to be considered "black." Comrade-Brother Jalil saw the need to address this, as well as identify with New Afrikan nationality over ten years ago, and we need to do so now. We must do so because we not only hold the right to have a nationality. But we must preserve our national origin and heritage. Neo-colonialism deprives our right to be New Afrikans. They deprive us in many ways, i.e., psychological genocide, depoliticization, dehumanization and sterilization programs. Amerikkka wants us to be "negroes" and "blacks" and "Afro-Americans" because to be such is to be void of our true nationality, and to be void of our true nationality is to be void of the need for self-determination and liberation. Without such needs there could be no struggle. We see the brainwashing tactics as well as all the other genocidal tactics of Amerikkkanism every day--in the colonial schools, the 'news media,' and everyday life in our communities.

The second question: Neo-colonialism goes undetected by many of us because the so-called community "leaders: not only accept the arbitrary branding of our nation. They impose and encourage such genocidal labels by way of their rainbow coalitions and integrationist programs. These type of leaders--neo-colonial leaders--would have us believe that if we prefer to live in our own communities with our own people, based on our own cultural ways of life and our own heritage, that this makes us racist. Some have even used the term "reverse discrimination" but that's not only wrong, but foolish.

Those of us who prefer to live in our own self-determined communities with our own people, based on our own cultural ways of life and our own heritage, those of us who are devoted to the interests of our people as a whole, and the independence of our people, are not in any way racist. They/we are nationalists--"Communitistic New Afrikan Nationalists"--and we, as Comrade-Brother Jalil stated, have a right to struggle for such beliefs. These neo-colonial "leaders" and integrationists don't want freedom from the repression of Amerikkkanism. On the contrary, they want to become a part of the very system which represses them. This is why the cadres and i have never been able to accept the use of "Afro-American." In this we find a gross contradiction. We can't understand how one can be an Afrikan--a New Afrikan--and an Amerikkkan at the same time. It's like saying "i'm an Afrikan who accepts the repression, the genocide, and the colonial deprivation of Amerikkkanism." It's like saying "i'm an Afrikan who knows of the U.S. imperial aggression on Angola, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Azania, Haiti, Grenada, Libya, as well as Nicaragua, Palestine, Afghanistan and Iran--yet still wish to be a part of the Amerikkkan system. Comrads, Brothers and Sisters, we can't understand or condone such contradictory terms and behavior.

Question number three: What must we do in terms of our youth? We must revitalize that sense of pride we had in the 1950s and 1960s. Being fairly young ourselves, we can only go back so far; but we need to reeducate and train the people, build their consciousness toward struggle, teach some to fight, others to be political leaders, teachers, and so on. We must build the struggle around the people--the youth--for the future is in their hands. We must show them the effects of drugs brought in by the C.I.A. and F.B.I. and dumped into our communities. The sterilization programs, the criminalization campaigns and the many genocidal assassinations carried out by the soldier-cops and paramilitary agents of Amerikkka. We all have the right of self-determination, and by virtue of that right we can freely determine our own political status and freely pursue our own economic, social and cultural development.

We must not only teach this, but show the need to struggle for liberation as well. Our youth are blind, but we can help them to see. If we but first start seeing ourselves. The struggle is now, not yesterday and not tomorrow.

Today we must arm ourselves and our communities with the knowledge and revolutionary consciousness we need to combat imperialism and neo-colonialism both in as well as abroad the boundaries of Amerikkka. We must remember and teach our young and our old, that we are not simple "black people," that we are not "negroes" and nor can we be "Afro-Amerikkkans." We are a nation--a nation of New Afrikan men and women, repressed under the neo-colonial hands of Amerikkka. Our struggle began well over four hundred years ago, and they

still continue today. Together we must raise up, wake up and struggle toward self-determination, liberation, and the Republic of New Afrika.

In closing, i would like to add that once again what i have just shared with you is the context of our discussion. If i/we have said anything which needs correction, please by all means respond. We need all help and information we can get. Knowing that together we must stand so together we may grow, i conclude until nex time.

New Afrikan Solidarity
One Struggle
One Aim
One Destiny

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WHO IS ALBERT "NUH" WASHINGTON?

(Submitted to CROSSROAD by the Queens Two Community Support Coalition)

Albert "Nuh" Washington was born in New York City in 1941. His father, an immigrant from the south, worked on the railroad before and after the war; his mother was born and raised in New York City. His parents gave him a loving, solid family setting and both contributed to his moral and political development.

His father taught him the only limits on him were those which were self-imposed, while his mother taught him to read and hate racial oppression. She, as a girl, had to fight white gangs just to get into the local swimming pool--and Nuh would have to do the same 30 years later. Nuh's father told him that had he stayed in the south, he would probably be dead, as he also spoke out against the racism and lynchings. Nuh's mother would point out places that wouldn't serve New Afrikans ("blacks") in New York City, and he learned that very little had changed over the years.

The New York City school system taught Nuh nothing, and without the love, concern, and ability of his mother, he would probably be an illiterate. At the age of 14, Nuh was exposed to New Afrikan (Black) Nationalism through the Nation of Islam. Within a few years of this exposure, he would become a Pan-Africanist. Nuh's first arrest came at age 15, when a couple of friends told him they had been attacked by a group of whites. Along with three others, Nuh went back into the white section to confront the hooligans who called the police. Beaten and called all kinds of names, he realized that he was being taught a lesson and that was: the system supported those who would attack New Afrikans ("blacks") and New Afrikans were punished for defending themselves.

Years later while in Colorado, Nuh was instrumental in helping to form one of the first Black Studies groups in prison. It was in the hole of Canon City prison that Nuh read about Huey P. Newton's starting trial and the Black Panther Party. In Denver, he contacted the Panther office and began political education classes, he began to teach, and to grasp the dialectical method of thinking. The Party taught him discipline and that raising the political consciousness of the people was the single most important thing. Yet, he realized that just expounding theories wasn't enough; people had to be taught to believe in themselves and not doubt their own ability not only to resist but choose a course of life suitable for their well being and follow it regardless of the forces brought to bear upon them.

Mao said "We must slight the enemy," and Nuh tried to show the enemy as men not worth fearing. This attitude and disdain for the authority were to be used as evidence against Nuh after the killing of two New York City policemen for which he and four other members of the Black Panther Party were charged. The district attorney, by his own admission, stated he couldn't say or prove what part Nuh allegedly played in the killings, but asked a jury to convict him based upon his beliefs, which they did.

Nuh has spent over 16 years in prison, 7 of them in solitary confinement. He is transferred from prison to prison to prevent him from teaching other prisoners the fundamentals of Islam to which he is an adherent, and the creed of respect for self and self-reliance. The prison teaches dependence and fear of authoritative figures. Prison officials try to portray him as a threat to security for not giving in to physical and psychological bullying. They have tried to isolate him politically and separate him from family and supporters. This has met with some success, as Nuh receives little mail or visitors. But, as he has said, "i'm not in this to be popular, but because it is right." He recognizes and strives for unity as he told some people, "If i could do it alone, it would have been done. But this requires a collective effort and we must work together."

COINTELPRO and Operation CHAOS-type programs have inhibited our ability to effectively educate and organize. They were also used in to imprison many former Panthers and revolutionaries. Albert Nuh Washington is just one of the many.

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AGAINST COLLABORATION

Raymond Luc Levasseur

"...it should never be easy for them to destroy us."

-- George Jackson

We call those who cooperate with grand jury investigations, collaborators. The term collaborator leaves a bad taste in one's mouth. One thinks of those who cooperated with nazi's during the war or in Chile and South Africa today where collaboration by individuals is used to seal the fate of those who resist.

The united states supreme court has said that informants are the cornerstone of the so-called criminal justice system in america. It takes a nation of informants to keep a million people locked down in prison and many others in check.

No community, organization or movement can remain healthy or secure if it harbors those who inform. The testimony of a grand jury (GJ) collaborator is also testimony to that person's moral character. If that same person is a political activist it is also a reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of the movement.

The grand jury is an arm of the FBI. What makes the GJ so insidious is its use as a tool to develop information and informants and its impact on our communities and political organizations.

To paraphrase Carlos Noya of the Liga Socialista Puertorriquena, the GJ is used to: obtain information on activists and organizations through intimidation and threats; to threaten people with imprisonment; to influence organizations to take more reformist positions; to recruit informants and sabotage the work of target organizations and fabricate charges against leadership; to jail activists whose political work has proven effective; TO TEST THE ATTITUDE OF ACTIVISTS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN REGARD TO GRAND JURY REPRESSION.

And there should be no question about it, revolutionary sectors of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement have been in the vanguard in resisting grand jury repression.

It may at first seem a simple principle to do as Ho Chi Minh once said in "resolutely struggling against our enemies...standing ready to fight, and refusing to submit, to bow one's head." However, in practice and as concerns GJ investigations, this has not always been the case. Particularly in the Boston area, which has had a political GJ working in conjunction with the BosLuc task force/investigation, there have been far too many people who have willingly collaborated with this investigation. It is useful in determining a course of action to take a closer look at the Boston situation.

BosLuc is a multi-agency force (FBI, Joint Terrorist Task Force, state and local police, etc.) assembled officially in February, 1983, but which in fact existed in one form or another prior to that date. Its primary target has been revolutionary clandestine organizations. Its secondary target has been whatever community people BosLuc has felt supported the underground or whoever had a finger pointed at them.

Those who in some way collaborated with the GJ investigation:

EMMETT DWYER: Political activist from the Keene, NH area who played a prominent role in the early Ohio-7 Defense Committee. Dwyer was subpoenaed by the GJ to provide physical exemplars (fingerprints and handwriting). He complied immediately. Subsequently, those exemplars have been used in the BosLuc investigations. While Dwyer left the Defense Committee as soon as he provided the exemplars, he remains politically active in supporting the Irish Liberation struggle (ironic, given the vanguard position on collaboration taken by so many Irish Fighters and their supporters).

