THE IDEOLOGY OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

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CHAPTER ONE

THE STUDY OF IDEOLOGY

I***The Importance of Ideology

Social theory in the western liberal democracies has had a hard time with ideology. There have been, since World War II, two complementary and somewhat crude views of ideology. Somewhat simply, these views can be described as liberal and conservative. The liberal position asserts the "end of ideology"[1]; the conservative, in his characteristically more pragmatic pose as Cold Warrior, claims that "the enemy" is an ideologue — therefore we must understand him in order to defeat him.[2] For the liberal theorists of advanced capitalism who have espoused the end of ideology, conflict no longer exists — they make a mockery of Marx by asserting that the era of the administration of things is already upon us, that the only problems facing social theorist and activist alike are ones of technique. In practice, this is little more than a reassertion of the original, Napoleonic, definition of ideo logy as irrational utopianism. On the other hand, the conservatives do recognise the significance of conflict in social and political affairs — for them it is externalised onto the global scale of the holy crusade against "totalitarian communism". Both of these rather unsophisticated "models" have a predecessor in the more elaborate attempt by Karl

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1. The most important proponents of this position are Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology (New York: Macmillan, 1961); S. M. Lipset, Political Man (New York: Doubleday, 1963); David E. Apter, Ideology and Discontent (New York: Free Press, 1964); Ralf Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959); A. Naess, Democracy, Ideology and Objectivity (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1956); Chaim I. Waxman, The End of Ideology Debate (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969).

2. In this category one would include the work of such writers as John Kautsky and Robert Strausz-Hupe.

Mannheim to erect a scientific sub-discipline, the sociology of knowledge.[3] Common to the contemporary positions and their ancestor is the tradition of more than a century of attempts to "disprove" Marx.

The first reason, then, in my view, for a study of ideology is that it presents a relatively straightforward introduction to the Marxist analysis of society. Of course, I do not intend to "prove" that Marx was correct: an individual cannot do that. There is, too, a polemical/political reason involved. The proponents of the "end of ideology" tend also to be major ideologues (naturally) for advanced capitalist society. The position they espouse, the dominant position in what passes for social theory in the developed capitalist states, defines modern society (directly or tacitly, the contemporary American model) ahistorically as the logical outcome and culmination of human development, uprooted from the past,[4] and if it is not "the best of all possible worlds"all that is required is some more or less minor technical adjustment. This, of course, means that class struggle has long since ceased, that the working class has been "embourgeoisified", that the system has integrated all the opposition.[5] It is my belief that this is no more than an elaborate rationalisation of the given, bourgeois, world-order and its social institutions and structures. Therefore, the polemical task involved in the employment of the Marxist mode of analysis concerns the reassertion of the validity and necessity of the Marxist world-view.

Simply stated, the purpose of this essay is to demonstrate the

3. Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (New York: Harvest Books, n.d.) (hereafter cited as I&U) and Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953).

4. A very perceptive discussion of this, ahistorical, aspect of liberal thought is contained in an essay by Michael Paul Rogin, "Southern California: Right-Wing Behavior and Political Symbols", in Rogin and John L. Shover, Political Change in California (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishers, 1970).

5. A so-called Marxist version ofthis thesis is Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964). An ironic example from England concerns Goldthorpe, Lockwood et.al., The Affluent Worker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) -- when their original findings were in the press, one month prior to publication, the "happy workers" of their study launched a revolt; according to The Times, 19 October, 1966, the workers were "singing the Red Flag and calling "string him up" whenever a director's name was mentioned".

utility of Marxist analysis through its application to the case of the ideology of the Black Panther Party.[6] The choice of the Black Panther Party stems, partly, from the relative clarity of articulation and structure of their ideology. A second aspect of this study lies in the fact that the Black Panthers are one example of a common type. Parties, organisations and liberation fronts with "revolutionary nationalist" ideology very similar to that of the Panthers exist in many places. One need only recall here such groups as the Tupamaros in Uruguay, the _Front de Liberation de Quebec_, the Irish Republican Army, and the numerous, similar armed organisations throughout Latin America, Africa and Asia.

In the analysis of ideology which follows there are two fundamental questions: what is ideology? how do ideology and action interact? There are, further, three essential premises — (i) ideology is existential and class is the primary determining factor, (ii) it is universal (everyone has an ideology, more or less well articulated), and (iii) any analysis of ideology must consider both the content (the ideas, values, concepts) and the structural relationships between the ideology and its basis in social practice (people, productive processes, political forces, etc.).

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6. By definition, a Marxist, therefore historical and material, analysis cannot restrict itself to the phenomenological level of ideas taken _in vacuo_. The ideas, in fact, can only be understood, along with any historical and social phenomena, in a materialist context: that is, in terms of their basis in social intercourse and the productive process of the society. See Theodor W. Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology", _New Left Review_, No. 46, November-December 1967, p. 69:

> The separation of society and psyche is false consciousness; it perpetuates conceptually the split between the living subject and the objectivity that governs the subjects and yet derives from them.

The concept of ideology made its first appearance at the beginning of the bourgeois era, in the work of Destutt de Tracy and the Institut de France in the period from 1795 to 1810. These origins in the bourgeois revolution are significant, for it was then that the term acquired both of its contemporary meanings.

> The twofold character of the liberal "ideology", as a system of normative ideas and as an incipient critique of the very notion of absolute norms, makes its appearance already in the work of Destutt de Tracy.[7]

The Institut de France was an outgrowth of and the visible triumph of the spirit of the Enlightenment: the embodiment of the rising bourgeoisie in the realm of thought as well as in the political and social spheres of power. As such, it represented the main preoccupations of the pre-Revolutionary thinkers with observation and reason rather than superstition; especially in their concern to build a rational and scientific study of man. As men of theory rather than action, the Institutistes opposed the rise of the Bonapartist autocracy, and were, in turn, scorned by Napoleon as mere ideologues.

Another source for the study of ideology stemming from the rise of the bourgeoisie was the development of the dialectic of Hegel; primarily as it was critically assaulted by the Young Hegelians. It was the failure of the latter to carry through their task to its logical conclusion which sparked the first rigourous formulation of the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge.

Whereas the Hegelian concept of ideology was one which assigned to man the role, at best, of the unwitting medium for the progressive self-realisation of the Idea, Geist, and therefore, inevitably, the

7. George Lichtheim, The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays (New York: Random House, 1967) p. 7.

state of "false consciousness";[8] for Marx and Engels history is the "history of class struggles",[9] "the social world conceived as the totality of the activities performed by the individuals who compose it",[10] the primary activity being men's conscious attempts to control their environment, both natural and social.

> This sum of productive forces, forms of capital, and social
> forms of intercourse, which every individual and generation
> finds in existence as something given, is the real basis of
> what the philosophers have conceived as the 'substance' and
> 'essence of man', and what they have deified and attacked.[11]

History is people and their activities, which are based on the production of goods and values to meet needs. One sort of value produced in society is intellectual — "for language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men . . . Consciousness is therefore from the very beginning a social product and remains so as long as men exist at all".[12]

The determinant forces in social development are material and contradictory: that is, tensions within and between the various parts of the social whole produce social development. There is always present a certain set of material conditions which lies at the base of historical development and determines its limits at any given period. These material conditions are the given society's forces of production and their relation to each other, which, taken together, Marxism refers to as the mode of production. The development of the economic base is, in the long run, the cause of historical development. The longer the time period considered, or the more important the event, the clearer is this point.

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8. See Walter Kaufmann, Hegel (New York: Doubleday, 1966); Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution (Boston; Beacon Press, 1960); Erich Heller, The Artist's Journey into the Interior (New York: Random House, 1968).

9. Marx & Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party (Peking: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965) p. 30.

10. Marx & Engels, The German Ideology (New York: International Publishers, 1947) p. 37. (Hereafter cited as GI).

11. GI. p. 29.

12. GI. p. 19.

But the development of the economic base proceeds through class struggle. This means that the ideas the various classes hold determine the form in which history develops. "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living".[13] This presents a dual aspect: on one hand, ideas themselves ultimately derive from the economic base, and on the other, ideology has a relative independence of development. Economic conditions ultimately ("in the final analysis") determine the way in which ideas change and develop, but they do so indirectly, through politics, law, literature and the other elements of the superstructure. The economic base is reflected indirectly and in a distorted manner, and only analysis of the superstructure reveals its relation to the base. In other words, there is interaction on the basis of economic necessities, which are decisive in the long run.

There is never complete correlation between base and super-structure. Nor can every element in the ideological superstructure be traced back directly or totally to the economic conditions in society. The parallel between ideological and economic development only emerges when we consider long time periods, or important historical events. One such is the revolutionary overthrow of one ruling class by another, and Marx is unequivocal about the sig-nificance of such an event in the ideological sphere:

> For each new class which puts itself in the place of the one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, put in an ideal form: it will give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones.[14]

> The ideas of the ruling class are, in every epoch, the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of the society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has at the same time control over the means of

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14. GI. p. 40 - 41.

13. Karl Marx, The 18 Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Moscow: FLPH, n.d.) p. 3.

mental production, so that, thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships expressed as ideas.[15]

And yet, subordinate classes can and do change their situation; and it is in understanding how and why this comes about that we encounter Marx's usage of the concept of "false consciousness". Where Hegel's version of the concept signified the belief that men created ideas, Marx used it to signify the situation in which inappropriate class ideas (derived from and defining one relational position vis-avis the mode of production) are accepted by another class (which, by definition, exists in another relation to the base). This sort of false consciousness is part of the complex of alienation/exploitation/oppression characteristic of class society — the ideological hegemony of the ruling class is one of its strongest weapons, a central aspect of bourgeois domination.[16] The corollary, of course, is the role of ideology in the armoury of the revolutionary class:

> It is clear that the arm of criticism cannot replace the criticism of arms. Material force can only be overthrown by material force; but theory itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses.[17]

In the same measure as the bourgeoisie produces the material conditions for its own abolition — the contradiction between the private appropriation of wealth by the bourgeoisie and the socialised production carried out by the proletariat — its very hegemony in the ideological superstructure poses the question of ideological contradiction. The

15. GI. p. 39.
16. On the topic of ideological hegemony see, Antonio Gramsci, The Modern Prince (New York: International Publishers, 1968); Perry Anderson & Robin Blackburn (eds.), Towards Socialism (London: Fontana, 1965); Alexander Cockburn & Robin Blackburn (eds.), Student Power (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969)
17. Karl Marx, "Introduction to Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", in T.B.Bottomore (ed), Marx: Early Writings (London: McGraw-Hill, 1964) p. 52.

imposition by the bourgeoisie of its ideas upon the rest of society, and the incongruence between those ideas and the living experience (praxis) of the proletariat, forces the latter to strive for the creation of its own ideology, its own definition of reality. In other words, the "end of ideology" can be no more than false optimism so long as the proletariat as a class continues to exist. Therefore we should make a brief survey of the theory underlying the "end of ideology" -- the sociology of knowledge. In particular, we shall examine the ideas of Karl Mannheim.

While asserting that ideas have an existential basis and that this basis is complex, the sociology of knowledge has eliminated the basis of the Marxist thesis -- class struggle -- and is therefore reduced to the position of denying that we can define the nature of the existential ground, or of the relation between ideas and material forces. Berger and Luckmann argue that the sociology of knowledge was a hybrid,[18] the result of the merger of three (truncated) streams of thought -- Marx's materialism (with its conflictual, class, heart removed), Nietzsche's notion of ressentiment and of the role of myth and illusion (taken out of the context of Nietzsche's critical assault on bourgeois and Christian thought), and Scheler's historicism (which was, as Mannheim acknowledged,[19] static rather than dynamic).

The denial of the central aspect of Marx's work, the fact that it was a distinctly biased theory aimed towards the achievement of the proletarian revolution, could not simply take the form of denying the whole work. Rather, once the heart had been removed, it was remarkably easy to admit that "Today, it is no longer the privilege of Socialist thinkers to observe the social determination".[20] The legacy of Marx appears in a number of forms: first, of course, in the bland admission that Marx was correct in pointing to society as the source of ideas:

18. Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (New York: Doubleday, 1967) Introduction.

19. Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge", in Essays, op. cit. pp. 155 - 157.

20. ibid. p. 145.

. . . there are modes of thought which cannot be understood adequately as long as their social origins are obscured.[21]

Secondly, there is the series of dichotomous pairs around which his conception of ideology is built -- aborted dialectics in which the crucial element of opposition/contradiction as a structural feature is utterly lacking. The first of these pairs is defined in terms of the degree and/or amount of the opponent's thought which is defined, and condemned, as ideological --

> Whereas the particular conception of ideology designates only a part of the opponent's assertions as ideologies -- and this only with reference to their content, the total conception calls into question the opponent's total Weltanschauung (including his conceptual apparatus).[22]

The second pair hinges on

> . . . the decisive question . . . whether the thought of all groups (including our own) or only that of our adversaries is recognised as socially determined.[23]

Mannheim's typology can be represented diagramatically:[24]

	General	Special
Total	All ideas of all groups	All ideas held by an opponent
Particular	Some ideas of all groups	Some ideas held by an opponent

It is when Mannheim enters into his discussion of the distinction between ideology and utopia that the argument becomes most ideological and confusing. At first he asserts that

21. Mannheim, I&U, p. 2.
22. ibid. pp. 56 - 57. (emphasis supplied).
23. ibid. p. 77.
24. This is my own diagrammatic representation of Mannheim's argument in ibid., Chapter II.

