

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY: TOWARD THE LIBERATION OF THE COLONY

(Draft of a resolution to be presented at the March National Council meeting, by Ed Jennings, Chicago Circle campus SDS.)

The sharpest struggles in the world today are those of the oppressed nations against imperialism and for national liberation. Within this country the sharpest struggle is that of the black colony for its liberation; it is a struggle which by its very nature is anti-imperialist and increasingly anti-capitalist. The demand for self-determination for the black colony -- a demand which arises from the most oppressed elements within the black community -- is anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist insofar as it challenges the power of the ruling class. Furthermore the black liberation movement consciously identifies with and expresses solidarity with the liberation struggles of other oppressed peoples.

Within the black liberation movement the vanguard force is the Black Panther Party. Their development of an essentially correct program for the black community -- as exemplified by the 10 points -- and their ability to organize blacks around this program has brought them to this leadership. An especially important part of the Panther program is the Black Peoples' Army -- a military force to be used not only in the defense of the black community but also for its liberation. Given the military occupation of the black community it is especially true that "without a peoples' army the people have nothing." A second important part of their program is their efforts to organize black workers. They are increasingly moving into the factories and shops, i.e., DRUM, Panther caucuses, Black Labor Federation, etc. It is important for us to understand that the black worker is not only a "subject" in an oppressed colony fighting for its liberation but that he is also a member of the working class. Thus the black worker as a result of this dual oppression will play the vanguard role not only in the black liberation movement but also in uniting and leading the whole working class in its fight against oppression and exploitation.

The fundamental reason for the success of the Black Panther Party is that it has a correct analysis of American society. They see clearly the colonial status of blacks and the dual oppression from which they suffer; national oppression as a people and class exploitation as a super-exploited part of the working class. The demand for self-determination becomes the most basic demand of the oppressed colony. And nationalism becomes a necessary and effective means for organizing the black community and forging unity against the oppressor.

We must be very clear about the nature of nationalism. If the principal contradiction in the world today is that of the oppressed nations against imperialism, then support for these revolutionary national movements becomes the most important criterion for dividing revolutionaries from counter-revolutionaries (and revisionists). To say that "in the name of nationalism, the bourgeoisie of all nations do their reactionary and dirty work" is to obscure the reality that in the name of national liberation the workers and peasants of all oppressed nations will struggle against and defeat imperialism. To say that "all nationalism is reactionary" is objectively to ally with imperialism in opposition to the struggles of the oppressed nations.

But nationalism is not always revolutionary. There is a fundamental difference between revolutionary nationalism which is "dependent upon a people's revolution" and reactionary nationalism in which the "end goal is the oppression of the people." What do the Panthers say about the reactionary, cultural or "pork-chop" variety of nationalism:

"we must destroy all cultural nationalism, because it is reactionary and has become a tool of Richard Milhaus Nixon, and all the U.S. power structure which divides the poor and oppressed, and is used by the greasy-slick black bourgeoisie to exploit black people in the ghetto."

George Mason Murray
Minister of Education

The Black Panther Party is under no illusion that liberation for the black colony can be achieved while capitalism still exists. Their call for "liberation in the colony revolution in the mother country" clearly recognizes the dialectical relationship between liberation for the black colony and socialist revolution for the whole society.

"its impossible for us to have control of the institutions in our community when a capitalistic system exists on the outside of it. When in fact the capitalistic system was the very system that enslaved us and is responsible for our continued oppression. So if we want to develop a socialistic system within the black community we're saying its also going to have to exist in the white community."

Bobby Seale
Chairman

The correct and uncompromising leadership which the Black Panther Party has brought to the black liberation movement has brought down the most vicious repression from the racist pig power structure. When the leading black revolutionary group is continually harassed, its leaders jailed, hounded out of the country and brutally assassinated, when Panther members daily face the provocations of the ruling class and its racist pigs, when their blood has been spilled and their list of revolutionary martyrs--Huey, Eldridge, Bobby Hutton, Bunchy Carter, John Huggins--increases daily, then the time has come for SDS to give total and complete support to their defense efforts. To do less would be a mockery of the word "revolutionary". We must continually expose and attack the role of the pigs and the courts in oppressing the black community. We must publicize the inhuman, brutal and unjust nature of "justice" in this society.

We see clearly the need to join with the Black Panther Party and other revolutionary black groups in the fight against national chauvinism and white supremacy. The development of the Panthers as a disciplined and militant group fighting for black liberation has had a tremendous impact on the white radical movement. No longer can we refuse to deal with the chauvinism and white supremacy which exists in both the larger society and in our movement. Toleration of any vestige of white supremacy in the schools, shops and communities must be seen as nothing less than "scabbing" on the black liberation movement and on possibilities for unity of the working class.

SDS declares

- its support for the Black Panther Party and their essentially correct program for the liberation of the black colony
- its commitment to defend the Black Panther Party and the black colony against the vicious attacks of the racist pig power structure

- its commitment to join with the Black Panther Party and other black revolutionary groups in the fight against national chauvinism and white supremacy
white
- its total commitment to the fight for liberation in the colony and revolution in the mother country.

IMPLEMENTATION:

--Form Newton-Cleaver Defense Committees--The Black Panther Party has requested that SDS join in setting up these committees. Huey P. Newton is "the key political prisoner in this country at the present time." The committees should first raise money for the defense of Newton, Cleaver and all other Panthers facing charges and second, educate the people about the real nature of "justice" in this racist society.

--The National Office should be mandated to print and distribute information about the history, development and programs of the Black Panther Party and other black revolutionary groups. Information about the repression directed against the black community should be kept up to date and distributed. Literature about the history of the black colony and its 400 years of unending struggle against oppression should be produced.

--The NO should be mandated to print and distribute information about the organizing of black workers. This would include Panther organizing in the factories, DRUM, and other revolutionary black unions.

--This resolution should stimulate chapters and regions to develop and/or strengthen informal and formal relationships with the Panthers. We must keep in mind that the Black Panther Party is not fighting black people's struggles only but is in fact the vanguard in our common struggles against capitalism and imperialism.

--This resolution should be seen as a formal repudiation of the resolution--"Smash Racism: Build a Worker-Student Alliance"--which was passed at the December NC. This previous resolution with its refusal to recognize the colonial oppression of blacks in this country, its statement that nationalism is "the main ideological weapon of the ruling class" within the black liberation movement and its inability to distinguish between revolutionary and reactionary nationalism is at best non-revolutionary. SDS must not be on record as supporting any resolution which considers revolutionary nationalism--the main factor which ties all oppressed nations together in their fight against imperialism--as a "weapon of the ruling class". Anything less than complete repudiation of this previous resolution is a cop-out on the support and solidarity which we must give to the world-wide movement of oppressed peoples for national liberation.