ROBERT DOYLE: Boston lawyer active with progressive causes. At one time the lawyer for Kazi Toure in a state case in which Alan Berube (a government informer) under the direction of BosLuc agents, placed a recording device under the defense table during a court proceeding. Doyle was subpoenaed before the Boston GJ and refused to testify. However, he turned around and provided the court (and therefore the BosLuc investigation) with an affidavit in which he provided much of the information BosLuc wanted from him. Given the information developed to that date by agents made Doyle's information particularly valuable and was subsequently used to target a community activist who was jailed after refusing to testify before the same GJ. In addition, Doyle offered to provide the court 'in camera' the specific names of individuals BosLuc agents were interested in. While Doyle continues to be hailed by the National Lawyers Guild chapter in Boston as a grand jury resister, nothing could be further from the truth.

JANET AXELROD: Community activist who at one time was a paralegal working on the defense team for Kazi Toure (presently on trial for sedition). Subpoened to the GJ, Axelrod provided the government with information of her privileged (legal) conversations with Kazi.

SONIA DETMAN: Former political activist and wife of Stanly Bond (revolutionary killed in Walpole prison). Faced with possible GJ subpoena, Detman provided a deposition to an assistant united states attorney in the presence of an FBI agent. Her position is that the information is harmless.

SALLY STODDARD: Former political activist. Sally Stoddard resisted collaboration for a lengthy period of time, utilizing every legal means at her disposal. During this period she, her children (both under age 5), and friends were constantly harassed, threatened, and had their phones tapped by BosLuc agents. In one incident her car was pulled over by police and she, along with her children and a friend, were forced to lie on the road with guns pointed to the back of their heads. Forced to decide between collaboration or jail, Sally Stoddard provided a lengthy deposition to BosLuc agents. While recognizing that the information provided was an act of collaboration, she has repeatedly stated that she had no other options, given the terror tactics used against her by BosLuc agents and the lack of movement support.

RICHARD SCHOFIELD: Former political activist who was paid over \$5,000 by agents to spy on Sally Stoddard and turn the information over to those same agents. Subsequently, he testified in a state trial against two of the Ohio-7.

TOKYO SUZUKI (AKA JOHN YANCEY): Former prison activist who provided lengthy statements under questioning by BosLuc agents. His first conversation was secretly recorded by a hidden microphone carried by an agent.

FELIPE NOGUERA: Political activist subpoenaed to the GJ and who subsequently testified at great length. Transcripts from the proceedings reveal a classic example of how the interrogator manipulates and ultimately breaks the witness. Noguera broke and turned into putty in the AUSA's hand, providing as much information as he could on a wide range of political organizations and activists. He provided the names of people in the community whom the investigation had to that point failed to identify. He also provided detailed information on these people and others, including Janet Axelrod and Georgia Hill. Anything, as long as it keeps the government off HIS back. Noguera became a government informant during these proceedings. Of particular concern is that while he has testified as a government witness against Kazi Toure and is expected to testify against the Ohio-7, he remains politically active and attempts to rehabilitate himself within the community.

GEORGIA HILL: Attorney and former political activist. Information on her was provided the GJ by Noguera. She testified before the same GJ and testified as a government witness against Kazi Toure.

LINDA COLEMAN: Former political activist who was initially issued a trial subpoena in the trial of James Barrett in early 1984. At that time she took the position on non-collaboration and refused to testify. The accelerated GJ activity following the capture of the Ohio-7 resulted in her being subpoenaed before the GJ and testifying. She is now listed as a government witness for the Ohio-7 sedition trial.

KATHY WALTON: Former political activist. Subpoenaed before the GJ and testified. Listed as a government witness for the Ohio-7 trial.

JOSEPH ACETO (AKA JOSEPH BALINO): Aceto didn't have to be persuaded to testify before the GJ. He jumped at the chance to cut a deal with the government. He has previously testified before state and federal grand juries without even a grant of immunity. In 1976, 1977 and 1984 Aceto has been used by the government to testify at trials of revolutionaries. He is a known rat who has been in the government's witness protection program since 1976. Aceto was recently convicted of a very brutal murder and is once again prostituting himself to the FBI.

Reviewing these profiles in a lack of courage, one sees that most fall back on some type of excuse for their collaboration. Selective collaboration (providing only physical exemplars); providing "harmless information" or providing information outside of the grand jury room; lack of movement support; fear of repression or blaming the very existence of the investigation on those in clandestinity. Those of bourgeois background seem to feel that their asses and careers are more important than anyone else's.

None of these people claim to know anything of the Sam Melville-Jonathan Jackson Unit of the United Freedom Front, the two organizations the investigation is focused on.

On the face of it you'd think that people would know when they're wrong and that providing information to an FBI investigation, irrespective of how inconsequential it may seem, has a terrible impact on building a political movement that must have the strength and fortitude to endure. No one likes a snitch no matter what the medium used to provide the information and no snitches should set the standards by which we fight government repression.

We must continue to advance the position that non-collaboration is a PRINCIPLE and not a tactic subject to varying circumstances. It is not an easy position to take for there is never an easy time to go to jail and that is always a possibility. And it is a position that should apply across the board, whether one carries a protest sign or a gun, whether your door has been knocked on or kicked in.

Important victories have been won through the principled acts of resistance by those in the Puerto Rican Independence Movement. The New York 8 grand jury resisters mobilized much political support when they refused to comply with GJ subpoenae's. Today, New Afrikan Watani Tyehimba is in jail for refusing to testify before a GJ in California. [Watani Tyehimba has since been released. Ed.] Carol Hill and Cameron Bishop refused to testify before the Boston grand jury. Carol was jailed but released early due in no small part to the community support she received. However small they may seem at any given moment, an important statement is made by each person and organization that refuses to collaborate. It's the stuff we can be proud of, build with, and tell our children about. No act of non-collaboration is an isolated one, for the history of independence and revolutionary struggles are replete with courageous examples of those who came before us and resisted the forces of imperialism and reaction.

However, in the wake of the BosLuc investigations we have failed to significantly advance the principle of non-collaboration as an integral part of community life and political organization. There has not been the wide exposure of the worst of the collaborators nor enough political support for those who have resisted.

Community work and the task of mobilizing larger numbers of people lies at the heart of any campaign to build support for GJ resisters and related issues. The principle of non-collaboration must always be on our agenda and not be put on the back burner only to be belatedly brought out again after the next wave of repression.

We must be prepared to answer the difficult questions people ask about our position on non-collaboration and act to ease the burden of those who are jailed.

Most progressive people would not conceive of themselves as willing 'collaborators with apartheid, the counterrevolutionary forces in Central America, or cops who kill.' Then why collaborate with the united states government?

We must take the example of those who have resisted and use our collective experience to educate others. We need to build on the principles and raise the consciousness of our communities and organizations to this very elementary form of self-defense. It is both a question of security and integrity.

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AFRICAN MUSLIMS AND THE STRUGGLE OF AFRICANS IN AMERIKKKA

Abdul Majid

Historically, the relationship between Africans and Europeans in Amerikkka has been one of oppression. This oppression was first in the form of slavery, and then modified to a status of servitude to the European settlers.

One essential factor of slavery was to try to totally obliterate our historical past (roots). The purpose for this was to make us more amenable and to make more palatable our wretched conditions in Amerikkka. Prior to our being transported to the "new world" as slaves, we lived in organized, flourishing societies, governed by Africans. These were some of the most advanced societies known to mankind at that time. Many of these states were either Islamic or heavily populated by Muslims. These African Muslims were very active in the social, political, economic and military affairs of these governments. Also, our people were fierce warriors when it came to protecting the integrity of the family, as well as the sovereignty of the state. We had Quran, along with many outstanding examples of the exemplary character of our people.

Thus, we must now ask ourselves: What happened to cause such a radical change in the Muslim of today from his brother [and sister] of the past? In order to get a better understanding of this phenomenon, it is necessary, I believe, to make a thorough examination of our past history (African). Here I believe is where we will begin to unravel the complexities of our present condition. Unfortunately, many of us have either forgotten where we came from or tend to brush our past aside as an afterthought; and sadly, there are still those of us who are ashamed of our past (African heritage).

When Europeans first came into contact with our foreparents on the shores of Africa, there was a mutual respect and in some cases we were held in high esteem and reverence by these peoples. This was due to our degree of sovereignty and the order that Europeans found in the governments they came in contact with. It wasn't until we fell victim to internecine fighting and the slave trade that Europeans began to see us in a different light, and began to lose respect for us as a people. The primary factor that played a role in this change of relationship was our loss of sovereignty and control of our destiny. We were no longer in control of any land resources or government upon being transported to Amerikkka and were firmly under European domination.

Our entire way of life was changed, our religious, cultural, social, political and economic institutions were totally scrapped by our colonizers. In place of this we were given "western kufir values" to imitate. This was done by the negation of everything we held of value for ourselves. Once this process began to take effect upon our people, our fate seemed sealed, at least for a time, and our captivity that much easier for our oppressors. As we know, education (reading and writing) of Africans was a criminal offense, punishable by law. In fact, even learning the Bible (old testament) was discouraged, for fear that this might rekindle ideas in our minds that slavery and oppression were wrong.

Once we were effectively cut off from our roots (Africa), we were then systematically mis-educated about where we came from through lies and deceit. Today when we look at our people, we can still see the lasting mental scars left by the false beliefs put forth by our oppressors. With this in mind, one can see why Europeans were so slow and non-committal to free us from slavery and grant our people the guarantees and protections of their constitution.