> A state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with
> the state of reality within which it occurs.[25]

But he also argues that

> Contrasted with situationally congruous and adequate ideas
> are the two main categories of ideas which transcend the
> situation -- ideologies and utopias.[26]

Ideologies are defined as

> . . . "organically" and harmoniously integrated into the world-
> view characteristic of the period (i.e. did not offer revolutionary
> possibilities) . . . the situationally transcendent ideas which
> never succeed de facto in the realisation of their projected
> contents.[27]

In contrast, utopias are those ideas which

> . . . when they pass over into conduct, tend to shatter,
> either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing
> at the time . . . succeed through counteractivity in transforming
> . the existing historical reality into one more in accord with
> their own conceptions.[28]

In brief, the distinction is a classificatory one: between ideas which
were contained and those which were revolutionary. There are several
evident logical difficulties with this conception. The most glaring
is the absence of an objective correlative for the definition of
"situationally congruent". It is implied that the revolutionary
developments in society and history have been ahistorical insofar
as the ideas they bore and that bore them have been "situationally
incongruous and inadequate". The second problem is the retreat into
Hegelian idealism -- ideas, for Mannheim, whether ideology or utopia,
are simply there, without basis. In other words, despite the assertion
of the necessity for the recognition of the social origins of ideas,
there is no real social basis in his classificatory system, much less
any recognition of the material/economic foundation of social structures.
Furthermore, in Mannheim's original assertion of the need to recognise

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25. ibid. p. 192.
26. ibid. p. 194.
27. ibid. pp. 193, 194.
28. ibid. pp. 195-6.

social origins, it is implied that the imperative is highly selective;
an implication which is never satisfactorily overcome, and which is,
indeed, reinforced by the definitions of both ideology and utopia. All
of which, in the end, lies beneath Mannheim's central place in twentieth
century liberalism, for it leads to the attempt to find a human, social
agency for the transmission of ideas through history, and for the
material grounding of such an agency. The result is Marxist materialism
shorn of its critical values -- for the agency he selects is the "free-
floating intelligentsia", the "socially unattached intellectuals",
grounded "materially" (!) in classlessness, in its relatively leisured,
contemplative existence.[29] Moreover, Comte's idea of the necessity for
a "sociocracy" of intellectuals, neutral because they exist in some
classless or supra-class limbo, is revived.[30]

Contrary to Mannheim, most intellectuals have seen their interests
in common with the ruling class -- nowhere more so than in the advanced
capitalist states. This judgement applies equally to Mannheim -- in
place of real conflict based on real people organised in real classes,
he has substituted an hypothesised Other; in place of the materialist
analysis of actual relations of production and class struggles, he has
substituted chronological accounts abstracted from history.[31] One

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29. ibid. pp. 153-70, passim.
30. ibid. pp. 160-63. For contrast, consider the following:
Without opinions and objectives one can represent nothing at all.
Without knowledge one can show nothing; how could one know what
would be worth knowing? Unless the actor is satisfied to be a
parrot or a monkey he must master our period's knowledge of human
social life by himself joining in the war of the classes. Some
people may feel this to be degrading, . . . Nobody can stand above
the warring classes, for nobody can stand above the human race.
Society cannot share a common communication system so long as it
is split into warring classes. Thus for art to be 'unpolitical'
means only to ally itself with the 'ruling' group.
John Willett, (Translator & Editor), Brecht on Theatre (London: Methuen,
1964), p. 196.
31. Mannheim, I&U, op.cit., pp. 153-64, 211-48.

critic of Mannheim has posed the question thus:

> The standpoint of the sociology of knowledge is pre-Hegelian . . . The distortions of the sociology of knowledge arise from the method which translates dialectical concepts into class-ificatory ones. . . .[32]

the effect of which is that it

> abstracts from the conditions of real social power upon which those levels of thought depend.[33]

In summary, it is Marxism which provides the fundamental premises upon which this essay rests. However because the Black Panther Party claims to stand in the tradition of Marxism-Leninism, we must consider one aspect of that tradition more closely. Moreover, since this is a Marxist essay, it is inherently political; it has a bias, a political perspective without which it would not exist. This bias is centrally concerned with, among other things, the most essential question facing Marxism -- the relationship between Marxism and nationalism, which is, when posed as the "revolutionary nationalist, anti-imperialist struggles of the oppressed peoples", the central focus of the contradiction which we have identified as the failure of the Black Panther Party. The next section, then, while apparently a digression, is an essential summary of the perspective from which the subsequent critique of the Panthers is developed.

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32. Theodor W. Adorno, "The Sociology of Knowledge and its Consciousness", in _Prisms_ (London: Neville Spearman, 1967), p. 42.
    33. _Ibid._ p. 42

III***Marxism and Nationalism — A Marriage on the Rocks

Because the Black Panther Party claims allegiance to socialism and to a place in the tradition of the world socialist movement, it is incumbent upon us to examine their ideology in the light of that tradition. Since the Paris Commune of 1871, the socialist movement has been focussed on the struggle between revolution and reform. In the twentieth century, the overwhelming presence dominating this battle- field is the Bolshevik Party; and because of the nature of capitalism in this century, it is around the concepts that we have inherited from the Bolsheviks that the struggle revolves. These concepts — imperialism, nationalism, revisionism — are the ones with which this essay is concerned, for it is around them that revolutionary strategy and tactics revolve. The way in which they are interpreted and realised in practice is the touchstone of revolutionary success or failure. In this section, we shall attempt to unravel the threads of the relationship between Marxism and nationalism; first, because it is essential for our argument concerning the Panthers, and second, because it is a vital question of Marxist theory.

For more than 100 years Marxism has been bedevilled by the twin ghosts of "the national question" and the "peasant question". The putative solution to these questions has formed an important aspect of twentieth century Marxism.

> The interaction between socialist revolution and national liberation is the heart of traditional communist strategy. Their relationship to each other is the pivot of the strategy Lenin himself devised and fought for from 1903 on. This was the strategy of the Bolsheviks and all the parties of the Comintern.
>
> But in no other matter is communist practice so pendulum- like, or Marxist-Leninist theory so equivocal, as on the matter of national liberation. The ambiguity of this strategy cannot be considered an accidental or incidental problem to be cleared up by further explication. Nearly 70 years of ideological struggle within the communist movement, and communist-led struggles, have clarified matters enough. It is crystal-clear that equivocation is inherent in the strategy, and political activityderived from it is bound to swing from one course to its opposite.[34]

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34. Progressive Labor Party, National Committee, Draft Report on the Continuing Struggle Against Revisionism: Road to Revolution III, unpublished manuscript, (New York, 1971), p. 94.

We must survey "the national question" and briefly outline the ways in which communists have approached it -- in order to gain some clarity on the contemporary significance of the question, and its relation to the Black Panthers. In the nineteenth century, the rising bourgeois class was concerned, primarily, with the task of carving out the territorial framework for its rule -- the nation-state.[35] Not surprisingly, then, Marx and Engels devoted considerable energy to examining the significance of national struggles for the workers' movement.

The basic Marxist position was worked out at the end of the 1860s -- during the first major crisis in English politics over the Home Rule question in Ireland. In 1869, in a letter to Dr. Kugelmann, Marx summarised the position which he and Engels had arrived at:

> I have become more and more convinced -- and the only question is to drive this conviction home to the English working class -- that it can never do anything decisive here in England until it separates its policy with regard to Ireland most definitely from the policy of the ruling classes, until it not only makes common cause with the Irish but actually takes the initiative in dissolving the Union established in 1801 and replacing it by a free, federal relationship. And this must be done, not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland but as a demand made in the interests of the English proletariat. If not, the English people will remain tied to the leading-strings of the ruling classes, because it will have to join with them in a common front against Ireland.[36]

Marx and Engels never formally decided on a given line for the socialist movement in regard to the national question, except insofar as they consistently argued for separation of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie, and for an internationalist position of class unity for the working class.[37] In some respects, their position was vague and inconsistent: clarity was brought to the question by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the ideological struggles surrounding World War I.

36. Marx to Kugelmann, November 29, 1869, in Marx & Engels, Selected Correspondence (Moscow:Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), p. 277.

37. See Shlomo Avineri (ed.), Marx on Colonialism and Modernisation (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

The Leninist strategy for national struggles which has dominated communist theory and practice in the twentieth century comprises two parts, which have, in practice, contradicted one another. More significantly, the Leninist national strategy has contradicted the more important contribution which Lenin made to Marxism -- hi analysis of the political economy of imperialism.

The first part of the Leninist approach to the whole question was his merger of the component parts; so that, with the Comintern, the question officially became "the national and colonial question". The two parts are (i) the right of nations to self-determination, and (ii) the progressive nature of national liberation struggles in the colonies. Underlying both, and particularly the latter, is Lenin's "nineteenth century", pre-imperialist, estimation of the peasantry. Lenin's position was developed in the struggle against two other currents in the socialist movement: on the right, the position of the Austrian socialists led by Adler, who espoused an early form of the idea of community control -- "cultural autonomy" for the minorities within the Hapsburg Empire; and on the left, Rosa Luxemburg and elements within the Bolshevik party, who proposed a form of "ultra-internationalism", denying any role in revolutionary struggle to oppressed nationalities. In response to these two lines, Lenin defined his position by elevating to the status of a "right" (in precisely the sense so contemptuously dismissed by Marx), the goal of the struggles for national independence being waged by oppressed nations against imperialism. In a definitive, pre-revolutionary statement, Lenin posed the task of the proletariat as follows:

> The proletariat cannot but fight against the forcible retention of the oppressed nations within the boundaries of a given state, and this is exactly what the struggle for the right of self-determination means. The proletariat must demand the right of political secession for the colonies and for the nations that "its own" nation oppresses. . . .
> The Socialists of the oppressed nations, on the other hand, must particularly fight for and maintain complete, absolute unity (also organisational) between workers of the oppressed nation and workers of the oppressing nation.[38]

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38. V. I. Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Theses)", Collected Works, Vol. 22, (Moscow: FLPH, 1958 - 1964), pp. 147 - 48.

In themselves neither of these points would have raised much comment from other socialists; but the fact that this perspective was based on some presumed "right" as opposed to the concrete agitational and organisational needs of the fight for socialism, led to the hopelessly contradictory impasse in which the communists found themselves when they applied the "right" to the colonies. Under imperialism, it was argued by Lenin and M. N. Roy at the sessions of the Second Congress of the Comintern, and given the existence of the first socialist state in Russia, there would be a "natural alliance" between the Soviet movement of the Russian working class and the revolts of the colonised nations against the imperialist states, since both shared a common enemy. The problem with this position was that it was based on a sleight of hand: for, in one thesis out of twenty proposed by Lenin and Roy, the latter, most succinctly and most materially, contradicted the entire rationale for supporting "revolutionary nationalism". Roy's seventh thesis reads as follows:

> There are to be found in the dependent countries two distinct movements which every day grow further apart from each other. One is the bourgeois democratic movement, with a programme of political independence under the bourgeois order, and the other is the mass struggle of the poor and landless peasants and workers for their liberation from all sorts of exploitation.[39]

The Comintern, Roy proposed, must attempt to lead the peasant movement, independently of the bourgeoisies of the colonial countries, so that "the popular masses in the backward countries will be linked to communism, not through capitalist development, but through the development of class consciousness".[40] Either the national bourgeoisie in the dependent country is the enemy of the proletariat or it is its friend: it cannot be both -- but the collapsing of the "national-colonial question" tried to evade the inexorable dilemma. And this is where we have to examine what I have described as Lenin's pre-imperialist analysis of the class nature and role of the peasantry.

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39. M. N. Roy, "Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question", reprinted in The Communist Conspiracy: Strategy and Tactics of World Communism, A Report of the Committee on Un-American Activities to the U.S. House of Representatives, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956). p. 72.

40. ibid. p. 72.

There is no doubt that Lenin could cite Marx in his favour ——
in 1852, Marx had described the French peasantry in these terms ——

> The small-holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of
> which live in similar conditions but without entering into
> manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production
> isolates them one from another rather than bringing them into
> mutual intercourse. The isolation is increased by France's bad
> means of communication and by the poverty of the peasants . . .
> Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient; it
> itself directly produces the major part of its consumption and
> thus acquires its means of life more through exchange with nature
> than in intercourse with society. . . In so far as millions of
> families live under economic conditions of existence that
> separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture
> from those of the other classes, and put them in a hostile
> opposition to the latter, they form a class. In so far as
> there is merely a local interconnection among these small-
> holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets
> no community, no national bond and no political organisation
> among them, they do not form a class. They are consequently
> incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name,
> whether through a parliament or through a convention. They
> cannot represent themselves, they must be represented.[41]

In 1905, in the course of the Menshevik/Bolshevik struggle for the
leadership of the Russian revolutionary movement, Lenin published his
first fully-developed statement on the nature of the class forces in
Russia, and their respective roles in the revolution to come. Therein
is to be found the Bolshevik position on the peasantry —— a position
which was never successfully contested within the communist movement.
Because of the "underdeveloped" state of capitalism in Russia, all the
Russian socialists were agreed that the revolution there would be a
"democratic" (i.e. bourgeois) one. For the Mensheviks this meant that
the workers would simply help the bourgeoisie into power without pressing
their own demands. The Bolsheviks, on the contrary, argued that,
precisely because the bourgeoisie would inevitably be "inconsistent,
self-seeking and cowardly in its support of the revolution",[42] the
workers must seek to ally with the peasantry to force the bourgeoisie
to complete the democratic revolution. This would necessarily mean going

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41. Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, (Moscow:
FLPH, 1967), pp. 105-6.
42. V. I. Lenin, Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic
Revolution (Peking: FLPH, 1965) p. 106.

beyond the bourgeoisie. However, since the proletariat was a minority, vastly outnumbered by the peasant masses, the outcome would not be socialism, but "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry".[43] The extent of Lenin's fundamental distrust of the peasantry can be guaged from his statements that "the proletariat alone can be relied on to march to the end", and "the peasantry includes a great number of semiproletarian as well as petty-bourgeois elements".[44] As far as Lenin was concerned, the principal fact was that the demand of the peasantry was for the confiscation and division of the lands of the large estates:

> While this does not make the peasantry become socialist or cease to be petty-bourgeois, it is capable of becoming a wholehearted and most radical adherent of the democratic revolution.[45]

Having defined the peasants as petty-bourgeois, consigned them to the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and limited them, in advance, to a support role in the forthcoming revolution, the Bolsheviks did not engage in political, organisational work among them. Therefore, when the Russian revolution (in at least two periods) depended for its success upon the socialist consciousness of the peasants, the only people who could be blamed for its absence were the Bolsheviks.