However, this did not stop Africans in Amerikkka from struggling to obtain a better life, in spite of European intransigence and obstinacy. This obstinacy on their part has merely made our people that much more resolved in our objective: To obtain full human rights, not as Amerikkkan citizens, per se, but as human beings to be respected as such. We are reminded almost daily that we still have a long road to travel before we obtain freedom, justice and equality in this society that we find ourselves still held captive. There are those with ready-made simplistic solutions to our complex problems, e.g., back to Africa; pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and even genocide; we know all too well from experience that it's neither easy nor simplistic--if only it were! For with the exception of the indigenous people of this land, no other ethnic group of people has been so viciously exploited, systematically denied and stymied in terms of opportunities as we have; with laws actually created and enacted with the specific intent and purpose of denying us the rights that others (Europeans) took for granted. Even today de facto laws exist that deny us jobs, housing, education, etc.

The struggle for full equality affects us all as a people regardless of political, economic or religious persuasions. Our collective oppression due to racism is something none of us can escape because we are African before we are anything. As Muslims of African descent we cannot afford the luxury of separating ourselves from the masses of our people. We must begin to see that what happens and affects the masses of African people will also happen and affect the African Muslim. Two recent examples of this were the arrest of the Imam and several brothers from Al Taqwa in Brooklyn and the murder of a Muslim in Flushing, Queens, by the police. Unfortunately, these incidents were neither isolated nor the exception to the rule, but rather the norm when it comes to our relationship with European Amerikkka. This is just one of the many forms of oppression the Muslim in general and Africans in particular are subjected to. Oppression and repression are very high amongst African Muslims in Amerikkka's concentration camps (prison). This goes on in spite of having civilian Muslims employed in these camps. Muslims are discriminated against both subtly and overtly in many other ways. We (Muslims) are fooling ourselves if we really believe that we have freedom of religion in Amerikkka or anything else for that matter, as long as our people are continually denied their basic human rights. Once we Muslims grasp this reality, then we can begin to deal with our problem in Babylon (U.S.A.).

We are supposed to be Allah's vicegerents here on earth. We are taught to fight oppression and aid the weak wherever we are. Allah commands us in Quran to sharpen our swords and keep our steeds of war at the ready. We are taught that death is preferred to oppression and denial of our right to worship freely. So the question now is what are we Muslims going to do? Are we going to get involved and participate in the affairs of our communities? Are we going to now get in the forefront of the struggle of our people (where we should be)?

Or, are we going to continue to tail behind the masses as we have been doing, looking for excuses as to why we shouldn't and can't get involved in the plight of the masses of Africans in Amerikkka. One justification for past non-involvement in the U.S.A. has been the concern with Muslims struggling in other countries but this becomes ludicrous when we see that Muslims elsewhere are dealing with the oppression in their lands. Many brothers like to speak on the Iranian revolution and the restoration of Islam to that country. They seem to overlook the fact that Muslims were in the forefront of the fight. It was Muslims amongst others who helped lead the fight to topple that corrupt puppet of U.S. imperialism, the Shah. They (Muslims) didn't separate and isolate themselves from their people; on the contrary, they stood shoulder to shoulder agitating, organizing and educating (tablík) the masses.

How much longer are we going to continue to sit by on the side lines before we take the "devil by the horns"? Of one thing we can assure ourselves, and that is that conditions will not change for the better due to European benevolence or "sense of justice." If we are going to be sincere to ourselves, then we must "practice" the book (Quran) in full to the best of our ability, not just taking four wives, or some of the other tenets that are non-threatening to our oppressors. Ultimately, we have to answer to a much higher authority than this government of modern-day Pharoahs, just as they (Pharoahs) will have to answer for what they have done. We will not be able to use the excuse that we didn't know any better, or had no place to go. For Allah will remind us: "Did - he not make this earth spacious enough for all his servants and creation."

"If we are not for ourselves, who will be for
us. If not now, when?" El Hajj Malik Shabazz (Malcolm X)

As Salaamu Alaikum

In Jihad

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A (BOOK) RE-VIEW

THE BANNER OF PEOPLE'S WAR: THE PARTY'S MILITARY LINE

By General Vo Nguyen Giap
Praeger Publishers, 1970

Re-viewed by Atiba Shanna

Why should we take the time to re-view a book that was written and published nearly twenty years ago? And why, when so much of our attention is presently turned toward internal analyses and reconstruction, concern ourselves with a book whose subject is Vietnam and its particular theory and practice of people's war?

The banner of people's war is also held by the New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM), and it was first raised over twenty years ago. As we took steps in the 1960s and 1970s to form our unique political and military theories and lines, and to test them in practice, the book under re-view was among those we studied; its principles and propositions were among those we debated. Some of the conclusions we drew at the time have proven valid, while others have not. As we prepare for a new offensive, it behoves us to use a re-view of this book as one means (among others) of moving forward by looking back....

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It may be said that a captured combatant newsletter ain't the ideal vehicle for initiating public discussions and analyses of past or proposed military lines and activities. (At bottom, there is no ideal vehicle for initiating public discussions of critical political lines and activities.) However, our movement is presently required to advance the struggle under less than ideal conditions. In view of security demands, we speak as generally as possible, using what we got until we get what we need—using what we got as a means of getting what we need.

At some point in the near future our movement (i.e., one or more organized political formations) will develop an armed organization that will create a vehicle (i.e., journal, newspaper or newsletter, radio station, etc.), with which to consistently address the people on military matters, and to supplement the political education of armed combatants principally provided by other organs of the party. The tasks of a vehicle that speaks with the voice of the party's armed organization would include, but not be limited to:

- 1) Informing the people of the occurrence, causes, and probable consequences of armed actions;
- 2) Exposing the people to lines and theories on military matters;

- 3) Informing the people on the general tasks confronting the movement and our collective responsibilities in fulfilling them;
- 4) Exposing the people to views and analyses on the nation's development ("history"), the promotion of revolutionary artistic culture, and presentation of the components of revolutionary science (i.e., philosophy, political economy, etc.);
- 5) Generally assist in the processes of agitation, education, organization and mobilization of New Afrikan people toward the realization of national liberation revolution, i.e., independence and socialist development.

At the moment, CROSSROAD comes close to representing such a vehicle, altho it speaks not with the voice of a single political party or armed organization. CROSSROAD is representative of many organizations and points of view, all of which speak in unity on the fundamental objectives of the New Afrikan Independence Movement. In this respect, CROSSROAD is the voice of a (armed) political front. The perspective in this re-view is that of only one component of the front.

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Lessons From Early Rebellions

As we've been saying so often lately, in so many ways, the road to the future goes thru the past. We lay the foundation for this re-view with a look back at a critical episode in the Vietnamese national liberation revolution. Our purpose is two-fold: 1) This episode will be a constant point of reference throughout later sections; 2) It will be the basis for drawing similarities to a critical period in our own struggle--the rebellions of the 1960s and 1970s.

In September 1930, "soviets" or what we might call independent bases of dual/people's power were temporarily established in the provinces of Nghe An and Ha Tinh, along Vietnam's north central coast. Known as the Nghe-Tinh soviets, the creation of these centers of people's power was the milestone in a year-long period of rebellious activity against the French and reactionary Vietnamese elements. Peasants, joined by workers, were the prime social force in these rebellions, aided principally by cadres of the newly founded Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP).

But by mid-1931, the French had not only reassumed control of the Nghe-Tinh area. In the aftermath of severe repression that covered the entire country, the Party--which had only recently celebrated its first anniversary--was nearly decimated. Vietnamese Party historians are said to now look upon the Nghe-Tinh rebellions as comparable to the 1905 Russian Revolution, in that it played a major role in preparing the way for later events. However, saying it this way can be misleading. The Nghe-Tinh period is significant today primarily because the Party learned from political errors and "military" defeat; they drew lessons from the experience which they applied to later political and military practice.

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In his "Introduction" to THE BANNER OF PEOPLE'S WAR: THE PARTY'S MILITARY LINE, Georges Boudarel makes the interesting point that the lessons of the Nghe-Tinh rebellions weren't fully drawn by the VCP until the 1940s.

A few obvious questions come to mind, i.e., What were the lessons drawn from the rebellions? Why did it allegedly take the Party such a long time to fully draw the lessons? Why was the rebellion and the established soviets short-lived?

There are also some not-so-obvious questions, i.e., What does the Nghe-Tinh period and its lessons have to do with the New Afrikan Independence Movement?

We'll try to supply answers to all these questions as we move along. However, we can say here that in one respect, the book under re-view reveals the lessons drawn from the Nghe-Tinh rebellions. This is so because the roots of the essential principles highlighted below can be traced to the 1930-31 rebellions and their aftermath.

The lessons drawn from the Nghe-Tinh rebellions relate to the political requirements to be met if people's war is to be effectively generated and pursued successfully. They relate to the need for timely social analyses done within a scientific socialist context. They relate to the proper "timing" and scope of revolutionary violence. Let's briefly examine the Nghe-Tinh rebellions and, in the process, see if we can draw lessons relevant to our own experience.

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The Nghe-Tinh soviets were established in September 1930, but the rebellions actually had their beginnings seven months earlier. In February 1930, the Vietnamese Communist Party was founded, and the Yen Bay revolt took place. Both of these events are significant because: 1) Cadres of the VCP played a major role in the rebellions. However, the Party was (along with other objective conditions) ill-prepared to sustain the activity; 2) The Yen Bay revolt served as an inspiration for cadres who wanted to 'learn from its defeat' and move straight ahead to launch what they believed would be a successful armed insurrection:

The Yen Bay revolt was a desperate and as it turned out fatal attempt by the Nationalist Party (VNQDD) to take advantage of rising anti-French sentiment among troops of the colonial French army, and to stop the hemorrhaging of the organization in the wake of intensifying French repressions. On the night of February 9-10, 1930, militants of the VNQDD infiltrated the Upper Red River French military post of Yen Bay, killing a few of the 600 French soldiers there, before being quickly suppressed, as were other attempted Nationalist revolts. Hence, as it turned out, the principal result of the Yen Bay revolt was the virtual removal through subsequent arrests of the Communist Party's principal competition for the leadership of the revolution, and simultaneously, a further embitterment of most Vietnamese nationalists, already disillusioned by the gap between colonial practices and

the reformist rhetoric of French Governor-Generals Varenne and Pasquier after 1925. Nonetheless, even though the VNQDD virtually disappeared from Vietnamese politics, the Yen Bay revolt spurred the imagination of nationalists, who remembered the words of one of its leaders who declared that he would "die for the purpose of letting the people of the world know that the Vietnamese people continued to live," and, of course, to fight. (2)

The VCP's analysis of the Yen Bay revolt, made a month after its occurrence, held that its failure was due to poor organization, and especially to the fact that it was conducted by only a few soldiers, and lacked the participation and support of peasants and workers (the VNQDD not only ignored the daily problems of peasants, but excluded them from membership in their party).

Communist Party cadres began calling for actions that would build on the momentum generated by the Yen Bay revolt. On March 28, 1930, activists in the Nghe-Tinh area "called for the 'preparation without delay of a second insurrection' that would link with the peasant and worker masses and hence would avoid the errors of the Yen Bay soldiers who 'had not organized...the assistance of the peasants and workers.' Agitation escalated in scope and intensity throughout the spring." (3)

The beginnings of agitation in the Nghe-Tinh area by the VCP date back, however, to 1926, when the Revolutionary Youth League began to organize peasants and workers into Red Peasant and Worker Associations. The VCP's predecessor organization, the Youth League had been founded outside of Vietnam in February 1925 by Ho Chi Minh and others. Later that year the League established its theoretical journal, and the first issue held that national liberation revolution "is not the work of a few people, but must come from the union of thousands and thousands of individuals..." (4)

A year after its founding, there was said to be 200 members of the Youth League, 300 in 1928, and an estimated 1,000 in all areas of Vietnam and abroad by 1930. (5) The activity of these cadres was based on the line put forth in their journal in 1927: "A directing Party is necessary to organize revolutionary groups...and must introduce agitators in all factories, schools, and public and private establishments in cities and villages...to counsel and direct." (6)

The core of the Youth League founded the Party in 1930, at which time the number of Communists actually inside Vietnam seems uncertain but small: "One source speaks of 211 members at the time of the founding, another of 300, and still another of 1,500 later in 1930. By April 1931, the Party claimed variously about 2,000 or 3,000 members, or about two or three times the number of Youth League activists as of late 1929. But as we will see, intensifying French arrests and other problems soon cut the number of Party members to an estimated 300, with perhaps ten times that number of sympathizers out of a population of some 18 or 20 million." (7)

By the spring of 1930, about half of all Party members inside Vietnam were said to be active in the Nghe-Tinh area. Their organizing efforts were aided by the highly oppressive and exploitative nature of local conditions, i.e., government oppression, taxes on land, persons, salt, wood, alcohol, decreasing

incomes, falling rice prices, etc.:

...In these increasingly desperate conditions, strikes by factory workers throughout the country rose from seven in 1927, involving 350 workers, to ninety-eight in 1930, involving some 31,680 workers, including the "first strike under Communist direction" among plantation workers, who took over the Phu Rieng rubber plantation near Saigon for several days in February 1930. In the Nghe-Tinh area, a strike of some 400 out of the 1,700 workers in a match factory in Ben Thuy, a suburb of Vinh, the provincial capital, on April 19, 1930, and Communist-led activity at a nearby textile factory were particularly important in the development of the 1930 rebellion.

Yet, it was the action of peasants, frequently led by local and regional Communist activists, that dominated the Nghe-Tinh soviet movement, as well as the other uprisings of 1930-31. Where in the entire country there were some 129 workers' strikes from April 1930 to November 1931, there were 535 peasant demonstrations in the same period, while among activists arrested by the French in the south between December 9, 1929, and April 30, 1931, for "political" reasons, some 2,791 were peasants and 374 were workers...Similarly, peasants made up the great majority of Communists in Nghe-Tinh, as elsewhere. (8)

All this activity led up to the establishment of the Nghe An-Ha Tinh soviets on September 7-9, 1930. Activists in Party cells, Red Peasant Associations and Red Workers Unions set up their own local administrations in over sixteen villages and nine districts of the two provinces. The foundation of these centers of dual/people's power were the mass organizations that had been created with the help of the Party. (Aside from the Workers Unions and Peasants Associations, there were mutual aid societies, sports associations, youth and women's organizations.) The Party cadres called for the seizure of communal lands, and established agricultural cooperatives. Taxes were abolished, rice and land redistributed, irrigation and other economic projects were begun, and literacy and educational campaigns started.

These activities continued even after the events that mark the anniversary of the rebellions. On September 12, 1930, French troops and airplanes attacked a demonstration of over 20,000 peasants and workers, killing 217.

Nevertheless, in late September, the Party leadership had come to feel that the Nghe-Tinh activities had gone too far too fast: "...it declared the actions in Nghe An and Ha Tinh 'not appropriate to the situation in our country because the Party and the masses in the country have not yet reached a sufficient level of preparedness and because we still do not have the means for armed violence. Violence in a few isolated areas at this time is premature and is an adventurous action.' In short, according to Party leaders, the revolutionaries could not possibly protect their movement, and hence should not have started it. Nonetheless, since action had already been taken by local activists, they also stated that measures such as redistribution of rice and land, and the abolition of taxes should be continued in order 'to keep the struggle alive' and so that people would remember.

"Party Central's judgment that revolutionary power could not be maintained proved correct. The French undertook a series of measures that, together with growing famine in the region, effectively ended the Nghe-Tinh soviets and other movements by mid-1931. The French rushed in reinforcements (they had had only a few dozen troops there at the start), set up a series of security posts (68 in Nghe An, 54 in Ha Tinh), required the carrying of statements of loyalty, and began to offer the peasants free food. Above all, they stepped up the suppression of revolutionaries all over the country, and especially in the rebellious provinces of Annam. It is estimated that repressions took the lives of some 2,000 in the two provinces, and throughout the country thousands were arrested, bringing the total of political prisoners to 3,000-4,000 in 1931 and to 10,000 after 1931. As a result, the Party admitted that 'certain organs... were provisionally destroyed by the police' and in one document of the period, estimated that in places 99 percent of its leadership was under arrest. In all, up to 50,000 leftists were reported arrested and 10,000 of them kept in jail until the mid-1930s.

"Those arrested in this first great wave of repression faced by the Communists included not only the Party leaders of Annam, but first Party Secretary-General Tran Phu, who died in prison, reportedly of torture, later in 1931, and many, many others, including most of the Central Committee arrested in the Saigon area in March-April 1931. The 1930s arrests also included those of future leaders, Le Duan (who would spend about eleven years in jail), Truong Chinh (about six years), Pham Van Dong (about seven years), Pham Hung (about fifteen years), Vo Nguyen Giap ('only' about two years), and Ton Duc Thang (about sixteen years). In short, almost every top Communist leader spent years in prison, and many did not survive. In view of their triumph despite this appalling history, Communist leaders would claim that the prisons had been 'revolutionary schools,' where adversity 'tempered them as fire fuses gold,' and as 'jade is polished.' They studied Communist texts printed on toilet paper, and at times were even able to publish news and ideas in the PRISON REVIEW...." (9)

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Since our purpose here (and our information) is limited, we won't try to talk about "all" the lessons drawn by the VCP from the Nghe-Tinh rebellions. Nor will we try to indicate all the ways in which the Nghe-Tinh period is similar to our own period of New Afrikan rebellions in the 1960s and 1970s. But I will pause here to note a few interesting points.

The "insurrection" model was, for all practical purposes, adopted by the Vietnamese from the Russian experience. It was 1941 before this and other inappropriate elements of the Russian model of making revolution were abandoned. (10) In short, it was not until the 1940s that the Vietnamese had more-or-less fully developed ideology, theory of struggle, and tactical principles in tune with their unique national personality and conditions.

Only now, in the late 1980s, is the NAIM showing signs of making the final break with models that we adopted in the late 1960s and early 1970s (e.g., the "foco") which have proven, for one reason or another, inappropriate to our needs. And, in ways similar to the Nghe-Tinh aftermath, we seem to have recog-

nized this fact only after suffering near decimation of certain vanguard forces.

That is to say, for example, that the story of the wave of repression that followed the Nghe-Tinh rebellions and the near destruction of the VCP, easily reads much like the wave of repression of New Afrikan revolutionary forces in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly RAM, the BPP, the BLA, and PG cadres. One major difference between the Vietnamese and ourselves, however (esp. among BPP and BLA cadres) is that we tended to place total responsibility for our setbacks on the state and its repression, neglecting to place in proper perspective our own political and military errors. This is the kind of situation where we decide not to quote Mao: 'If the revolution fails, it's the fault of the vanguard....'

Altho not fully evident from the material we've covered, the VCP was forced, after Nghe-Tinh, to concentrate on rebuilding the Party and on further developing their clandestine structure and techniques for carrying on ALL forms of work, i.e., how to organize the masses and 'swim in the water' on the basis of "underground" activity. Of course, such development had to proceed on the basis of a political line formed in light of the conditions peculiar to the Vietnamese environment and the international situation's influence upon it.