Not even in the light of his own analysis of imperialism, as capitalism on a global scale (wage-labour and commodity production necessarily included) did Lenin alter his mistrustful estimation of the class role of the peasantry. At the Second Congress of the Comintern, Lenin presented the theses on the agrarian question — in which he commenced by analysing the divisions among the peasantry (between landless rural proletariat, small peasants obliged to sell their labour-power to supplement the produce of their own (or rented) land, small farmers or sharecroppers who subsist without having to work for others, and the large land-owners — the capitalists in agriculture). Having presented this analysis, Lenin proceeded to

43. _ibid._ p. 125.
44. _ibid._ p. 107.
45. _ibid._ p. 107.

deny the political implication of it, by saying that although the vast
majority of the rural population "is economically, socially and morally
interested in the victory of socialism"[46]—

> . . . it (the peasantry) will finally support the revolutionary
> proletariat only after the proletariat has taken the political
> power, after it has done away with the owners of the large estates
> and the capitalists, after the oppressed masses are able to see
> in practice that they have an organised leader and helper
> sufficiently powerful and firm to support and to guide, to show
> the right way.[47]

When one combines this distrust of the peasantry with the concept of
"progressive nationalist struggles" in the colonial countries and the
illusory value of the "right to self-determination", then the current
Chinese support for fascism in Pakistan is a logical outcome.

By calling Lenin's and the Bolsheviks' perspective on the
non-Western, non-industrial world pre-imperialist we wish to draw
attention to the way out of the contradiction which the communists
built. To properly understand the political nature of the class forces
at work in the world today we must return to Lenin's analysis of
imperialism —— for, it should go without saying, any Marxist perspective
must begin with and return to the mode of production for its understanding
of how the world works. While it is not necessary for us to recapitulate
Lenin's entire argument, it is essential that the logical conclusions and
political ramifications be spelled out.

Above all other considerations is the fact that imperialism is
capitalism writ large; bearing within its core the central contradiction
of the bourgeois era —— between bourgeoisie and proletariat —— intensified
and reproduced internationally. The expansion of capital, the seizure
of the world by capital necessarily includes the imposition, everywhere
in the world, of capitalist relations of production. Therefore,
contrary to the ideologists of "Third Worldism"[48] the vast majority

46. Lenin, "Theses on the Agrarian Question", In The Communist
Conspiracy, op.cit. p. 75.
47. ibid. p.75.
48. The most notable proponents of "Third Worldism" are the group
of writers around the publication Monthly Review —— particularly Paul
Baran, Paul Sweezy, Harry Magdoff, Leo Huberman —— for whom the significant
contradiction in the world is the one between a unified, monolithic
imperialism and the rest of the world (particularly the underdeveloped,
Third World). For these thinkers, there can only be one source of rev-
olutionary activity —— the Third World; because imperialism has integrated
the bourgeois-proletarian contradiction.

of the world's population is not "semi-feudal" . The operation of imperialism can have had only one result -- the proletarianisation of the peasant masses everywhere.

From this, it follows that M. N. Roy was correct in drawing a distinction between the two movements in the colonial countries; and the communist movement was fatally at error in not recognising the importance of the distinction and in ignoring his advice. This treatment of the relationship between Marxism and nationalism is not a sectarian exercise in the Byzantine politics of the socialist movement. Rather, it has very important bearing on what follows because of the Panthers' claim to stand in the socialist tradition, for "revolutionary nationalism" and because of the fact which is most clear from an examination of the relationship between nationalism and Marxism. The history of the communist movement's attempts to yoke the two together has been a very bad mis-match: and the reason for that lies in the class nature of the ideology of nationalism. The Bolsheviks, following Marx, were insistent that nationalism was a bourgeois ideology: to that extent they were correct. Their failure lay in trying to "use" or compromise with an ideology which was in fundamental contradiction to the class unity of the proletariat in opposition to the bourgeoisie which Marxism demands. And it is this same contradiction which, we shall see, dooms the Panthers to reformism.

In addition to the basic propositions defined in The German
Ideology and in the preceding section, I have also drawn upon other
works in my preliminary readings. Before ontering into a discussion
of these other sources, I wish to enter an important caveat. My
citation of the following works does not imply wholehearted commendation
of them, nor of their contexts, nor of their author's other work: rather
they have been taken as fruitful ideas which must be seen as supplemental
to the basic Marxist propositions. Furthermore, the ideas cited below
have been assembled eclectically rather than in any rigourously
analytical fashion.

The first conception to which I wish to draw attention pre-dates
Mannheim: this is Georges Sorel's idea of the general strike as "myth".
For Sorel, a myth is

> . . . a body of images which by intuition alone, and before
> any considered analyses are made is capable of evoking the
> mass of sentiments . . .[49]

Moreover, they are "not descriptions of things, but expressions of a
determination to act".[50] Sorel's myths

> . . . must be judged as a means of acting on the present; any
> attempt to discuss how far it can be taken literally as future
> history is devoid of sense. It is the myth in its entirety
> which is alone important: its partsare only of interest in
> so far as they bring out the main idea.[51]

He restates this point:

> . . . we should not attempt to analyse such groups of images
> in this way that we analyse a thing into its elements . . .
> they must be taken as a whole, as historical forces.[52]

Although there is some superficial resemblance between this
conception and Marx's, we must take care; on two grounds. First,
because of the idealism and irrationalism implicit in Sorel's position,

49. Georges Sorel, Reflections on Violence (New York: Macmillan,
1961), p. 122 (Sorel's emphasis).

50. ibid. p. 51. (A letter to Halevy).

51. ibid. p. 126. (Sorel's emphasis).

52. ibid. p. 42.

which run directly counter to the warning reiterated by Marx against seeking the reality of a society and its historical period in its own self-consciousness -- ideas refract rather than provide a mirror-image to reality. Second, although we accept the necessity for seeing the parts in terms of the whole, this must not lead the analysis into a facile disregard for the parts and their significance -- again, with reference to Marx, if we see ideology as a part, no more than an aspect of the whole, we fall guilty of the worst form of mechanism.[53]

There is one notable exception to contemporary social science's flight from ideology.[54] This exception is an essay by Clifford Geertz which attempts to synthesise the two approaches to ideology; which he identifies as the "interest" and "strain" theories. The former (roughly speaking, vulgar Marxism) is plagued by a "too muscular sociology", the latter (structural-functionalism[55] and variants on Freudian theory) by a "too anemic psychology". Since neither of these theories has more than the "most rudimentary conception of the processes of symbolic formulation",[56] Geertz argues for an analysis of ideology as "systems of interacting symbols, as patterns of interworking meanings"[57] He defines the nature and function of ideology in these terms:

> . . . maps of problematic social reality and matrices for
> the creation of collective conscience . . . (whose function
> is) . . .to make an autonomous politics possible by
> providing the authoritative concepts that render it meaning-
> ful, the suasive images by means of which it can be sensibly
> grasped.[58]

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53. There is also the problem of the relationship between Sorel and Italian fascism: Mannheim, I&U, p. 139n. cites Mussolini --"We have created a myth. This myth is a faith, a noble enthusiasm. It does not have to be a reality, it is an impulse and a hope, belief and courage. Our myth is the nation, the great nation which we wish to make into a concrete reality."

54. For an incisive discussion of the roots of the modern "cow-ardice of the intellectuals", especially in their response to the post-war anti-communist drive culminating in McCarthy's Senate witch-hunt, see Michael Paul Rogin, McCarthy and the Intellectuals: The Radical Specter (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967); also the review of Rogin"s book by Conor Cruise O'Brien, The Listener (London), December 7, 1967.

55. For instance -- "ideologies attempt to relieve the tensions generated by disequilibrium"; Chalmers Johnson, Revolutionary Change (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966) p. 83.

56. Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System", in David E. Apter (ed), Ideology and Discontent (New York; Free Press, 1964) p. 54.

57. ibid. p. 56.

58. ibid. pp. 64, 63.

While this definition should apply to all ideologies, Geertz's essay falls into the functionalist trap he had described, as when he admits that

> . . . ideology is a response to strain . . . It is a loss of orientation that most directly gives rise to ideological activity, an inability, for lack of usable models, to comprehend the universe of civic responsibilities and rights in which one finds oneself located.[59]

The significance of Geertz's essay, however flawed it may be by the facile acceptance of the "ideology is other people's sickness" approach, lies in the reminder he presents of the importance of the work of modern literary criticism, the structural linguists and the founders of semiology.[60] The acknowledgement of this debt marks a step beyond the usual, self-imposed limitations accepted by most of the literature, which remains content to talk only of the content of "isms", or, at best, to differentiate in terms of generality/specificity of the formulations of a given ideology.[61] The step beyond this position which was taken (half-heartedly) by Geertz, and which is implied rather than stated, is the recognition of the need to study ideology, partially at least, "on its own terms", through an examination of internal structural characteristics.

The final element in the modern analysis of ideas comes from the work of the French social anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss — particularly in his attempt to create a framework for the structural analysis of myth, ritual and totemism. Levi-Strauss has attempted

59. ibid. p. 64

60. ibid. p. 55f. Semiology is "A science that studies the life of signs within society . . . what constitutes signs, what laws govern them" (Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics), cited by Lee Russell, "Cinema — Code & Image", New Left Review, No. 49, May 1968; also Peter Wollen, Signs and Meaning in the Cinema (London: Secker & Warburg, 1969), Chapter 3 — a more extensive treatment of the pseudonymous article.

61. See, e.g., Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1958); Johnson, op.cit.; Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960); Clifford Geertz, Old Societies, New States (New York: Free Press, 1963); David E. Apter, The Politics of Modernisation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). This is a small selection from a large genre.

to analyse myths as structured pictures of the world[62]— apparently arbitrary in content, myths are very similiar in structure all over the world. This Levi-Strauss' premise which leads him, also, to acknowledge the debt to de Saussure,[63] and to assert the need to seek meaning, not in the component parts of the myth but in the pattern of the relationships between the parts:

> If there is a meaning to be found in mythology, it cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into the composition of the myth, but only in the way those elements are combined . . . Although myth belongs to the same category as language . . . language in myth exhibits specific properties . . . The true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but bundles of such relations, and it is only in terms of bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning.[64]

The foremost English commentator on structuralism in anthropology, and on the work of Levi-Strauss, has pointed to the importance of the latter's self-consciousness as a legatee of the Enlightenment's rationalism. Thus for Levi-Strauss

> . . . social behaviour, (the transactions that take place between individuals), is always conducted by reference to a conceptual scheme, a model in the mind of the actor of how things are or of how they ought to be.[65]

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62. Claude Levi-Strauss, Totemism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963); The Savage Mind (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1966); Structural Anthropology (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

63. Levi-Strauss, The Scope of Anthropology (Inaugural lecture at the College de France, January 5, 1960), (London: Cape Editions, 1968).

64. Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth", in Structural Anthropology, op.cit., pp. 206, 207. (emphasis in original).

65. Edmund Leach, "Claude Levi-Strauss", New Left Review, No. 34, December 1965; see also, Leach, Levi-Strauss (London: Fontana Modern Masters, 1970); Georges Charbonnier, Conversations with Levi-Strauss (London: Cape Editions, 1969); "Structuralism", Yale French Studies, Special double issue, Nos. 36/37, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966). A popularised version of structuralism is represented by Roland Barthes, Mythologies (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1957) — a collection of short essays on popular culture, plus the title essay. See also, Roland Barthes, Elements of Semiology (London: Cape Editions, 1967).

V***The Proposed Form of Study

There is a twofold reason why this essay comprises a critique of the pluralist model of democracy and its concomitant theses of the "end of ideology" and the death of class struggle. In the first place, pluralism (including its "radical variant", the power elite thesis), is characterised by inertia -- it is a static theory of social reality. What we are seeking to do is reassert the most important aspect of Marxism -- the reality that social phenomena can only be understood in terms of the activities of classes which have opposed, contradictory interests. In short, history is the "history of class struggles".

Secondly, ideology is not pathological, nor a feature of "underdevelopment", nor closed, absolute, totalitarian. Most emphatically, it is not "other people". Indeed, this essay, like all forms of social communication, is ideological -- it seeks to present information in terms of a set of conceptual imperatives.

Our analysis will attempt to be materialist, in accordance with the guidelines formulated by Marx and Engels. In mid-career, Marx defined "the leading thread of my studies" --

> In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society -- the real foundation, on which arises the legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence which determines their consciousness.[66]

Thirty years later, Engels restated the basic formulation:

> . . . According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the

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66. Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (New York: International Publishers, 1971) p. 11.

> production and reproduction of real life. More than this
> Marx and I have never asserted. Hence if somebody twists
> this into saying that the economic element is the only
> determining one he transforms the proposition into a
> meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic
> situation is the basis, but the various elements of the
> superstructure -- political forms of the class struggle
> and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the
> victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical
> struggles, and even the reflexes of all these struggles in
> the brains of the participants, political, juristic, phil-
> osophical theories, religious views, and their further dev-
> elopment into systems of dogmas -- also exercise their
> influence upon the course of the historical struggles and
> in many cases preponderate in determining their form.[67]

In terms, then, of the Black Panther Party, we shall look for the
source of their ideology in the developments of the economic position
of blacks in the United States, and in the developments in the
superstructural elements of American capitalism in the twentieth
century.

What of the concept of dialectics? Again we turn to Engels
for the basic proposition:

> What these gentlemen all lack is dialectics. They always
> see only here cause, there effect. That this is a hollow
> abstraction, that such metaphysical polar opposites exist
> in the real world only during crises, while the whole vast
> process goes on in the form of interaction -- though of
> very unequal forces, the economic movement being by far
> the strongest, most primordial, most decisive -- that here
> everything is relative and nothing absolute -- this they
> never begin to see.[68] As far as they are concerned, Hegel
> never existed. . .

The dialectics of Marx and Engels is primarily concerned with the
search for the dynamic element at the heart of reality -- the
coming-into-being, passing-out-of-being of things. Marx sought to
"turn Hegel back onto his feet" --

The mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands,

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67. Frederick Engels, Letter to Joseph Bloch, September 22, 1890,
in Selected Correspondence, op.cit., p. 498.