Similarly, after the NAIM began to experience devastating repression in the late 1960s, it too was confronted with the task of rebuilding vanguard forces while "underground," yet maintaining its links with and also rebuilding the "mass front." This is a task which remains a top priority for our movement. While some progress has been made, we're still primarily groping in the dark. For example, we haven't fully grasped the fact that we have no linear fronts (e.g., "mass front" separated by space from an "armed front," or, a "rear base" separated from a "front line"). The main, obvious reason for this is that we control no territory from which the enemy is excluded and over which we exercise authority in all spheres of social life. It's like when we used to stand in front of the drug store drinking and singing, and some pig would drive up and say "Gimme that corner!"

Do we need to drag out this point? I fear we do, cause some of us have eyes and ears but still can't see or hear: Even some of the "safe houses" ain't really safe! Anytime the pigs come into--can follow us to--our "safe" house, plant cameras the size of dimes and replace explosives with phoney stuff, it's time for all of us to re-evaluate all our shit.

We start with the fact that the "mass front" is the state's first point of attack, and thus has to be our first line of defense (as well as offense). We gotta stop thinking of the "mass front" as "legal" and thus as "safe" for vanguard forces. We have to figure out ways to be fully active without totally exposing ourselves and without letting our daily activities serve the state as roadmaps....

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The Strategy of People's War

As we evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of ourselves and our opposition, we come to many of the same conclusions as did the Vietnamese when, after 1954, the U.S. became their main enemy, too. For sure, they had the aftermath of the Nghe-Tinh rebellions in mind when they looked toward the U.S.

and saw an enemy possessing tremendous economic and military potential, and a large modern army:

Under these circumstances, we must have time gradually to weaken and exterminate enemy forces, to restrict his strength and aggravate his weaknesses, gradually to strengthen and develop our forces, and to overcome our deficiencies. Thus, the more the enemy fights, the weaker he will become, and the more we fight, the stronger we will become. For this reason, the strategy of people's war is a protracted one.... (11)

Saying, in 1987, that the New Afrikan national liberation revolution has the character of a protracted, people's war, is no revelation. In 1975, the protracted strategy was addressed by the Coordinating Committee of the BLA when it issued MESSAGE TO THE BLACK MOVEMENT:

The strategy of protracted war is suited to our objective circumstances. The oppressor is strong while we are weak. But his strength is not absolute, is not without its limitations. These limitations are to be found within his seeming strength. For purely military reasons we will not go into them all, but the immense size and urban centralization of the economic strengths of our oppressor make him vulnerable, his intensified difficulties on the economic and social levels make him tactically vulnerable, the erosion of his reactionary political face make him politically vulnerable, and subject to social dysfunction. In addition, the exploitive relationships of capital are approaching their limitations, while we are progressive and as of yet have not reached our full potential. For these reasons and many others, protracted struggle is a correct strategic line. We must refuse to fight decisive battles on the military level, while striving to increase our potential to harm ruling class interests. We must organize on the mass level along these same principles: refusing to fight battles that cannot be won, while constantly engaging in those that will build the confidence of our people. This does not mean an abdication of responsibility to raise the level of consciousness of our people by engaging in struggles that will only "enlighten" them, it merely means that each tactical struggle around particular issues must have a specific and concrete goal that can be won.

Protracted struggle is the method of struggle that shuns bringing conflict to one decisive showdown. Instead, it seeks to wear down the enemy, force him to utilize all of his manpower without securing a decisive victory, while the revolutionary forces increase their strength and raise peoples' awareness in the process. Protracted struggle aims at increasing the social burdens upon the oppressor, while these same burdens are the catalyst for the masses organizing themselves. In short, protracted struggle is the process by which the enemy is weakened, demoralized, and made politically bankrupt, until our relationship to his strength is tipped in our objective favor. (12)

The strategy of people's war is a protracted one, but what, exactly, does this mean? Some of us may regard this as a senseless question, because "protracted" obviously means "drawn out," "prolonged," etc. However, if you agree with this definition--and take it no further--then raising the question is justified.

The point is this: We tend to think of "protracted" as merely embodying time elements or the single aspect of time. But "space" is also an aspect of protraction, i.e., "time" assumes importance because of what (should) happen during the interval from one moment to the next.

To illustrate a bit, let's first go back to the above quote from Giap, where he says "Under these circumstances, we must have time...." What must we have time for? WHY must we have time?:

- to weaken and exterminate enemy forces;
- to restrict his strength and aggravate his weaknesses;
- to strengthen and develop our forces;
- to overcome our deficiencies.

Most importantly: "...when we say a state of undeclared war exists, we mean a domestic war, an economic, a military, and a political war. We therefore must fight this war on all fronts." (13)

WE must fight this protracted war on ALL "fronts," i.e., devise and execute national revolutionary (social) and military strategy in all spheres of life, among all classes and strata of our people, and diplomatically (among allies and international supporters). "We" being whoever claims to be a real vanguard, which is to say, the real vanguard ain't just the folks carrying guns, but is those who constitute the political PARTY responsible for the total conduct of the war and the development of the people's state.

For this reason, protracted strategy for the New Afrikan Independence Movement doesn't merely aim to raise people's awareness in the process of wearing down the enemy, nor does it follow an idealist assumption that the masses will organize themselves (spontaneously) as the social burdens of the oppressor increase. Protracted strategy in the New Afrikan national liberation revolution requires vanguard forces to mobilize the masses, as well as help increase their awareness; our strategy of protracted people's war demands that vanguard cadres take the lead in consciously organizing the masses, and not leave this responsibility to spontaneity or to less committed, non-revolutionary forces.

Let's reflect a bit more on why we need time, or, on why we must make better use of our time. We need to weaken the enemy, and to overcome our deficiencies. Where is the enemy strong? Surely not only is he strong militarily, but he's also strong politically, ideologically and philosophically, i.e., the ideas of the bourgeois-imperialist state constitute a hegemonic block on the development of revolutionary and socialist consciousness and activity. Consequently, vanguard cadres must not only know how to make the quick draw, but how to utilize philosophy and the ideological polemic as major weapons in people's war.

What are our deficiencies? You name the area and you name a field for which strategy of protracted struggle must be developed. That is, strategy that will allow us to "extend" our ideas and our physical presence among ever wider circles of mass and prograssive forces. Protracted means "reaching out"--and "pulling in"--.... In short, the protracted strategy imposes demands which make us devise our own "comprehensive formula" for building our forces and waging the war.

The "Comprehensive" Nature of People's War

The Vietnamese Communist Party's military line held that victory in people's war requires a correct and creative military art and formula for waging war, and that the problem of mobilizing ALL the people to fight the enemy must be solved.

For the VCP, the formula (and art) was captured in the phrase "comprehensive war," which meant waging a war in which they sought to combine "armed forces with political forces, armed struggle with political struggle, and armed uprising with revolutionary war..." (14) More specifically, a "comprehensive people's war is fought not only in the political and military, but in the economic, philosophical, ideological, artistic ("cultural"), diplomatic, and all other fields:

Political struggle is an aspect of basic struggle. It is always a base on which armed struggle can develop, and it is also a formula for attacking the enemy. The purpose of political struggle is to mobilize and organize the people, to lead the people in the struggle against the enemy, from lowest to highest levels, to expose and doom every deceitful enemy trick, to disperse and weaken his military forces, to confuse his rear base area, and to protect the people's livelihood and production and the revolutionary bases. (15)

The broad understanding of "politics" held by cadres with a revolutionary scientific socialist worldview allows us to see more easily how "political" struggle can effect so many different areas of social life. That is, "politics" is not limited to narrowly conceived activities of (bourgeois) political parties. While influencing and being influenced by the social infrastructure, politics is the broad description for everything happening on the super-structural level of social life. All forms of political activity are centered on the seizure, retention, and exercise of state power.

If we wanted to give concise statement explaining the purpose of the New Afrikan national liberation revolution, we could say: The struggle is for the seizure, retention, and exercise of state power. Fundamentally, the struggle is not merely "against racism" nor merely to "end colonial violence," and certainly not for "parity" or the "equal opportunity" to be imperialists and targets of the wrath of all the world's oppressed peoples. We'll begin to end racism after we seize state power. We'll effectively combat colonial violence when New Afrika is independent. We'll begin to guarantee equality for all our citizens once we exercise state power and guide the nation along the socialist path of development.

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Armed struggle is an aspect of basic struggle... Along with the task of annihilating the enemy's militant forces, the armed struggle is also duty-bound to protect the people, to win them over, to combine with political struggle, and to support the revolutionary masses in conducting their political struggle, in gaining the right to rule, and in scoring the greatest successes for the revolution. The more fiercely the war develops, the more important the armed struggle. (16)

How many of us have read Robert Williams' NEGROES WITH GUNS ? i'd think it a worthwhile project for many cadres who can use the inspiration and the reminder that fire, too, can be a major weapon in people's war. A single match, if properly and creatively used, can cause much damage to even the most sophisticated technological gadgetry. We have to get serious about waging war in this most vulnerable of bellies:

In the comprehensive war of our entire people, along with the fundamental military and political struggles, economic struggle also plays a very important role, especially when we have bases and rear base areas, when the liberation war is developed and broadened, or when we carry on a national defense war.

Along with motivating a war economy, we must resolutely carry on economic struggle against the enemy, coordinate political and military struggles with economic struggle to harass the enemy's economic foundations, to drive his economy into disorder and stalemate, to safeguard the people's lives, to boost production and saving vigorously, to defeat all the enemy's maneuvers that harass our economy, and so on. " (17)

If you don't know...if you don't know how--learn. Any kind of information you need is readily available, if you know where to look. Go to a public library or one on a college or university campus. If your imagination needs stimulation, read novels or accounts of the kinds of operations undertaken by the European resistance movements during the second imperialist war. If you wanna know how to conduct economic warfare, you can even read accounts of the operations and campaigns undertaken by both sides in the war between the Confederate States of America and the United States of America.