68. Frederick Engels, Letter to Conrad Schmidt, October 27, 1890,
in ibid. p. 507.

by no means prevents him from being the first to present its
general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner.
With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right
side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel
within the mystical shell.[69]

In 1888, Engels explained that the contradiction within Hegel's
formulation of the dialectic was the conflict between method and system:
the system that Hegel erected could be, and was, by Marx, demolished
through the application of his (Hegel's) own method.[70] Once the
distinction between method and system is recognised, it becomes clear
that the central failure of Hegel was his idealistic system. The
abolition of the system of Hegelian idealism, through the application
of materialist dialectical method, means that Marxism cannot be a
system either. Thus, Marxism is above all a means of analysis in
order to provide a guide to action:

The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various
ways; the point, however, is to change it.[71]

Therefore, implicit in an attempt to analyse and understand social
phenomena, as in the case of the ideology of the Black Panther Party,
is the task of discovering the source of mistakes in order to over-
come them.

Describing Marxist political economy, Henri Lefebvre has said
that

The analysis proceeds simultaneously on three planes —
that of pure form (logic), that of the relationship between
form and content (dialectical logic), and that of social
labour with its internal contradictions (dialectical
movement, which includes the preceding determinations).[72]

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70. Frederick Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical
German Philosophy (Moscow: FLPH, n.d.) passim.
69. Karl Marx, Capital (Moscow: FLPH, 1961), Afterword to the
Second German Edition, p. 20.
71. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach — No. XI, in GI, op.cit. p. 142.
72. Henri Lefebvre, The Sociology of Marx (New York: Random
House, 1969) p. 101.

Lefebvre's formulation can be rendered by posing three axes of analysis.
In the first instance, we need to know the historical-material roots
of a given phenomenon. Then we must decipher the structural relation-
ships integral to the phenomenon in question. Finally, we must critically
examine the relation between the phenomenon and its roots, in terms of
our fundamental premises concerning the class nature of society. In
the specific instance of the ideology of the Black Panther Party,
we shall look at the connections between ideas and social practice;
asking the question -- what is the nature and degree of congruence?

The final comment to be made before we commence our study of
the ideology of the Black Panther Party is that we shall hypothesise
the existence of three "levels" of ideology.[73] By this we mean that
the ideology is composed of a series of elements which tie together
into a whole, but which can, for analytic purposes, be identified
in terms of a pattern of generality/specificity. These three levels,
moving from the general to the specific, are (i) myth, (ii) symbols,
and (iii) directives. This categorisation is suggested for reasons
of convenience -- not as an airtight structure. There will be obvious
cases of overlap between levels, which we shall indicate. Further,
the terms themselves are to be taken, not as final definitions, but
as conceptual pigeon-holes. In other words, just as society and
history are not finished products, so the results of human social
practice are open to question and change.

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73. The conception of levels of ideology derives from the
work of a two-year seminar in the study of ideology and political
change (graduate and undergraduate), conducted by the Faculty of the
Schools of Social and African and Asian Studies at the University
of Sussex, under the guidance of Professors Bruce Graham and Fred
Bailey. Their responsibility for what follows is nil; the entire
responsibility for the following analysis rests with the author.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOURCES OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

The central concern of this essay is to contribute to the
understanding of contemporary political events; one of the writer's
fundamental precepts is that this is impossible without a radical
inquiry into the sources of the present in its historical context.
A Marxist analysis of ideas would be useless if divorced from Marx's
conception of history. Therefore, this essay will attempt to emulate
certain models.[1] I intend to demonstrate the utility of the Marxist
mode of analysis, in this case by building a logical and ideological
explanation of the Black Panther Party.

The first step towards this explanation is what we described
above as the first axis of analysis. The principal source for the
understanding of contemporary phenomena must be in the past. The
historical trajectory of the class struggle in the United States,
the role and function of racism in that struggle, and the particular
manifestations of class struggle which have arisen in the period since
the end of World War II are the subject-matter of this chapter. In
the subsequent chapters, I shall return to the other two axes of
analysis — in Chapter III, the question of the internal structural
characteristics of the ideology of the Black Panther Party; and in
Chapter IV, the analysis of the relation between ideology and its
material grounding.

The analysis in this chapter is based on a series of fundamental
propositions about the political economy of the United States. For the

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1. The examples I have in mind are Marx's Eighteenth Brumaire
of Louis Bonaparte; The Class Struggles in France; The Civil War in France;
Engels" Condition of the Working Class in England; The Peasant War in
Germany.

first of these, we shall return to Engel's explanation --

> Men make their history themselves, only they do so in a
> given environment, which conditions it, and on the basis
> of actual conditions already existing, among which the
> economic relations, however much they may be influenced by
> the other -- the political and ideological relations --
> are still ultimately the deciding ones, forming the keynote
> which runs through them and alone leads to understanding.[2]

Alternatively, in Mao's phrase, ideas do not "fall from the sky".[3]
The central and decisive facts about the economic relations in the
United States are that there exists a ruling class of capitalists
and a ruled class of proletarians. Because of the internal developments
in capitalism, first analysed by Lenin, the capitalist class in the
United States is (and must be, for its own survival) imperialist.[4]
In asserting that the United States is an imperialist state, we
necessarily imply the existence of classes with opposed interests
which populate the society. Any capitalist society is based on
commodity production, wage-labour, and economic relations which
center on the overwhelming contradiction between a bourgeoisie which owns,
controls and appropriates to itself, the products of the means of
production and the proletarians who sell their labour-power to the
owners for employment in the socialised forces of production.

2. Engels to W. Borgius, in Selected Correspondence, op.cit.,
p. 705.

3. Mao Tsetung, "Where do Correct Ideas Come From?", in Four
Essays on Philosophy, (Peking: FLPH, 1968), p. 134.

4. See V. I. Lenin, Imperialism; the Highest Stage of Capitalism
(Peking: FLPH, 1969); other works on imperialism in Lenin, Selected Works
(Moscow: FLPH, 1968), Vols. 2 & 3; there is also a body of work, of very
varied value, on "American imperialism". Some of the more valuable items
include "A Primer of Imperialism", Progressive Labor (VI: 4: June 1968);
"Imperialists at each others throats", Progressive Labor (VIII: 2: August
1971); David Horowitz, From Yalta to Vietnam (Harmondsworth: Penguin,
1967) and Imperialism and Revolution (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press,
1969); Andre Gunder Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin
America (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969) and Latin America:
Underdevelopment or Revolution? (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969).

The United States is evidently not the same now as it was a century ago; but the central fact of the nature of the economic system has remained constant. Within this capitalist economy, black people, since the abolition of slavery,[5] have comprised part of the proletariat. In other words, contrary to the proponents of the various formulations about blacks as an essentially pre-capitalist national minority (share-cropping equals feudalism in this view[6]), it is our argument that for most blacks as for most whites in North America, the only real option has been to sell their labour-power to the capitalists who have been running the economy continuously since the mid-nineteenth century.

The context in which the outline of the developments in the class struggles of black people in the United States is presented, is the existence and nature of imperialism in the second half of the twentieth century. The history of this century is the story of the conflicts among imperialist powers, overlaid with their (more or less) united struggles against socialism -- the Soviet Union after World War I, China after World War II. In short, our overall premise is the international character of capitalism as a system of exploitative economic, political and social relations. Marx and Engels described capitalism as having created "new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones".[7] Imperialism did not alter that fact, but its development broadened and intensified the oppression and the struggles inherent in the system. Since the end of the last imperialist war, since 1945, the United States has been one of the major pillars of imperialism. Therefore, we need to examine the impact of that fact on the class struggle in America. Further,

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5. See Eugene D. Genovese, The Political Economy of Slavery (New York: Random House 1965); C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957).

6. This proposition was the line taken by the Comintern and by the Communist Party, USA, from 1928; it was spelled out in a thesis of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, October 1930, on "the right of self-determination of Negroes in the Black Belt", cited in Jane Degras, (ed.), The Communist International, 1919-1943: Documents (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), Vol. 3, pp. 124-135.

7. Marx and Engels, Manifesto, op.cit., p. 31.

we must inquire into these developments with particular reference to the black sector of the proletariat —— for several reasons: first, because it is black workers, as we shall see, who have led the struggles of the entire working class in the recent period; second, because the operation of racism as an aspect of class society has meant the physical (i.e. demographic) and ideological division of the working class along racial lines; and third, because we shall, implicitly, be replying to the various bourgeois "social scientific" analyses of blacks as, variously, caste, class, nation, and ethnic group.

Finally, we shall limit the discussion, primarily, to the period since the end of World War II. The reasons for adopting this breaking-point are at once arbitrary and rational. In the first place, the period since the end of the war gives us a sufficiently broad time-span to present the developments coherently. Simultaneously, we are able to solve the problem of unwieldiness which is posed by the limitations of the essay-form.

II***The Black Proletariat in America

        One of the most important aspects of the development of the political economy of the capitalist states of North America has been the shortage of labour-power. The American ruling class solved the problem by importing workers -- the wealth of the continent was built by immigrant workers. This process should not, however, be narrowly interpreted with reference only to the period of the importation of slaves, nor to the period of the large scale immigrations of the late-nineteenth century. The importation of labour-power has taken a number of different forms, and continues down to the present. Indeed, it is the modern form of importing labour-power that we encounter when we discuss the question of "urbanisation". One body of developmental theory has defined the process of modernisation in terms of "urbanisation".[8] In practice, the terms, modernisation and urbanisation, refer simply to the development of capitalism -- without mention of the political-economic or class elements. For this reason, one has to realise that "urbanisation" is neither an automatic nor uni-dimensional process. People make it happen; and they do so with differential amounts of power at their disposal. We can identify, approximately, three variants of the process in the world-history of capitalist development -- enclosures and the forcible destruction of the land-person relations of feudalism (as in England, France and late-Tsarist Russia); the wholesale importation of the resulting "surplus population" to fill the cities of North America; and, in the latest version, forcible "rural renewal" as practiced in South East Asia.[9] More or less accelerated, the result

    8. See, for instance, David E.Apter, The Politics of Modernisation op.cit.; Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, op. cit.; Geertz, Old Societies, New States, op.cit.; Gabriel A. Almond & James S. Coleman, The Politics of Developing Areas (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); Gabriel A.Almond & Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965); Daniel Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society (New York: Free Press, 1958).

    9. See Noam Chomsky, American Power and the New Mandarins (New York: Random House, 1969) pp. 42 ff. for a discussion of "urbanisation" in Vietnam; also, Andre Gunder Frank, "The Sociology of Development and the Underdevelopment of Sociology", Catalyst (No. 3; Summer 1967); Maurice Dobb, Studies in the Development of Capitalism (London: Routledge, 1958).

is the same: the creation of organised supplies of labour-power
required for capitalist economic development.

The creation and development of the city as the most "rational"
locus of production in the advanced capitalist economy has been the
dominant motif of the past century in the United States. The role of
the black population in this process has been both marginal and
critical -- with a resultant apparent ambiguity surrounding the class
position of blacks. The victory of the Northern industrial bourgeoisie
in the Civil War,[10] and their imposition of capitalist modes of
production and property relations in the agrarian South, naturally
victimised the poor of that area -- black and white alike. The political
compromise between the Northern bourgeoisie and the Southern landowners,
based as it was on the recognition of the pre-eminence of capital,
precluded the possibility of the development of a peasantry (feudal
or otherwise), black or white, in the rural South. The two con-
temporary emancipations -- of black slaves in America and of feudal
serfs in Russia -- bore within them the same inexorable tendency: the
creation of proletarians, urban and rural.[11] The rural population of
the developed agricultural areas was not peasantry tied to the land by
small-ownership. The principal form that the economic relations of
rural capitalism took was that of share-cropping or forced service.
Although this has often been described as semi-feudal,[12] this form

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10. See Dobb, op.cit.; Barrington Moore, Jr., Social Origins of
Dictatorship and Democracy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

11. See V. I. Lenin, "New Data on the Laws Governing the Dev-
elopment of Capitalism in Agriculture: Capitalism and Agriculture in the
United States", Collected Works (Moscow: FLPH, 1964), Vol. 22, pp. 21 - 25;
The Agrarian Question and the "Critics of Marx", (Moscow: FLPH, 1954);
The Land Question and the Fight for Freedom (Moscow: FLPH, n.d.); also,
Roger Beardwood, "The Southern Roots of the Urban Crisis", Fortune,
(LXXVIII; 2; August 1968).

12. This formulation has been proposed, variously, by the official
spokesmen for the Chinese Communist Party, the Communist Party of the
Soviet Union and by the "Third Worldists" grouped around Monthly Review.
(See Note 48, Chapter One, above).

of land-tenure and owner-cultivator relationship is the typical mode
in agrarian society under capitalism. In other words, there is a
fundamental similarity of content (though with large variations in form),
between the development of the post-Civil War South and the developments
in the exploitation of the Third World by imperialism -- rather than
being feudal, it is capitalism's characteristic mode of rural
exploitation.[13]

While share-cropping still exists, it is no longer essential
to the American economy, and was already on the way towards becoming an
anachronism by the end of World War I. The massive in-migration of
the Southern rural population, from share-cropping to urban industrial
labour, was more than a matter of geographical distribution. During
the nineteenth century, with limitations progressively introduced between
1885 and 1924, the American ruling class imported the labour-power it
required. The important question is not one of importation or
immigration, however, but rather it is hinged upon the socio-historical
trajectory of the people involved. On that criterion, the millions of
immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, and the rural in-migrants
from the Southern states, shared a common experience (in gross terms,
of course) -- the transition from rural to urban society, urbanisation
-- they all became proletarians. This, their common origins, is the
material basis for unity of the American working class -- black and
white.

Meanwhile, of course, racism has been and remains one of the
most essential ingredients in the continuing power of the American

13. Capitalism imposes its market-relations on the whole world;
indeed, the introduction and integration of the whole world into the
market system is the world-historical accomplishment of the bourgeoisie.
A principal by-product of this process is the abolition of feudalism --
in content if not in form. Clearly, the feudal peasantry of the fifteenth
century and the imperialist peasantry of the twentieth are different
classes. Whether the latifundia of Latin America, or the mortgage system
of the industrial capitalist states, the class relationships are the same.
See A. G. Frank, ops. cit.; Paul Sweezy, The Political Economy of Growth
(New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957); "Peasants: Feudal or Capitalist
Exploitation?", Road to Revolution III, (New York: Progressive Labor Party,
1971), pp. 54 - 59. This question, of course, forms an intimate part of
the analysis of imperialism (above, Chapter I, section III) -- we shall
return to it, in our discussion of the Panthers' interpretation, below.

ruling class.[14] It is important to note that racism has not only applied
to blacks —— each newly arrived immigrant group has faced racism directed
against its members. An example —— the passage of the 1924 Immigration
Act (which rationalised the quota system for immigration), was
accompanied by the re—creation of the Ku Klux Klan, and by a wave of
nativist racism directed against all foreigners (especially recent
immigrants).[15] Racism in the United States (and in other capitalist
countries) can be related clearly to economics, in a number of senses.
The most blatant instance —— the differential between average white and
black incomes —— amounts to a saving, or surplus value, to the American
bourgeoisie of over $20 billions annually.[16] Secondly, as Willhelm
has documented, racism becomes most virulent when the rate of profit
is declining —— the ability to divide and rule, along racial lines,
is one of the most formidable weapons in the bourgeoisie's armoury.[17]
Thus, as it was against the early European immigrants that the double—
edged sword of racism fell —— in the denial of "civil rights" and in
the more essential fact of mass unemployment —— so, the operation of
racism in the modern period has been directed against black and Latin
people. The most recent entrants to the mainstream of the economy,
at the bottom, are the ones who are victimised and the ones against
whom the working class is divided by racism.

14. By racism we mean two things: (1) the ideological definition
of and denigration of peoples on racial lines; (2) the practical applic-
ation of differentiation on racial lines.

15. See John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American
Nativism, 1860 – 1925 (New York: Atheneum, 1960); W. J. Cash, The Mind
of the South (New York: Random House, 1956).

16. Black Liberation Program (New York: Progressive Labor Party,
1969), pp. 19 – 20.

17. Sidney M. Willhelm, Who Needs the Negro? (Cambridge, Mass.:
Schenkman, 1970), Chapter IV, passim.

Commencing at the time of World War I -- a period of imperialist growth and boom in the domestic economy -- large numbers of black people moved north into the cities. The original impetus for the in-migration was the need for labour-power to fill the gaps created by the mobilisation (mostly of white workers) for the war. Of course, given the inherent anarchy of the capitalist economy, the numbers of blacks moving north exceeded the number of jobs available -- a repetition of the nineteenth century phenomenon in which the immigrants filled out the "pool of surplus labour", the "reserve army of the unemployed" as well as actual jobs. The fact that these most recent newcomers to the labour market -- who were used to break strikes, depress wage-levels -- were visibly different only made the ruling class' task easier. The truth of this observation can be remarked from a cursory examination of the historical statistics of black unemployment, wage levels, and welfare recipients.[18]

The post-war period saw a slackening of the in-migration from the South as the returning soldiers and newcomers were set against each other. Moreover, the wartime expansion was slowing down, as inflation took hold and speculation replaced capital investment -- the first flush of finance-capitalism in the United States. Predictably, the Depression hit black first and worst -- both north and south.[19] The effects of the Depression included the acceleration of the mechanisation of Southern agriculture as the impact of New Deal projects like the Tennessee Valley Authority programme took hold, particularly in the latter 1930s. The entry of the imperialist powers into a new attempt to redivide the spoils of the world market in 1939 generated another false boom for the American proletariat.

World War II saved American (and Western) capitalism from

18. See for instance, St. Clair Drake,"THe Social and Economic Status of the Negro in the United States" and Philip M. Hauser,"Demographic Factors in the Integration of the Negro", in Talcott Parsons & Kenneth B. Clark, The Negro American (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967). These two essays contain a wealth of statistical and bibliographical information.

19. See Raymond Wolters, Negroes and the Great Depression, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Corp., 1970)

the crisis of the 1930s -- and it confirmed the permanent transformation of the class role of black people in the United States. The gross statistical evidence is summarised succinctly by Willhelm:

> In 1910, 73 percent of the nation's Negro population lived in rural America, 91 percent in the South. By 1960, 73 percent lived in urban America and only 60 percent in the the South. . . . The 1966 metropolitan areas housed 15 million (69 percent) of the nation's 21.5 million Negroes.[20]

More important is the distribution of blacks in the economic structure and in the urban basis of the economy. From 1950 to 1966, the black population rose from 15 million to 21.5 million (up 43%), in the metropolitan areas the increase was from 8.4 million to 14.8 million (up 77%), and in the central cities from 6.5 million to 12.1 million (up 87%).[21] In the basic industries of the United States, black workers comprise substantial minorities -- in auto, steel and transportation, between 25 and 50 percent of the workforce; in the essential urban service industries (transportation, hospitals, maintenance, etc.), the proportion rises to as much as 70 percent. The huge growth of black employment in the urban service industries is reflected in the rise of organisation of these workers in unions such as Local 1199 of the Hospital and Drug Workers. Simultaneously, the unemployment rate among blacks has consistently ranged between two and ten times that for whites.[22]

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20. Willhelm, op. cit., p. 12.

21. U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Report No. 332 ("Social and Economic Conditions of Negroes in the United States), cited in Black Liberation Program, op. cit., p. 17.

22. The problem with unemployment statistics concerns the official reporting techniques -- people disappear from the bottom of society in Census operations -- the normal definition of the unemployed simply disregards millions who have either given up looking for jobs that do not exist, or who are "underemployed". In 1967, a Department of Labor study of about a dozen central cities, discovered black unemployment rates ranging from a low of 24% to a high of 48%, (published in New York Times, July 28, 1967; cited by Willhelm, op.cit., p. 155).

The central cities are slums: the oldest, decaying areas of the cities, where social services are least adequate, rents highest (especially when measured against what they pay for), food most expensive, and so on.[23]

> The objective dimensions of the American urban ghettos are overcrowded and deteriorated housing, high infant mortality, crime and disease. The subjective dimensions are resentment, hostility, despair, apathy, self-depreciation and its ironic companion, compensatory grandiose behavior.[24]

The essential point we are concerned with here is not to provide a comprehensive and detailed survey of the political-economic status of black people in the United States. Rather we are presenting a schematic and cursory extended premise: that black people comprise, primarily, part of the American proletariat, which is super-exploited through the operation of racism.

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23. Both the statistical evidence and the myriad liberal interpretations of it are so numerous, that listing them comprehensively, let alone providing an adequate critique of the central foci of those interpretations, is beyond the scope of this paper. A few of the more notable, and bizaare, of the liberal myths about blacks include the concepts of "the pathological black family", "cultural deprivation" (poor folks, they don't have any culture, what a shame!) and the overall idea of urbanisation — black people live in slums, are poor, and uneducated because they came from the country and weren't able to cope with city life. Willhelm makes some very appropriate comments about the latter idea, (op.cit., pp. 12ff.).

The basic feature common to all the liberal myths is their, often unconscious, racism. This is inescapable, given the bourgeois class basis of liberalism as ideology and practice. The central feature of liberalism is the individual in contractual relations with other individuals. Thus, as far as liberalism is concerned, groups, especially classes, cannot be recognised. This principle is embodied in the American constitution, and reflected in the Federalist Papers. Only individuals entering "freely" into the maze of social contracts are acknowledged in law and reality in the United States — therefore, the legislation stemming from the civil rights movement could only guarantee individual rights; it could not deal with the reality of class oppression. See, for instance, Michael Paul Rogin, "Liberal Society and the Indian Question", Politics and Society, Vol I, No. 3, May 1971. The article contains the following statement: "The workings of society were not the responsibility of the government, and it was powerless to control them".

24. Kenneth B. Clark, Dark Ghetto (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 19; for the subjective dimensions, impressionistically described, see William H. Grier & Price M. Cobbs, Black Rage (New York: Bantam Books, 1969).

III***Practice in Search of Theory

        The flesh which is missing from the skeleton which we have
constructed above comprises the political activity of the black people
of the United States as they have undergone the developments outlined.
For the purposes of this essay, we shall limit our focus to the period
since 1945. Several considerations govern this restriction — first,
the fact that the period since the end of World War II provides a
sufficiently long time-period for analysis; second, the limitations
of space; and third, because the period since the end of World War II
is a continuous whole, a decipherable sequence in the history of
imperialism. While it is not our position that 1945 introduced any
real qualitative change in the nature of imperialism, it did realise
some important quantitative alterations in the distribution of power
between and among the imperialists. The post-war situation in the
distribution of power among imperialists included in its effects
the redistribution of the loci of the contradictions, internal and
external, which are inherent to capitalism.[25]

        Among the contradictions is the essential one between
bourgeoisie and proletariat — and this contradiction lies at the
root of the Black Panther Party. The Panthers exist because of the
subordination, exploitation and oppression of the black working class.
The nature of the Black Panther Party — how and what as opposed to

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    25. One of the consequences of the global re-division of the
imperialist pie at the conclusion of World War II was the dis-memberment
of the nineteenth century empires of Britain, France, Germany and Italy.
The "de-colonisation" of Africa, Asia and Latin America was, in
practical terms, a case of replacing old forms of oppression with new
ones — in two senses. On one hand, the process amounted to a change
in masters, as the United States inherited control over the former
colonies of the other powers. On the other, it is clear that the
imperialist states dominate the ex-colonies more completely today
than in the heyday of the old empires. One aspect of the "de-
colonisation", however, was the "revolution of rising expectations";
the nationalist struggles which occured (and continue to occur). These
had, in some cases, the effect of arousing an identification with
African independence on the part of black nationalists in the USA: see
Anthony Lewis and the New York Times, The Second American Revolution
(New York: E. P. Dutton Co., 1965).

why -- is primarily a product of the political practice (or absence of it)
of the working class, which they have claimed to represent,[26] in the
post-war world. The political practice of the black proletariat (and
others) is the subject-matter of this section of the essay.

I think it necessary, at the outset, to dispose of a relatively
minor point of confusion. The post-war period, dating either from
Truman's Executive Order desegregating the Armed Forces (1948), or
from the Supreme Court decision in the case of Brown vs. the Board
of Education, Topeka, Kansas (1954), with reference to black people
has been widely bruited as the "Negro revolution" or the "revolution
in civil rights". The brutal fact is that there has been no revolution.
A revolution would imply, at least, some significant change in the
loci of power in the society -- one class rather than another would
wield state power. In less scientific terms, but no less accurately,
Malcolm X disposed of the misconception in these words:

> . . . the Negro revolution is no revolution because it
> condemns the system and then asks the system it has
> condemned to accept them back into their system. That's
> not a revolution -- a revolution changes the system, it
> destroys the system and replaces it with a better one.[27]

However, there is more to this question than terminology, it is not
just a case of sloppy semantics. In fact, the concept of the Negro
"revolution" has been exploited in the so-called "backlash"[28] by
ascribing to black people the achievement of major benefits, by
explicit or implied definition, at the expense of white people. One

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26. The claim and the reality are two different matters -- the
discrepancy between them is the major topic of the concluding chapter,
below.

27. A. B. Spellman, "Interview with Malcolm X, March 19, 1964",
Monthly Review, May 1964, p. 23.

28. Stokely Carmichael commented, aptly, that the "backlash"
was the same old racism, with a new excuse; in "What We Want", New
York Review of Books, September 22, 1966.

corollary of this usage of the term is the development of the concept of "white racism"[29] — a generalised social disease that all white people have, presumably inherited racially, existing without roots or reason. Social realities are not that accidental — a phenomenon as deep and important as racism has a real basis, a material basis: the class structure of society, and the needs of the dominant class. The material grounding for racism in the United States is the more than $20 billions, per annum, which the imperialist bourgeoisie realises in extra profits from the cheap(er) labour-power of the non-white workers.[30]

What sorts of political practice led to the Black Panther Party? What sorts of political, theoretical understanding of the practice prefigured the ideology of the Black Panther Party?[31] There are two

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29. The original inspiration for the popular circulation of this idea came from the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York: Bantam Books, 1968). The nature, and function, of this concept — particularly its attribution of blame and guilt to the "individual citizen" (i.e., its absence of class analysis) — is typical of the way in which liberalism works. Note also the similarity with the "dirty humans" propaganda which surrounded the ecology scare: see Sandor Fuchs, "Ecology Movement Exposed", Progressive Labor (VII: 6: September 1970), pp. 50-70.

30. See Black Liberation Program, op.cit.; for comparison, it is illuminating to consider the following analysis of Anglo-Irish relations:

> And most important of all! Every industrial & commercial centre in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English and Irish. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor, who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats & capitalists of his country against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social & national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude towards him is much the same as that of the "poor whites" to the "niggers" in the former slave states of the USA. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker at once the accomplice and the stupid tool of the English rule in Ireland.
>
> This antagonism is artificially kept alive & intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And that class is fully aware of it . . .

Marx, Letter to Meyer & Vogt, April 9, 1870, Correspondence, op.cit., p. 286.

31. For an important Marxist contribution to the question of the relation between theory and practice, see Antonio Gramsci, The Modern Prince (New York: International Publishers, 1957).

aspects to the answers to these questions. In the first place, there is the long-term theme of the dialectic of integration versus separatism which has been identified by Harold Cruse.[32] The other aspect concerns the specific objectives and forms of political activity engaged in by black people since World War II. It is with the latter that we are immediately concerned in this chapter.

The first ten years of the post-war period were characterised by "pressure-group politics".[33] The traditional organisations of black people in the United States — the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League — were the foremost and "legitimate" voices of the needs and feelings of black people. In large part, the recognition of these organisations depended upon their legalistic and constitutional perspective.[34] The major focus of the period's activities was upon segregation in the armed forces, discriminatory employment practices and segregation in education. The first two areas were subject to formal action by Presidential Executive Orders, issued by Truman. The order concerning discriminatory hiring by firms doing business with the federal government "remained ineffective under both Truman and Eisenhower".[35] The peak of the first, constitutional period came with the Supreme Court decision in the case of Brown vs.

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32. Harold Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual (New York; William Morrow, Inc., 1967) and Rebellion or Revolution? (New York: William Morrow, Inc., 1968). This brilliant, but distorted perspective on the failure of black politics will be considered more fully below.