In real war, trains are derailed, bridges and factories are sabotaged, power lines are cut, crops and storage facilities are burned; oil and natural gas pipelines and storage facilities are major targets, as are the lines of communication.

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The key to grasping the significance of waging a "comprehensive" war is (simply?) that we build the new society as we fight. "... (T)o strengthen the force of the revolutionary war and improve the chances of success and the force of war in all respects, our Party has relied on existing circumstances to lead the people to carry out, step by step, revolutionary tasks in the midst of the process of war. This is precisely the question of grasping the relation between revolution and revolutionary war in the process of directing and guiding the war." (18)

We see here that General Giap makes a distinction between "revolutionary tasks" and "revolutionary war." In essence, the same distinction is made between "revolution" and "revolutionary war." To some of us this distinction and the reasons for making it are obvious, while for others this is not so. Many blots think that one automatically wages a revolution whenever armed actions are initiated.

However, the underlying rationale for waging a "comprehensive" war is not just to win armed battles or succeed in the military sphere. To grasp the relation between war and revolution is to grasp the relation between destroying the oppressive regime and building the new society--creating the 'new men and new women' in the very process of struggle. Not only must oppressive institutions be destroyed, but new institutions to serve the people's interests must be built. Old ways of living must be undermined and eliminated, and new ways of living must evolve as manifestations of "revolutionary culture." The struggle won't succeed if we do nothing more than eliminate the enemy without transforming ourselves. People's War is not simply a military strategy, but also a social program. Carrying out the "revolutionary tasks" in the process of war is to lay the foundations for the new society...it's the actual first steps in the transitional process leading toward a more developed socialist nation.

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("Rear") Bases Among the People

To wage a war properly, it is necessary to possess a firmly organized rear base area. The rear base area is always necessary for success because it is a source of supply for human and material resources for the war and a source of political and spiritual motivation and encouragement for the front line. Without a stable rear base area, the front line cannot defeat the aggressors. This is the general law for every war. (19)

We're back to the fact that we struggle in an environment in which there are no hard and fast linear rears or fronts. If, in fact, a law governing our war demands that we have a "rear base area," how do we go about building it?

Well, maybe we should first determine exactly what a rear base IS, i.e., its essence rather than its form. What are the characteristics of a rear base, i.e., is it a place where one can function in relative security while receiving the benefit of human and material resources? Must a rear base area have clearly defined boundaries, across which the enemy doesn't dare travel? Can certain neighborhoods or rural counties or towns become "rear bases" for New Afrikan cadres if we simply modify their present "form"? If so, how do we go about the process of modification?

According to General Giap, the VCP began to build their rear bases by moving from imperfect to ever more perfect conditions. They relied heavily upon the people in chosen areas, and went "from building political bases toward building bases and rear base areas, and creating increasingly larger rear base areas, from 'have not' to 'have,' from small to big, and from fragmented to systematized...." (20)

At the outset, the VCP's "sole prop was the revolutionary organization of the people and their already enlightened patriotism and boundless loyalty toward the revolutionary undertaking. Relying on this patriotism, our Party did its best to conduct a revolutionary drive to educate, mobilize, and lead the masses in the various forms of their political struggle and in this way to develop its own and the masses' political organizations, to build political bases everywhere, and to see to it that wherever the masses were, there would be a political base and a revolutionary organization....From these political bases, using the motto that 'armed political propaganda is more important than military matters'...our Party did its best to build secret armed bases and, from bottom to top, to step up political struggle in combination with armed struggle." (21)

Clearly, our INITIAL "rear bases" are wherever the people are--now. We're confronted with the task of making contact and maintaining contact, acquiring and utilizing resources--but all to be done in ways that prevent this activity from being known for what it is. At bottom, it's like going to the people and start from where they are, with what they have, and to initiate and/or escalate struggle around existing circumstances, while also introducing new styles and aims. The point to be emphasized is: TO PREVENT ACTIVITY FROM BEING KNOWN FOR WHAT IT IS, i.e., where "mass work" is actually "clandestine" activity...where the "underground" is constructed on the "aboveground" level....

Clearly, the "political base" is not the same as the idealized "rear base," but it's the "imperfect" condition that we begin to build on. This initial political base can be something that already exists, i.e., an NAACP Youth chapter or a block club; or it can be something that you provide the impetus for.

It's also evident that "patriotism" is a necessary but not sufficient factor. On one hand, mere patriotism ain't the same as revolutionary, scientific socialist, consciousness. On the other hand, in 1987, the vast majority of our people don't consider themselves NEW AFRIKAN patriots, and thus there's no beginning base of "loyalty to the REVOLUTIONARY undertaking."

All this says that there's much IDEOLOGICAL work to be done before we can begin to give serious consideration to actual creation of "rear bases." But, we start from where we are, using what we have as means of getting what we need:

In areas under the enemy's temporary control, the building of bases essentially followed this pattern: Through various forms of struggle--from illegal to legal struggle, from economic to political and armed struggle--and through the fierce fight against the enemy, the clandestine political bases of the masses gradually turned the areas under the enemy's temporary control into guerrilla-infested areas and guerrilla bases that, small and isolated at first, became linked together into increasingly vast areas. (22)

According to the viewpoint of people's war, the strengthening of the strongholds and rear bases primarily depends on political, economic, military, and geographical factors, of which the most important are the political and human factors and the nature of the social regime.... (23)

Geographical factors? And demographic....Where's the line and motion on taking control of some space inside the National Territory? In view of so much energy being expended in the bourgeois electoral arena, where's the strategy which aims to elect conscious citizens and supporters (not necessarily openly declared as such) to key offices in towns, cities, counties inside the National Territory? What is the nature of the (ruling) social regime in some of those predominantly New Afrikan areas in the National Territory where power is still held by colonialists? Where's the embryonic social regime, inside the National Territory, that's being nurtured by the New Afrikan Independence Movement?

It is first necessary to build a sound political position, to strengthen the political and moral consensus among the people; to strive constantly to develop the supremacy of the new social regime in various aspects--political, economic, and cultural; to achieve democratic reform gradually and actively; to improve the material and spiritual life of the people; and to develop constantly the latent potentials of the rear bases, with which they will be able to defend themselves and, at the same time, develop comprehensively their great contributions toward the war. The strongholds and rear bases of people's war pose a constant threat to the enemy, and thus are the objectives of the enemy's repeated and violent attacks. (24)

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The Party and the Army

Communist Party leadership is the main factor deciding the victories of the uprising of all the people and the people's war:

This is because our Party is the Vietnam workers' new-style Party; it has a thoroughly revolutionary spirit, a scientific Marxist-Leninist theory, a strict and disciplined organization, and close relations with the masses. Our Party's emergence resulted from a combination of Marxism-Leninism with the workers' movement and the Vietnamese national liberation movement. Ever since its birth, our Party has assumed sole leadership over the revolution in our country. It is the Party of the working class and of the Vietnamese people as well. (25)

A "new-style" party is many things, most of which are attributable to early Marx, Engels, and especially to the contributions of Lenin. Most of us draw from this contribution the organizational style, i.e., building from the

center outward, from small to big. Most importantly for us is the element of "professionalism" which stresses keeping the vital organs of the party and its activity hidden as well as possible from "the eyes of the world." Without this key element, the party's survival is in jeopardy.

Assuming the party's survival, we must also consider the problem of "combining" revolutionary scientific socialism with the people's struggles around immediate issues and for national self-determination. On one hand, this means we must lose our fear of using words like socialism and communism in our literature and especially among the masses. On the other hand, and most importantly, it means grasping and learning to use the ESSENCE of the scientific socialist principles in daily struggle, so that we move closer to resolving the contradiction in practice. That's to say, for example, that the firmer the grasp you have on the essence of "socialism" and "communism," the more you can TALK about them without using the words themselves. A firm grasp of the essence means we're better able to adapt fundamental principles in their tactical application around struggles to "improve education," "guarantee decent housing," etc. You can first get groups of people to see, for instance, that they're united around a set of common interests, and that, as a group, they stand in opposition to others who don't share these interests. Then, you can say, "We call these 'class interests,' and 'national interests'."

The party has primary responsibility for representing all such interests, in that it represents:

- 1) "The most resolutely revolutionary class representing the socialist solution formula";
- 2) The basic interests of the masses;
- 3) The basic and long term interests of the people as a whole.

The party can fulfill these responsibilities by:

- 1) Possessing a correct and creative revolutionary line;
- 2) Firmly grasping and applying the laws of revolution and revolutionary war;
- 3) Exercising bold, resolute and scientific leadership over the implementation of its political and military lines;
- 4) Forming the nucleus "for the great unity block of all the people";
- 5) Determining the most correct and timely forms for organizing social forces in all forms of struggle.

Party leadership is also demonstrated by the following points:

First: To carry out continuously and vigorously political motivation among all the Party, army, and people; to cultivate and develop highly Vietnamese revolutionary heroes; to cultivate the spirit of determination to fight and win, to build supreme political and moral strength in order to defeat the enemy; and to achieve by every means the revolutionary objectives set forth for each period. (26)

Second: To mobilize fully the potentialities of people's war while stepping up the prosecution of the war, gradually fulfilling revolutionary tasks, strengthening the victorious elements of the war, and insuring the leading of the war toward final victory. (27)

Third: To build and consolidate the Party's leadership system, from central to local organs, among the people's armed forces, and among all other masses' organizations, and in the military, political, economic, and cultural struggle realms, in order to insure the Party's comprehensive, concentrated, and united leadership in wartime. (28)

Needless to say, the party can accomplish none of its tasks without qualified party members. Specifically, the party depends on cadres who must be capable of helping to formulate and implement party lines. Cadres especially must tackle awesome responsibilities when, as we've seen, the movement and the party are severely weakened by repression, and must rebuild:

The long war has made it necessary for our Party to have a well-formed organization. Each of the Party's leading ranks has much experience in organizing leading organs to struggle and build--organs that materialize the Party's comprehensive, concentrated, and united leadership vis-a-vis people's war as a whole. This is the key condition for creating an efficient, synthesized strength for leading the people's war in each locality.