33. See, e.g., Harry Eckstein, Pressure Group Politics (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960); S. E. Finer, Anonymous Empire (London: Pall Mall Press, 1958); Earl Latham, The Group Basis of Politics (Chicago: Octagon Books, 1965); David B. Truman, The Governmental Process (New York: Knopf, 1951).

34. My characterisation of these organisations as "traditional" and "legalistic" does not imply either ignorance or neglect of the historical fact that the NAACP was born in struggle and regarded as revolutionary in its origins, nor of the fact that neither organisation was more than 50 years old in 1945. Rather it is a comparative description; from the perspective of hindsight, in the light of the developments since 1945. One indicator of the importance of the NAACP is the fact that Robert F. Williams' radicalism was born in the organisational framework of that body. See below.

35. Willhelm, op. cit., p. 67

Board -- the test case (one of several engaged in by the NAACP) which
reached a decision. The importance of the case does not lie in its
legal significance in the realm of educational policy,[36] but rather in
its political consequences. Paradoxically (or rather, dialectically),
the very summit of the first "moment"[37] of the post-war black politics
was its end. The case had been fought through the "normal",
constitutional channels -- successfully. The fact that the case had
succeeded through the constitutional means spurred on the move towards
activities outside the "normal channels". The decision acted as a
catalyst or spur; it released vast amounts of repressed energy and
provided the focus for the next "moment" of the struggle. The Truman
Executive Orders and the Supreme Court decision came, not from a
vacuum, but from the very strenuous lobbying activities of the major
organisations. The result of the nature of the source of these reforms
(however truncated and formal rather than real they may have been) was
that the federal government became the repository of the hopes and
demands which previously had had no focus. Of course, these demands
and hopes centred on material improvements in the lives of black people.
Since they were directed towards the federal government, demands for
"life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" -- more prosaically, for
education, jobs, decent incomes and housing -- were codified in the
symbolic terms of "freedom" and "justice". Furthermore, the act of
codification (rendering into a code or cipher) had a mystifying effect:

36. See, for instance, Bayard Rustin's comment -- "Negroes today
are in worse economic shape, live in worse slums, and attend more highly
segregated schools than in 1954". Commentary (XLVII: 3: September 1966)
(emphasis supplied). See also Lee Rainwater & William L. Yancey, The
"Moynihan Report" and the Politics of Controversy (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT
Press, 1967).

37. The term, for Hegel, signifies a concatenation of ideas and
situations. It could also be rendered by the word "period"; except that
word, normally used, has a greater signification of a clearly delineated
time-space dimension and lacks the implication of the significance of
ideas. By Lenin, the term was rendered as "current moment" -- with
particular reference to the development of the various forces engaged in
the class struggle. See Walter Kaufmann, Hegel (op.cit.) pp. 18-31, 279-85;
Lenin, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism (New York: International Pub-
lishers, 1927).

this was in turn determined by the nature of the focus or "arena" to which the demands were directed.[38]

The character of the "second moment", then, shares with its predecessor the common feature of focus upon the federal government. The period, roughly, of Eisenhower's second term of office, was marked also by a growing awareness of the most glaring contradiction — that between reality and promise. While the focus of hopes was the federal government, the arena of action was predominantly the South. The most important single event was the Montgomery bus boycott, which marked the exodus of the black people of that city from the limbo of invisibility.[39] The boycott was the first large-scale test of mass direct-action, which was aimed at putting formal, constitutional civil rights into practice in the South. The description of the Southern movement, born in Montgomery and bloodied in Selma, Birmingham and elsewhere, as one for civil rights is accurate, for the focus of the major strain of black politics of the time was upon the fulfilment in reality of the rights inscribed in constitutional theory. From hindsight, it is clear that fulfilment of these demands posed too formidable a contradiction to the existing balance of forces in the society. The black political movement itself achieved recognition of this problem, and realised that shift in consciousness through the adoption of "black power" over "civil rights". That is to say, the rhetorical shift from "civil rights"/"Freedom Now" to "black power"

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38. See Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1964), Chapter Five, for a discussion of political setting as a determinant of political action — from which the above discussion is extrapolated. See also Wollen, Signs and Meaning in the Cinema, op. cit.; and below, the discussion of "integration", "civil rights" and "black power" as values, goals and programmatic strategies.

39. See Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (New York: Modern Library, 1963), a fictional evocation of the unbeing of black people.

represents the development of the consciousness among blacks (specifically among the more radical leaders of the civil rights movement) of the operations of the contradictions within American society. "We had to work for power, because this country does not function by morality, love, and nonviolence, but by power".[40]

The civil rights movement, like its predecessor, died at its zenith -- on the occasion of the March on Washington of August 1963. The apparent and symbolic high-point of the civil rights movement was the mobilisation of from one-quarter to one-half million people for a March for Civil Rights; and from this same event can be traced the decline of the civil rights movement as a period of black struggle in the modern period. John Lewis, of the Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) expressed publicly, for the first time, the doubts and criticisms of the role of the federal government which existed in the movement. Before that point could be reached, however, the movement had gained a great deal of practical experience. On the positive side, in the lessons on how and where and when to organise, they had learned from the mass actions led by Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and from the smaller-scale, more fundamental activities of the field-workers for SNCC and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). SNCC and CORE engaged in both symbolic and real actions -- the sit-ins and the Freedom Rides of the early 1960s -- based upon the practice of nonviolence in the face of repression and state brutality (in the persons of the police). Although it was the "big" symbolic actions -- the Freedom Rides and the most explosive sit-ins -- which were the focus for the news coverage by the mass media,[41] greater significance

40. Stokely Carmichael, "What We Want", New York Review of Books, September 22, 1966; reprinted under the title "Power & Racism", in Stokely Speaks! (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 19.
41. Anthony Lewis, The Second American Revolution: The New York Times Report on Civil Rights, 1954 - 1964 (New York: Random House, 1964): this book is an accurate catalogue of the "significant" events as defined by the "news-media" perspective.

lay in the less "newsworthy" organisational work of SNCC and CORE.
The practical import of this latter, unspectacular work was that it centred
on organising the rural black workers of the South towards political
action and out of years of repression and terror -- it was indeed, the
first step in the political education of the black working class in
the possibilities of collective political action.[42]

Despite the obvious shortcomings in the political perspectives
of both CORE and SNCC -- which included their inexperience, their
virulent liberal anti-communism, combined with a strong dose of
elitism and an anti-organisational bias -- there is no doubt that the
two organisations achieved much. Part of this stems from the composition
of the groups:

> If one were to generalise about the SNCC staff in the Deep
> South, one would say that they are young, they are Negro,
> they come from the South, their families are poor and of
> the working class, but they have been to college.[43]

The most important factor about the two organisations which comprised
the radical wing of the civil rights movement was that they began the
process of breaking through the veil of legality and "responsibility"
in which the realities of the class basis of American "democracy" are
enshrouded.

The keys to the first two moments -- the struggle for civil rights
-- were that they were Southern, symbolic, nonviolent and political.
And, essentially, that they ruptured the decades-old patina of
quiescence and submission in the face of oppression. The central
and determining feature which characterised the early period was

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42. Howard Zinn, SNCC: The New Abolitionists (Boston: Beacon
Press, 1965); Inge Powell Bell, CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence
(New York: Random House, 1968).

43. Zinn, op.cit., p. 10. Note, however, the contrary position:
Thus before joining SNCC, the up-and-coming young man was
being primed for the black middle class. This was true of most
SNCC activists in 1966. Although they may have come from poor
or working class families, the young students themselves were
headed for middle-class status. . . . These ideological waverings
were reflective of the insecurity and equivocation of the black
middle class, which SNCC in a sense represented.
Robert L. Allen, Black Awakening in Capitalist America (New York:
Doubleday, 1969), p. 40.

the continuing trust in the federal government as the repository of hopes and source of fulfilment — based on several examples of federal action, notably the Supreme Court decision of 1954 and the committal of troops to Little Rock, Arkansas. The tendency to entrust the fate of the movement in the hands of the federal government was strengthened by the election of John F. Kennedy to the Presidency in 1960 (in which the smart election campaign run by Robert Kennedy, including the phone call to Mrs Martin Luther King in Atlanta, played its part). The three years of Kennedy's tenure of office were the height of the civil rights movement.

The first step out of the strait-jacket of civil rights struggle and reliance upon the federal government was taken (in the public arena, at least) in August 1963, when Lewis voiced his and SNCC's criticisms of the government's role in the struggle then being waged in the South. Under pressure from the leadership of the March on Washington, which comprised most of the leading lights of the United States' "official" liberal establishment (including President Kennedy), Lewis omitted the real question which SNCC was beginning to ask — "I want to know: which side is the federal government on?"[43]

If the March on Washington was the first step out of the embrace of the liberals, the critical stage in the shift from civil rights to black power occurred in 1964, at the Democratic Party Convention in Atlantic City. That Convention was the last attempt by the radical wing of the movement to work at the national electoral level. At the Convention, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) presented its claim to represent properly the population of the state of Mississippi, on the twofold basis of its representation of the black population of the state, and its preparedness to pledge loyalty to

43. Cited by Zinn, op.cit., p. 215. Documentation of the federal government's duplicity, and refusal to serve any interests other than those of the corporations and landowners in the South is contained in Ed Clark, "Black Panther's Power: Exclusive Report from Alabama", Progressive Labor, (V; 5; October 1966).

the national party (both of which distinguished it from the regular,
racist party organisation). This insurgency onto the national political
stage by the black working masses, in their own organisation, was
headed off and excluded from the stage by the most notable luminaries
in the liberal firmament -- Humphrey, Reuther, Rauh, King, et. al.
Despite prior endorsements from Reuther and the Americans for Democratic
Action (ADA), when pressure was applied by the party leadership,
particularly in the Credentials Committee, the support from the liberals
evaporated. The Party leadership offered the MFDP a "compromise"
whereby the regular racist organisation would represent the state of
Mississippi, while the MFDP would be granted two delegates-at-large
for the 1964 convention and two regular delegates for 1968. The MFDP,
in other words, was told to accept the ordinary party organisation,
indeed to endorse it -- for which they would receive some more tokenism.
More than a rebuff, this was an insult -- and it was the archetypal
liberal compromise which disturbs not one particle of the existing
power relationships.

The fact that, for all their liberalism and all their soft
words of encouragement and "support", the liberals were objectively part
of the enemy's forces -- that in fact they were true to their class --
by defending the racism of the formal organisation of the Democrats in
Mississippi, was a major lesson. Less obvious was the further lesson
which arose from the 1964 Convention, posed by the MFDP's experiences
there. They were obliged to ask themselves: which is more important,
the game of politics ("the art of the possible"[44]) played by the liberals
and the capitalist power they represented, or the needs of the people
who had created the MFDP, black working people in Mississippi?
Since the MFDP had already chosen the latter, they were forced to face
the concrete realisation of the contradiction between the government

44. Zinn comments that SNCC (who were important in development
of the MFDP) had been engaged in the art of the impossible -- successfully.
Op. cit., p. 254.

(whether liberal or conservative) and the people. John Lewis' question of 1963 was answered by Johnson and Humphrey in 1964 -- the lesson was clear; the only currency in politics is power -- "Once you get power, you don't have to beg".[45] The MFDP's encounter with the realities of political power in the United States was an important step in the political education of the black working class.

The experiences of the MFDP did not simply remain in the minds of the thousand delegates, friends, co-workers and supporters: those thousand people were the concrete vanguard of their class. The lessons they learned were generalised and assimilated rapidly for several reasons -- (i) the experiences of the MFDP were a concentrated and archetypal expression of the normal powerlessness of the black working class, in the liberal north as much as in the reactionary south; (ii) the MFDP was the first mass political organisation created by black workers to meet their needs;[46] (iii) the SNCC people involved in the MFDP continued the work of organising in the South, and began to move to the Northern cities;[47] (iv) out of the MFDP experience grew the realisation of the need for power, and that power lies in the cities. The conclusion to be drawn from the decade up to 1964 was that all the litigation and legislation had not materially improved the lives of most black people in the United States. The third, and critical, stage in the transition out of civil rights -- in the modern political education of the black working class -- came in 1965. The essential factor was its location in the city of Los Angeles.

The key to the third stage was the shift from South to North,

45. John Hulett, President, Lowndes County Freedom Organisation, Alabama, cited by Clark, loc.cit., p. 37.

46. By first is meant, of course, in this period of the short-term roots of the Black Panther Party, as defined on page 40, supra.

47. One example of this process is the career of Kathleen Cleaver -- a SNCC worker in the 1960s, subsequently Communications Secretary for the Black Panther Party. Stokely Carmichael, too, moved from SNCC to the Panthers, where he remained until they expelled him.

encapsulated in the change in slogans, from civil rights to black power.
The civil rights movement had concentrated its efforts on the South, on
desegregation, and on the achievement of rights which were formally
inscribed in the Constitution and in federal law, but contravened in the
daily social practice of the South. The new stage on which the struggle
was to be engaged was one where the contradiction between theory and
practice was, at first sight, more opaque; where segregation is de facto,
almost accidental were it not so systematic; where class overwhelms
caste.

A central fact of American history is the Civil War, our oblique
starting point to this chapter — the resolution of two competing modes
of production in the military arena. Part of this fact is the form in
which the victory was consolidated, through the achievement of a compro-
mise settlement in favour of the social structure of the losers. Black
people became the scapegoats and a perpetual source of cheap labour-power
for capitalists, South and North. In senses more metaphorical than
scientific, one can describe the post-bellum South as a dependency or
quasi-colony.[48] To the extent that the South is relatively under-
developed, the civil rights struggle was of less than critical
importance to the survival of American imperialism. But the real
impotence of the civil rights movement lay in its strategic perspectives,
its ideological understanding of American society. For the most part,
the strategic perspectives of the Southern civil rights movement were
deeply embedded in American liberalism, in the prevailing ideology of
the American ruling class. The civil rights activists focussed on the

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48. It is important that this point not be exaggerated: the South
never was a real colony. During the twentieth century the South has been
increasingly integrated into the mainstream of American society (largely
under the impact of four war-induced booms) — contrary to the movie Easy
Rider, the South is not an alien land. Contemporary politics provides
ample evidence of the importance of the South (both political and economic)
to American capitalism — e.g., Nixon's "Southern Strategy", the power
of the Southern Congressmen, the power of the Texan oil lobby, and the
significance of the South as a location for "runaway shops" (the displace-
ment of capital in search of cheap, unorganised labour-power).

federal government; they appealed to the magical powers of moral imperatives; and to the extent that there was a hint of a class analysis behind their activities, these were fundamentally illusory in viewing the black masses of the Deep South as some sort of truncated peasantry.[49]

The critical nexus of the imperialist system is the city -- the location where base and superstructure are most fully integrated.