To strengthen Party leadership in the war, it is necessary to step up the building of the Party and training and improvement of cadres and Party members, and to constantly strengthen and improve chi bo's [party cells]. The cadres and Party members have the duty to propagandize, educate, and organize the masses to carry on the Party's line and policies in the war. Therefore, the training and improvement of cadres and Party members is a key problem in understanding the Party's leadership in the war and an important point in the Party-building task. It is necessary constantly to have a strong--both quantitatively and qualitatively--cadre organization to meet the requirements of the leadership task in the development of the war. (29)

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The Composition of the Vanguard and the Qualities of Cadres--With Particular Focus Upon the Armed Forces

Even seasoned cadres must, after surviving the repressive sweep, take time to reflect and sum up the situation, and in most cases, reorientate themselves not only so as to adjust to objective changes, but primarily to make any necessary adjustments in the thought and practice of the party as they existed

prior to the onslaught of the state. Moreover, as cadres begin to rebuild, new members and cadres must be carefully selected and trained:

In the training and improvement of cadres and Party members, primary consideration must be given to the improvement of the class and vanguard character of cadres and Party members. In the war, cadres and Party members must have the sound stand and ideology of the working class and Marxism-Leninism, patriotism, revolutionary eagerness, a staunch fighting spirit for the sake of national liberation and Communism, and a will to forge ahead in the class struggle and the violent struggle of our people. (30)

What does it mean, to "improve the class and vanguard character" of cadres and party members? First, for us, it means we revise and tighten the criteria by which we judge and admit new members into our ranks. This applies especially to the armed forces, where our tendency has been to most readily admit those who exhibit a willingness to "get down" or to quickly pick up the gun. Any fool can pick up the gun. We need people who can think, and who can serve as examples of the new women and men that must struggle to free and develop the new society.

Secondly, we remind ourselves that, as New Afrikan, we're concerned not only with the class and vanguard character, but with the NATIONAL character of cadres and party members. New Afrikan cadres must have a firm grasp of the laws governing the contradiction between the oppressed and oppressor nations, laws governing the development of imperialism, colonialism, and national liberation revolutions. New Afrikan cadres must exhibit the willingness and ability to struggle selflessly for national independence, and for socialism and communism.

Thirdly, New Afrikan cadres who struggle on the basis of a scientific socialist philosophy, must exhibit the character of the New Afrikan working class. These cadres must have a firm grasp of the objective laws of social development as formulated in the basic principles of revolutionary scientific socialism. More specifically, cadres must demonstrate a consciousness of the objective position and the subjective mission of the working class. The essence of the working class stand is that cadres seek to "master nature, society, and self."

The essence of the "vanguard character" is that cadres recognize that "vanguard" is synonymous with "party." That is, the New Afrikan...working class... can realize its role as gravedigger only by organizing itself and creating its own independent vanguard/party....

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As most of us know, not every member of the people's armed forces is or will be a member of the party. This fact, among others, explains the attention given by the party to its leadership of the army:

The problem of the army's class nature and revolutionary substance

is the key one in our Party's theory of building up armed forces. As asserted by our Party, our armed forces belong to the people...and are led by the Party of the working class....They are a tool used by the Party and the revolutionary state to conduct the revolutionary struggle and armed struggle to carry out the Party's revolutionary tasks..... (31)

The VCP believed that "the best guarantee and basic factor in creating the armed forces' fighting strength" was to insure that they were primarily composed of members with a working class stand, who were thoroughly schooled in scientific socialism:

...our Party considered as essential measures to reinforce the armed forces' revolutionary nature: strengthening its leadership vis-a-vis the armed forces; teaching proletarian thoughts; and building up armed forces' political stand, along with strengthening the working-and-farming element, especially among the armed forces' cadres.

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The essential problems in building our armed forces in the political field during our army's development have been the unremitting consolidation and strengthening of the Party's absolute, direct, and comprehensive leadership vis-a-vis the people's armed forces--the most fundamental principle; the unremitting strengthening of the political task--the source of strength and a principle of building the people's armed forces; the extreme emphasis on the task of political teaching and thought-leading in the army, so that all cadres and soldiers will be keenly aware of the Party's political line and tasks, military line and tasks, and stands, policies, and state laws; instruction in Marxism-Leninism, the increased development of class awareness, coordinated with national awareness, education in patriotism, love of socialism, and the international proletarian spirit, and, on this basis, the unremitting effort to heighten the armed forces' combativeness and determination to fight and to win; the continuing consolidation of the Party's organization and the organization of political tasks; the active formation and training of an army of cadres absolutely faithful to the Party's revolutionary enterprise and expert in leading, organizing, and commanding; the implementation of a centralized democratic regime and a severe, just, and self-conscious discipline, that of a revolutionary army, on the basis of broadening internal democracy; the firm strengthening of internal solidarity--the solidarity between army and people that must be similar to the one between fish and water, and close international solidarity. (32)

ReBuild!

Footnotes

2. James Pinckney Harrison, THE ENDLESS WAR:FIFTY YEARS OF STRUGGLE IN VIETNAM (New York: The Free Press, 1982), p. 53.
3. Ibid., pps. 55-56.
4. Ibid., p. 45.
5. Ibid., p. 44.
6. Ibid., pps. 139-140.
7. Ibid., pps. 51-52.
8. Ibid., p. 55.
9. Ibid., pps. 57-59.
10. Ibid., p.84.
11. Vo Nguyen Giap, THE BANNER OF PEOPLE'S WAR: THE PARTY'S MILITARY LINE (New York: Prager Publishers, 1970), p. 68.
12. Coordinating Committee, Black Liberation Army, MESSAGE TO THE BLACK MOVEMENT (1975), pps. 14-15.
13. Ibid., p. 14.
14. Giap, p. 57.
15. Ibid., p. 58.
16. Ibid., pps. 57-58.
17. Ibid., pps. 60-61.
18. Ibid., p. 101.
19. Ibid., p. 42.
20. Ibid., p. 43.
21. Ibid., p. 43.
22. Ibid., p. 44.
23. Ibid., p. 49.
24. Ibid., p. 49.
25. Ibid., p. 95.
26. Ibid., p. 97.
27. Ibid., p. 99.
28. Ibid., p. 102.
29. Ibid., p. 104.
30. Ibid., p. 105.
31. Ibid., p. 30.
32. Ibid., pps. 31-32.

Reprint:

WEAPON OF THEORY [ON THE DEBATE OVER THE SLA]

By People's Party III--Comstock

[Editor's Note: The following article first appeared in the MIDNIGHT SPECIAL. It was recently sent to CR, but without information as to its original date of publication.]

The June/July issue of MS was dedicated to the six SLA members who were murdered by the hired mercenary's of capitalism in L.A., having articles by Russell Little, Joseph Ramiro, and Martin Sostre. We of the Peoples Party in Comstock found many valid points in these articles, but like so many other articles on the SLA, both pro and con, we also found that many of the serious questions facing the revolutionary movement in the U.S. were overlooked. As a result, we would like to present some of these questions and attempt to deal with them in a principled and consistent manner, for whatever our emotional involvement, we must learn from the SLA in a dialectical way, which means both from their mistakes as well as their successes. Otherwise, the unprincipled and bitter rhetoric that has so characterized the response to the SLA will continue and eventually we will be dealing with polemics ON polemics, not the actual facts, conditions, and the practical tasks which arise from them.

POINT ONE: An attempt has been made to turn the discussion on the SLA into one representing two opposite poles: REFORM and REVOLUTION. This, we feel, is incorrect. What is reform? It is QUANTITATIVE change, the result of partial victories of the workers and the poor in the struggle for their legitimate class interests. And what is revolution? It is QUALITATIVE change, the waging and winning of a full victory by the workers and the poor in their struggle to overthrow capitalism and lay the foundation for a classless society. Are these two really opposites? No, they are not. They are part of the same process, the former tactical and the latter strategical, and only by confusing these two or elevating the one over the other without combining them both do we set up an artificial dialectic. Every revolution begins with a reformist character, in the sense of dealing with peoples education and building around their immediate needs, for this is designed to link us with material reality, rouse the general masses, set them in motion, and elevate the struggle to higher and higher levels as class contradictions heighten.

It can be no other way, for revolutions and revolutionists just do not fall from the sky, they are tested and steeled through long years of struggle and sacrifice. If we are to build a mass movement we must have links with the masses, we must approach them as they are (we will find them no other way) and uplift their essentially reformist practice and outlook through education and organization that grows over into mass struggle. If we desert our people, if we do not provide them with correct leadership, then this leadership will fall to the class enemy and, at the same time, make it possible for the class enemy

to crush the vanguard in their isolation. This leads us right up to the situation we have in the U.S. today, where the capitalist class and their Elunkies lead the masses into dead end reformism with one hand, while with the other, strikes blow after blow to the vanguard.

History proves that the vanguard must be closely linked with its mass base if we are to meet with success, and this in DEEDS and in CONCRETE FORMS, not words and sympathies that mask illusions. And those who are impatient, those who replace mass struggle with isolation and individualism as other anarchist tendencies have done, will fail in the end, for those who will not learn from history are bound to repeat it.

The fire-fight between the SLA and the forces of reaction took place in an extremely oppressed ghetto area, and we must ask ourselves this question: WHY WERE THE PEOPLE PASSIVE, UNABLE TO ASSIST THE SLA IN THEIR STRUGGLE? Surely these people have revolutionary potential and a strong will for a better life, yet they did nothing. Some will draw a lesson from this that a mass movement is impossible, for even those in the lowest positions in the U.S. will not fight, but these are the same kind of people who fall flat on their face and then decide that they wanted to lay down anyways.