> . . . power in advanced capitalist societies is not an object cited exclusively or even primarily in Parliament . . . it is not an object at all; it is the totality of differential relationships that constitute a society. These relationships are, of course, mediated and objectified in a range of crucial institutions. These institutions are infinitely more numerous and varied than Parliament . . . Each has its own specific degree of autonomy. The legislature is thus one of a series of sectors of power, not their synthesis. The dynamic configuration of these different ensembles is the real constellation of power in the society.[50]

The United States, the most advanced capitalist country, the imperialist state par excellence, is an urban society: and the cities are the major stars in the constellation. And in 1965, the front line of the struggle moved to the cities, with the rebellion in Watts. While the black workers of the cities were moving onto the stage independently, those who had led the earlier struggle and who would provide some of the leadership during the transition from South to North, from civil rights to black power, had begun to synthesise the lessons of the preceding period.

What were these lessons? They included the concept of collective action as a means of producing social change; the conscious-

49. Zinn, op.cit, passim, quotes SNCC documents which contain numerous appeals to the normal shibboleths of liberalism -- "freedom of the individual, press, expression" etc, and of course, the determinant slogan, civil (i.e. bourgeois) rights. The alternative 'Marxist' line which defined the blacks as peasants was inherited from the CPUSA's line from 1928 on, which called for "self-determination of the Black Belt". See below, Chapter IV, for further consideration of this question.

50. Perry Anderson, "Problems of Socialist Strategy", in Perry Anderson & Robin Blackburn, (eds.), Towards Socialism, op.cit., pp. 235-6.

ness that the federal government is not a neutral or well-disposed
bystander; the recognition of power as the only true currency of
politics (corollary -- morality and justice are worthless if they
cannot be enforced). The most important realisation was the conclusion
that racism, far from being aberrant, is a universal and systematic
function of American society.[51]

In our outline of the trajectory of the post-war period from
civil rights to black power we have made several gross omissions. While
this was inevitable given the large scale of the canvas employed, it
is essential to our understanding to mention several instances which do
not contradict the major theme but represent variations. Chronologically,
the first of these was the development of the NAACP chapter led by
Robert F. Williams in Monroe, North Carolina, at the end of the 1950s.
In response to potential and actual danger from the local chapter of
the Ku Klux Klan, Williams, an ex-Marine, applied for and was granted
a charter from the National Rifle Association to form a rifle club.
For the temerity of saying, in 1959, that blacks might have to meet
violence with violence, that they had the right to engage in self-
defense, Williams was supended from the NAACP. For actually arming
black people and leading a confrontation with the Klan, he was
placed on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's "Most Wanted" list as
an "armed and dangerous" kidnapper. He was finally forced into exile,
first in Cuba, then in China.[52]

Another part of the process of translating the consciousness of
the insufficiency of justice and morality into action was taken by a
Louisiana offshoot of CORE. A group of CORE activists, who were less
than completely committed to Ghandian pacifism, organised the Deacons

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51. The first systematic presentation of these conclusions,
particularly the last, was Stokely Carmichael & Charles V. Hamilton,
Black Power (New York: Random House, 1967), which presents a twofold
characterisation of racism, as institutional and individual. This book
was also an early formulation of the "blacks-as-colony" thesis, derived
from Franz Fanon and mediated in black American terms by Malcolm X.

52. See Robert F. Williams, Negroes with Guns (New York: Marzani
and Munzell, 1962); Cruse, Crisis, op.cit., pp. 351-61, 375-99.

for Defense, which successfully defended civil rights workers who had
been threatened -- usually by a show of armed force.[53] Of course,
neither Williams nor the Deacons can be described as revolutionary,
for neither went beyond the concept of self-defense, nor did they
transcend the contemporary definitions of the struggle. The most
they aspired to was the role of military, defensive wing of the
integrationist struggle for civil rights: a challenge to state power
was unthinkable.

The real keys to the political process which led to the Black
Panther Party came from the working class blacks of the North -- from
Malcolm X and the rebellions which have struck most cities in the
United States between Harlem (1964) and the assassination of Martin
Luther King (1968). In many ways, Malcolm was archetypal of the
black activists of the urban working class: a career which traversed
the ground from ghetto hustler born of the racist unemployment endemic
in the ghettoes, to gaol and conversion, and finally to a developing
political consciousness.[54] His political career was preluded by twelve
years of service to Elijah Muhammad, as chief preacher for the Nation
of Islam, founder and organiser of several of the Nation's biggest
mosques. The climax of Malcolm's career as a Black Muslim saw him
in the position of unrivalled Muslim leader in Harlem, and as a
significant leader to large numbers of non-Muslim blacks. But Malcolm
was not only a follower in the rigid hierarchy of the Nation of
Islam -- as time wore on he became increasingly critical of Muhammad's
policy of non-involvement. It was his own, very secular, background
that made Malcolm critical of the Nation's policy, because he responded

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53. Inge P. Bell, op.cit., indicates the existence of contra-
dictory interpretations of and far from unanimous adherence to the
value of nonviolence within the civil rights movement.
54. The rapidity of the development of political consciousness
from the period of Malcolm's prison "conversion" can be judged by the
events at Attica. It is no longer a question of individual conversion,
but rather a matter of mass uprising; no longer religious but openly
political.

to the ideas and needs of the ghetto militants, recognising the truth
of their criticisms:

> If I harboured any personal disappointment whatsoever, it was
> that privately I was convinced that our Nation of Islam could
> be an even greater force in the American black man's overall
> struggle —— if we engaged in more action. By that, I mean I
> thought privately that we should have amended, or relaxed,
> our general non-engagement policy. I felt that, wherever
> black people committed themselves, in the Little Rocks and
> the Birminghams and other places, militantly disciplined
> Muslims should also be there —— for all the world to see, and
> respect and discuss.
>   It could be heard increasingly in the Negro communities:
> "Those Muslims talk tough, but they never do anything, unless
> somebody bothers Muslims". I moved around among outsiders more
> than most Muslim officials. I felt the very real potentiality
> that, considering the mercurial moods of the black masses, this
> labelling of Muslims as "talk only" could see us, powerful as
> we were, one day separated from the Negroes' front-line struggle.[55]

The split between Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam —— his expulsion
and/or resignation —— ostensibly for his comment that the assassination
of President Kennedy was a case of "chickens coming home to roost",
was a major political event because it forced Malcolm to enter into a
fundamental re-evaluation of the political stance of the Muslims and
of the development of the politics of black liberation in America.

Malcolm's importance was both tentative and posthumous, not
definitive. Neither his post-Muslim programme nor his organisation
can be described as more than the first step towards the development
of a new position.[56] The central feature of the last year of his life
—— from the time of his split with the Muslims in February 1964 to his
assassination in March 1965 —— was the articulation of the new radical
position[57] —— under four approximate headings: (1) the concept of black

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55. The Autobiography of Malcolm X, (Harmondsworth: Penguin,
1968), pp. 397-98.
    56. The embryo of the new position was contained in the "State-
ment of Basic Aims and Objectives" and "Basic Unity Program, Organisation
of Afro-American Unity", reprinted as Appendices A & B in George
Breitman, The Last Year of Malcolm X (New York: Merit Publishers, 1967).
    57. Again, the "novelty" of the "new radical position" is entirely
relative to the limitations of the post-World War II time-span. There
were elements of this position in the programmes of a number of black
predecessors to Malcolm; particularly, in the twentieth century, W. E.
B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey.

nationalism; (2) the conviction that blacks in the United States are part of an international dynamic of revolt by the colonised peoples against their oppressors; (3) the conviction that racism is systemic in the United States; and (4) the proposition that black people must be anti-imperialist to achieve their liberation.[58] None of these points, taken singly or ensemble, made Malcolm a revolutionary socialist: his assassination occurred before he could develop in that or any other direction. The real significance of the last year of his life was that although he did not complete his development, he did open some of the most crucial questions that had to be faced.

Malcolm was one of the most important black activists of the 1960s, with a considerable following among the people of Harlem. Furthermore, the nature of his support, its class basis, differentiated him sharply from the other "leaders" of the civil rights movement: in large part because, unlike them, Malcolm did not display a profound fear of the masses.

That fear of the masses led the civil rights leadership to rely increasingly upon those liberal politicians who had scuttled the MFDP insurgency at Atlantic City, and who had, by 1965 demonstrated con-clusively their sheer inability and/or unwillingness to effect real changes in the lives of the majoirty of black people.[59] Simultaneously, these "leaders" were under pressure from below to achieve something other than meaningless legislation. They were in the unenviable position of knowing that Malcolm's scathing criticisms of them were essentially correct, as in his remarks on the March on Washington:

The White House speedily invited in the major civil rights

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58. There are obvious parallels between these ideas and the ideology of the Black Panthers: the central problem in both, as we shall consider more fully below, is the tension (indeed the contradiction) between "black nationalism" and "anti-imperialism".

59. In other words, the legislation (three Civil Rights Acts, a Voting Rights Act and legislation aimed at discrimination in education, housing and employment) had not effected real changes in the lives of most black workers. The effect of the legislation on electoral rights had the primary effect of allowing more blacks to participate in the fraudulent charade of the electoral system: the choice between different sets of oppressors every four years, with the added "advantage" of being able to choose black faces to carry on the normal functions of the state.

"leaders". They were asked to stop the March. They truth-
fully said they hadn't begun it, they had no control over
it —- the idea was national, spontaneous, unorganised and
leaderless . . .[60]

James Farmer expressed the point more pithily: "Civil rights
organisations have failed. No One had any roots in the ghetto".[61]

One of the points of differentiation between himself and the
civil rights organisations on which Malcolm was most insistent
concerned the value of integration as a strategic goal. He asserted
that integration was a dead-end, inevitably doomed to impotence, to
being a token effort, and at best a stumbling block in the struggle
for black liberation.

Tokenism only benefits a few. It never benefits the masses
and the masses are the ones who have the problem, not the
few.[62]

The truth of Malcolm's dictum, that " . . . the black masses were
—- and still are —- having a nightmare" was borne out five months after
his death.[63]

The newest period, or moment, that of black power as opposed
to civil rights, came with the uprising in Watts in August 1965.
Staged spontaneously by the working class blacks of the country's
"best" ghetto, the rebellion was unorganised, diffuse and easily
crushed. Notwithstanding the claims of the McCone Commission Report,

60. Malcolm X, Autobiography, op.cit., p. 385.
61. Cited by Lewis M. Killian, The Impossible Revolution? Black
Power and the American Dream (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 107.
62. George Breitman, (ed.), Malcolm X Speaks (New York: Grove
Press, 1966), p. 173.
63. Autobiography, op.cit., p. 388; the immediately preceding
words are a discussion of the March on Washington:
Yes, I was there. I observed that circus. Who ever heard of
angry revolutionists all harmonising "We shall overcome . . .
Suum day . . ." while tripping and swaying along arm-in-arm
with the very people they were supposed to be angrily revolting
against? . . . with gospels and guitars and "I have a dream"
speeches?

that it was an hysterical and valueless outburst on the part of the
"riffraff", it is clear that the uprising was a political statement
-- the French noun manifestation is perhaps the best synonym. Watts
was the first major clear-cut statement by the black working class of
the cities, on their own behalf, of their rage and frustration, and
the first expression of their potential political power.[64] This does
not necessarily mean that all of the people (or even a large proportion
of them) who participated in the uprisings in Watts and elsewhere, were
conscious of the political/class significance of their collective
behaviour. It is not necessary that they be so conscious -- in fact,
consciousness is frequently a consequence of the action that it
embodies. The potential power expressed in the urban uprisings
since Watts was mostly the negative power involved in the dislocation
of the smooth functioning of the system. Beyond that aspect, lay the
opposite, positive political potential which the organisation and
direction of that power to dislocate could pose -- the revolutionary
action of the proletariat. Of course, so long as racism effectively
isolates the uprisings of black workers within the ghetto, the power
of the proletariat as a class is negated. The potential, therefore,
is truncated so long as rebellion remains a black activity, until
revolution becomes a class affair.

The break marked by the spontaneous and independent entry of
the black working class onto the political stage with the development
of mass uprisings in the cities -- at first, a Northern phenomenon,
which quickly spread to the South -- was both sign and cause of a
deep crisis in black politics. The adoption of the new slogan of

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64. California, The Governor's Commission, Violence in the City
-- An End or a Beginning? (Sacramento: State Printing Office, 1965);
Robert M. Fogelson, "White on Black: a Critique of the McCone Report",
Political Science Quarterly, September 1967 and "From Resentment to
Confrontation", PSQ, July 1968; Elizabeth Hardwick, "After Watts",
New York Review of Books, March 31, 1966; Tom Hayden, Rebellion in
Newark (New York: Random House, 1968); "Detroit: Violence on the Urban
Frontier", Trans-action (Special Issue), September 1967; Russell Dynes
& E. L. Quarantelli, "What Looting in Civil Disturbances Really Means",
Trans-action, May 1968; Supplemental Studies for the National Advisory
Commission on Civil Disorders (New York: Praeger, 1968). This is only
a selection from a long list.

black power by all the black leaders[65] was indicative of the malaise
of their consciousness that they had, as Malcolm pointed out, failed
to change the root conditions of the black working class. The failure
became manifest with the collapse and disintegration of most of the
erstwhile leaders and organisations. No doubt, much of the reason
for the failure of the organisations which tried to make the transition
from civil rights to black power lay in the fact, apparently paradoxical,
that the change was not so great as the mass media's presentation of
the "new black radicalism" suggested. The ruling capitalist class
still maintained its hegemony over the "movement", particularly over
its organisational framework. This can be seen clearly if we examine
the different meanings of black power which were presented in the
three years up to 1969, and then the fate of the organisations which
adopted them.