The real answer lies in our understanding that no matter how well meaning and brave the SLA is, it still does not have links to the very masses in whose name it fights, and without these links, then tactics which are meant to be employed as part of a general mass movement will fail. The people themselves must be brought into the fight under our leadership, and we cannot replace them, fight for them, or without them, by ourselves. If we do, then all talk of "defending ourselves" becomes a cover to hide our LACK OF ABILITY in building a real and mass movement which is capable of OFFENSE, and we end up carrying on our struggle over the heads of the people without their active participation in their own liberation. And this is nothing more but an admission on our parts that we are incapable of, and do not believe it possible to, defeat our enemies once and for all.

POINT TWO: It is true that most of the left in the U.S. took a very vulgar and dogmatic stance on the SLA, content to denounce them without investigation and to quote Lenin, Mao and Trotsky without evaluating their words in light of our own conditions. This is a very basic flaw in left circles generally--to be incapable of thinking and thus rendering the creative works of the great revolutionaries into hollow phrases as a result of applying them dogmatically and abstracted from practice. And because of these and other basic flaws on the left, some of our people get disgusted and drift into adventurism. If one follows the political trail of the SLA--SDS, RU, Venceremos--this fact becomes very clear, for this is a textbook case of how ultra-leftism crystalizes. In a general sense, the inability of the left to build a real and multi-faceted mass movement in the U.S. is the breeding ground for groups like the SLA, and rather than correct its own flaws, more often than not the left attacks those splinter groups which its sterile practice gives rise to in the first place. Your child burns itself through playing with the matches that you never taught it not to (or at least use correctly), so you turn around and burn this child's fingers once again to "teach" him and others a lesson. All this is not merely

stupid, it is criminal, and if certain forces on the left find themselves unable or unwilling to end their devisive sectarianism and get down to work with all honest forces, then the least they can do is have the decency to show some respect for those who try, even if they go about it incorrectly. Sterility is adventurism's other profile, plain and simple, and M. Sostre is correct in pointing out the curious way in which the U.S. left supports armed struggle all over the world--right up until the time it "sneaks" past our borders. Of course, some will say "but we are not ready for armed struggle in the U.S.," but let us make this just a bit more concrete and ask "Why?" We will be answered (for the 2,000th time this year) "the masses are not ready."

But once again, "Why?" To be ready implies preparation, does it not? And we are all preparing for the inevitable armed struggle, are we not? And if so, your dispute with the SLA centers around timing and method, so why not deal with these and other differences in a principled manner instead of slander and unprincipled attacks which simply confuse the issue and serves the class enemy? Many of us are simply refusing to see the SLA in an historical context, hence we are unable to see the SLA in the present, and thus we rush to isolate this phenomena and not weigh it on the scale of social reality. This speaks of our own practical and theoretical immaturity in "new left" circles, and outright bankruptcy and tailing after liberals in the "stinking corpse" of the "old left," nothing more. And in particular cases, some groups are so unsure of their development that when an anarchist group busts out of the closet, they are quick to kick the door shut and scream "agent" for subjective reasons alone, letting principles fly out the window in an area where principled, objective criticism is required.

POINT THREE: Do revolutionists dismiss the tactics of kidnap, ransom, and urban guerrilla warfare out of hand? Of course not. We weigh our tactics in light of our strategy, the concrete conditions that we face, the forces we have at hand, what can be done with both, and out of this arises a political selection from the arsenal of revolution. At a given time, some tactics are more suitable than others, and by the same token, what is a good tactic today may become a bad one tomorrow, or vice versa, depending on the movement itself, the correlation of forces, and our concrete needs at a certain historical conjuncture. But in all cases, we cannot deal with tactics in the abstract, for our movement is concrete and the tactics we employ flow from this fact, not textbook maxims and slogans debated in academic circles. In analyzing the conditions that we face and their processes of development, in having a long term strategy which our day to day work must be geared towards, we link ourselves to historical necessity and seek to fulfill the revolutionary tasks required of us.

The SLA has no analysis of conditions, nor does it have an historical understanding of the class struggle or socialism--it has tactics which have been elevated into a strategy. This flows from the class composition of the SLA--students and lumpen--and from mistaking the beginnings of class struggle for its end--armed seizure of power--and replacing historic necessity with sheer voluntarism, communism with anarchism. We have to recognize these limitations of the SLA, but that does not alter the fact that they are a revolu-

tionary tendency, not agents, drunkards, etc., as has been rumored by the present BPP, who's leaders ran ON the Democratic ticket and FROM Attica in '71.

M. Sostre recognized the incorrect approach of the Chilean revisionists in their refusal to arm the masses in their struggle for power, yet what he fails to recognize is that this has its reverse, ultra-left side: refusing to recognize that our movement is still weak, our forces scattered, and that building our movement through "fire-power" at this time will have an opposite effect. In Chile you had a mass movement that was schooled in the class struggle but choked to death by the bankrupt policies of the leaders who tailed after them, while in the U.S. we lack a mass movement and some of our vanguard cadre want those who are ready now to pick up the gun to take its place. And while the Chilean leaders succeeded in holding the people back from making history at this point, some of our cadre in the U.S. want to push the people ahead of history and when they will not go (just like your child will not walk, much less run, days after its birth) these cadre make that leap without them. We should remember that oppression minus consciousness equals defeatism, and it was just for this reason that the oppressed people in the L.A. ghetto cowered in corners or fled, for they did not know what was happening and were not prepared to act even if they did know. Nothing can replace the slow and persistent work of education and organization geared towards the day when a MASS MOVEMENT can inspire MASS TERROR in the hearts of our enemies through ARMED FORCE that is well organized and nation-wide in its scope, and all "leaps," all "shortcuts" away from building this mass movement signifies that those who do this regard the masses as incapable of winning their own liberation. Without this mass movement, all talk of tactics to replace it shows evidence of a simple impotence on our part in the face of the historic tasks before us.

POINT FOUR: As M. Sostre points out, history shows us that a people's army is needed to crush the military arm of the capitalist class (their State apparatus), yet history also shows us that this army was and is the people themselves, not isolated cadre who acted in the peoples' name. M. Sostre also believes that the SLA represents the nucleus of the people's army, yet does not tackle the problem of how this army is to grow from the base of the SLA. If a group is underground, hunted day and night by the enemy, forced to fight for its life at every turn, and has no links to the masses, then the only way in which the SLA can grow is through a spontaneous assimilation of their tactics and program, i.e., small groups arise here and there to follow the lead of the SLA without organizational ties or the ability to combine forces or concentrate tactics. That this will develop we have no doubt, but how far it will go towards defeating a well organized enemy who is superior in terms of manpower, firepower, technique and mobility, remains to be answered. At a certain point--for a spontaneous movement (even a mass one) sooner or later internalizes itself and has yet to seize and hold power anywhere in the world--the number of deaths, disabled and captured will exceed the flow of recruits coming in; recruits who have no formal links with the SLA itself. The enemy's armed forces are both expendable and replaceable, while each cadre underground takes on an increased importance in direct proportion to their numbers diminishing. It is not a question of will or sheer bravery that dictates success, but the

cold realities of life and revolution--organization, planning, and the ability to both replace expended cadre with new ones (who will need training) and at the same time grow and consolidate victories and base areas. M. Sostre also forgets that development holds in its formula a reverse process, that of reduction and disintegration. And what of the question of base areas, which are needed to wage successful urban guerrilla warfare? Without them the Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese revolutionists could not have triumphed in their protracted struggles, yet they were located in rural areas, for the most part, while we are speaking of cities. Must we not find new answers to qualitatively new questions that arise from this fact? Yet we are content to transport lessons from other and previous experiences instead of finding our own, and we even vulgarize them in the process. Such infantilism IS NOT the stuff from which revolutions are forged, and it is about time we begin dealing with concrete facts and analyses of the real situation before us.

We are dealing with the most vicious and well prepared enemy that the worlds peoples have ever known, yet we counter this with various assortments of emotionalism and lack of preparation, and while it may appear dialectical that the most advanced capitalist nation has the most backward revolutionary movement, this is a dialectic that we of the Peoples Party refuse to accept as historically valid.

These four areas must be considered by all honest forces in the U.S. If we reject Marxism-Leninism as a reflex of rejecting the Gus Hall's and Linda Jenness's of the world, and embrace anarchist individualism as a result, then we do ourselves untold harm and forsake the tasks before us. And if we reject the broad masses of the people because they "just aren't ready" or "the masses are asses" type thinking, then all the vulgar forms of oppression we are subjected to will remain in effect, for it is precisely these masses--led by a truly revolutionary vanguard in FACT, not just RHETORIC--who are the real makers of history. So while we accept the SLA as part of the same struggle we are waging, and as comrades in that struggle (in the sense of having a common enemy and a common love for the people), we of the Peoples Party do not feel that their tactics are correct at this time or in need of being followed as a substitute for building the mass movement.

We believe in and work for the day of MASS ARMED STRUGGLE, educating our people in the prisons as communists who are capable of ADDING to this mass struggle by helping to BUILD it, and reject any tactics at this time which may give self-satisfaction to the few, but which do little more than leave the broad masses suffering under the yoke of capitalism. It is impossible to "unite the many to defeat the few" if we are isolated from the people, and at this time in the movement, SLA tactics lead to just this isolation. And while we cannot tell our brothers and sisters on the streets what their reality is, we believe that the voice of the Peoples Party should be heard and considered if we are to be consistent with our principles and program. We close with communist greetings.

Peoples Party III -- Ministry of Information

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