There were approximately five versions of black power in
circulation at the end of the Johnson presidency, ranging (in schematic
terms) from extreme integrationism to extreme separatism.[66] Reading
from right to left on the political spectrum, the first position was
presented by the Nation of Islam, President Nixon, the Urban League
and the Urban Coalition. Although not necessarily in the same words,
all these forces were agreed that the biggest problem in the ghettoes
was an insufficiency of private capital investment. What black people
need, says this version of black power, is more capitalism, black
capitalism, of course. No less bourgeois, but considerably less
logical, is the second conception -- presented by the black bourgeoisie
through its organs, Jet and Ebony, by many liberal politicians, and by
some black nationalist organisations. In this perspective, black

65. Note also, that just as the death of civil rights was
marked by Johnson's adoption of "We Shall Overcome", so President Nixon
called for black power (when the slogan had already died of overuse).
66. For the discussion that follows I am indebted to the "ideal-
type" analysis developed by Robert L. Allen, The Dialectics of Black
Power(pamphlet) (New York: The Guardian, 1968) and in more developed
form, Black Awakening in Capitalist America (New York: Doubleday, 1969).
See also, Floyd B. Barbour, The Black Power Revolt (Boston: Porter
Sargent, 1968).

power equals more black faces in electoral and other public offices; in essence, the same old tokenism.[67] The centrist position was occupied by the NAACP, King and the SCLC, CORE -- the black petty bourgeoisie -- who argued for a redefined pluralism, which amounted to the discredited "melting pot" theory, dressed up, like the emperor, in new clothes. A fourth variant is the position common to a host of small "cultural nationalist" groupings, which vary in the degree of emphasis they place on things cultural -- like Dashikis, Afro-style hairdos and soul food -- but are agreed on a paraphrasal of black power as "black control of the black community". Almost invariably, these groupings are completely vague as to the political and economic means whereby "black control of the black community" is to be gained. Finally, according to Allen's interpretation, there are the revolutionary nationalists. These are the people whom Cruse has described in these terms:

> The new Afro-American nationalism has emerged with both a positive rational wing and an anarchistic wing with nihilistic overtones. Revolutionary nationalism in black America has developed a form of Black Bakuninism.[68]

The central representatives of this trend are the Black Panthers, though the perspective is shared by the Communist Party, USA, the Socialist Workers Party (Trotskyites), and most of the so-called New Left. As I shall attempt to show below Cruse's definition of the Panthers as Bakuninists is inaccurate. There are a number of things which need to be said about black power and the urban rebellions; the purpose of the foregoing digression into a summary of the ideological themes of black power was designed to serve as a clarification of what follows.

The ruling class' hegemony over black politics took the form of overwhelming liberalism at the heart of even the most radical

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67. An interesting version of this position was Leroi Jones' aim of winning control over Newark, electorally, in the 1970 elections. The aim was based, illusorily, on a simple mathematical count of blacks in Newark (a "body-count"). See, "Interview with Leroi Jones", Evergreen Review, No. 50, December 1967.

68. Cruse, Crisis, op. cit., p. 365

organisations and activities;[69] but liberalism was not the only ideology within black America. The critical thought absent from the secular civil rights movement did find a place among black people — metamorphosed into the Muslims' mysticism of Yacub and the white devils.[70] It was not merely coincidental that the Nation of Islam's strength should have lain among sections of the urban working class; nor that the critical thought and radical analysis should return to black politics from that same class — in the person of Malcolm X and in the independent action of the black proletariat in hundreds of rebellions.

The flames of Watts consumed the civil rights movement along with the supermarkets — it was not the "fire next time" but "burn, baby, burn" NOW![71] The demands for civil rights had no real meaning for the ghetto's working class. On one hand, those rights were already formally inscribed in the Northern, "constitutional" polity, and, yet, simultaneously, those rights were a mockery, at best integrationist crumbs (the occasional black foreman, black doctor, black engineer, black politician) to bolster the petty-bourgeois buffer between the rulers and their victims. Like bourgeois democracy, of which they are a part, those civil rights "cannot but remain restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and a deception for the exploited and the poor".[72] Black workers throughout the North already were in full possession of the civil right to be super-exploited and unemployed.

69. This is not surprising if we consider the middle-class orientation and membership of the civil rights groups, including SNCC and CORE. Although this contradicts the statement of Zinn's cited above,(p, 47), it is in keeping with the rest of the book and it is substantiated by original SNCC material to which I have had access.

71. James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964); Robert Conot, Rivers of Blood, Years of Darkness (New York: Bantam, 1966); Jerry Cohen & William S. Murphy, Burn, Baby, Burn (New York: Avon Books, 1966).

70. E. U. Essien-Udom, Black Nationalism (New York: Dell 1964); C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America(Boston: Beacon Press, 1961).

72. V. I. Lenin, The Renegade Kautsky & the Proletarian Revolution (Peking: FLPH, 1964), p. 20.

According to Cruse's analysis, the resurgence of black
nationalism as a principal force in black politics is no more than
the re-appearance of one side of the "dialectic" of integration
versus separatism, which he identifies as the dominant theme in black
politics in the United States:

> The present-day conflict within the Negro ethnic group,
> between integrationist and separatist tendencies, has its
> origins in the historical arguments between personalities
> such as Frederick Douglass and Martin R. Delany.[73]

However, as Cruse has pointed out elsewhere, the dialectic is not so
simple. In a later manifestation --

> The Washington-DuBois controversy was not a debate between
> reaction and progress, . . . but over the correct tactics
> for the emerging Negro bourgeoisie.[74]

And again,

> Of course, a substantial Negro bourgeoisie never developed
> in the United States. Although this fact obscured and
> complicated the problems of Negro nationalism, it did not
> and does not change the principles involved.[75]

The burden of this paper is that the "principles involved" in
nationalism, regardless of colour, are bourgeois; that the dominance
of nationalism in the ideologies of contemporary black politics
represents the continued hegemony of the American ruling class over
its victims. However, while nationalism may appear to rule the roost,
there is another tendency which first appeared in Watts and which has
been developing since. One indicator of the other tendency can be
isolated if we survey briefly the real demands which have been made
by the black working class since the mid-1960s. I have pointed out
above (p. 44) the mystification process of the early coding of
demands made upon the federal government into "justice" and "freedom".

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73. Cruse, _Crisis_, op.cit., pp. 5-6.
74. Cruse, _Rebellion or Revolution_, op.cit., p. 82.
75. _ibid._, p. 84.

The second stage witnessed the articulation of demands (however diffuse) for black power, for community control. As the activities became more rebellious and less legitimate, as the struggle became, apparently, more spontaneous and less organised, in that measure the demands and the focus have become more material. One essay on the urban rebellions described them as crude methods for redistributing the social wealth,[76] an assessment which points to the real (i.e. material) significance of the uprisings. The other tendency which must be counterposed to the apparent hegemony of the ruling class through the medium of nationalism,[77] is the development of open class struggle. The "unled", "disorganised" rebellions of 1969 and 1970 developed the logic of Watts: they focussed on material demands -- for jobs, housing, welfare; and they took up the factor which had previously been missing from the struggle -- the challenge to the state power of the bourgeoisie.[78]

At the end of the 1960s, black politics faced a divide: whether to side with the bourgeoisie and "black capitalism" or to break out in search of the politics which would overcome the contradictions in American society which they had discovered. At this point, there appeared to be, in centuries of oppression, decades of separation and a common badge of servitude, the soil in which nationalism was supposed to take root. We must ask the essential question: is the soil fertile or barren? and for whom?

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76. Dynes & Quarantelli, loc.cit., p. 13.

77. Primarily, we are arguing, this hegemony is ideological; the ruling class triumphs by imposing its ideas upon its victims. But the American bourgeoisie is thorough. As Allen has documented, already in 1965, important agencies of the ruling class (in particular, the Ford Foundation) were engaged in seeking to ensure political-economic, as well as ideological, control over potentially radical groups. See Allen, Black Awakening, op.cit., pp. 60-65, 121-30; Chapter V passim.

78. This is not to suggest that Watts, Newark, Detroit did not pose major challenges to the state, but rather that the deliberate and evidently conscious attacks on, for instance the New Bedford Model Cities Office (in 1970), indicated the growth of a consciousness of the state as the enemy -- a fundamental change from the earlier period of petitioning the state for relief.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

I***The Myths

As outlined briefly in Chapter One, I am working with a
hypothetical structure of ideology, which can be described in terms of
three levels of generality/specificity. The three levels are Myth,[1]
Symbol and Directive. The levels are not to be thought of as airtight
containers, so much as indicators. There will be some reference to
the "psychic", cultural values of the ideology, but the primary emphasis
will be upon the programmatic, political aspects. The most elementary
statement of the ideology of the Black Panther Party is contained in
the "Ten Point Platform and Program", drawn up by Huey Newton and
Bobby Seale in October 1966.[2] The bulk of the analysis and exegesis
which follows derives from the Party's newspaper: The Black Panther
(henceforward cited as TBP).

The principal myths of the Black Panthers revolve around their
analysis of the history of black people in the United States and of the
present position of black people. The Panthers have developed a
relatively coherent and structured account of American society: at the
level of myth it focusses on three core concepts, three basic myths
-- culture, race and imperialism. The mythic content of the ideology
comprises images, symbols and analyses clustered around these three
concepts.

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1. The use of myth in this context does not denote either
"fallacious history" or "a formulation of religious mystery" (Leach,
Levi-Strauss, op.cit., p. 54): it is rather a descriptive, short-hand
noun employed to represent the "bundle of relations" (see above, Chapter
One, p. 24) which comprise the historical understanding and fundamental,
agreed conceptual referents shared by the Panthers.
    2. See the account by Bobby Seale, "Selections from the biography
of Huey P. Newton", Ramparts, (October 26, 1968), and Seale, Seize the
Time (New York: Random House, 1970). The Ten Points are published in
each issue of TBP, and are included here as Appendix I.

The first myth which I shall present, in order to dispose of
it -- since it is not of lasting significance at any of the other levels
of the ideology or in the practical work of the party -- is the only
one which has been presented in a single coherent form. This first myth
is the conception of culture, particularly in its sexual and psychic
manifestations, which was spelled out by Eldridge Cleaver in an essay
written while he was imprisoned in Folsom Prison and before he joined
the Black Panthers.[3] The essay comprises an encapsulation of the
logic of the sexual mores of American society, viewed in terms of
class and race.

Racism, it is argued, has produced in the United States a
series of schizophrenic roles and relationships, which can be
summarised diagramatically:[4]

	Male	Female
White	Omnipotent Administrator	Ultrafeminine Freak
Black	Supermasculine Menial	Amazon

Because the dynamics of racism have operated on class lines, the sexual
and intellectual aspects of humanity are split along lines where race
and class coincide. Thus there is a ruling male figure -- the white
Omnipotent Administrator -- and a ruled, slave-like Supermasculine
Menial (black). In turn, and corresponding to these two, are the
appropriate female figures. The Ultrafeminine Freak is a mutant,
the sex-image on a pedestal; the black Amazon is equally distorted.

The ruling male figure has appropriated to itself all the
intellectual, mental attributes of humanity, as part of the process

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3. Eldridge Cleaver, "The Primeval Mitosis", in Soul on Ice,
(New York: Belta Books, 1968).
4. This is my own diagrammatic representation of Cleaver's
thesis.

of asserting control. This process of control and domination, by its unnatural one-sidedness, has rendered the Omnipotent Administrator sexually neuter (an act of self-emasculation), thereby forcing the white female to compensate (i.e. become the Ultrafeminine Freak).

The oppressed variants of this total process of deformation are the obverse -- logically counterposed deformities. Thus the white appropriation of the mental attributes has necessarily implied the relegation to the black of the physical attributes of mankind. The black male is then the Supermasculine Menial, and his female counterpart, the Amazon.

The very distortions which this process of domination and subordination have created in turn lead to a further complication. The sexual attraction/repulsion works along racial lines, since all four roles seek complementarity. The Supermasculine can only be attractive and attracted to the Ultrafeminine; the Omnipotent Administrator to the Amazon.

This "bundle" of images is essentially concerned with the conception of the mind/body dichotomy and with presenting a concise summary of the network of social and sexual tabus embedded in American society.[5] The culture myth is by no means crucial to the Panthers' ideology. In the first instance, the Panthers are, at least verbally, in complete opposition to the politics of the "cultural nationalists", and unwilling to become side-tracked into the cultural cul-de-sac.[6] Further, there is (less so, as time goes on) an intensely political/ military cast to the Panthers' bearing which drives them towards the more purely "political" aspects of their ideology. The principal function served by the culture myth, in the period prior to the United Front Against Fascism conference (July 1969) was to gain

5. See, e.g., Calvin C. Hernton, Sex and Racism in America (New York: Grove Press, 1966); W. J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York: Random House, 1965).

6. Although the essay embodying the culture myth was written before Cleaver joined the Panthers, it has been endorsed by the party in a number of ways. The closest thing to an "official" endorsement was Newton's reference to the ideas it contains in his "Interview with The Movement" (Chicago; Students for a Democratic Society, 1968; pamphlet). Throughout 1968, there were frequent references to Cleaver's polar roles in The Black Panther.

support among the more liberal/intellectual supporters of the New
Left, particularly during the Black Panther Party/Peace and Freedom
Party alliance at the 1968 elections. The impact of the author of the
myth, Cleaver, in tv and radio appearances publicising the book of which
it forms a part, was an important aspect of the Panthers' activities
for a period in 1968.

The second myth in the Panthers' ideology is their interpretation
of racism. They define the United States as systematically and
universally racist:

> We cannot gain our freedom under the present system: the
> system that is carrying out its plans of institutionalised
> racism.[7]

A major editorial statement by Kathleen Cleaver states the argument in
this way:

> The color line is the basis upon which wealth and power is
> distributed in this country; racism on the part of white
> institutions and white citizens forces black people to remain
> poor and powerless . . . The present political leadership in
> the mother country wants black people to act in a manner that
> will serve the interests of white power and maintain white
> domination over the world.[8]

George Murray, then Minister of Education in the BPP, posed the question
of a revolutionary culture in these terms:

> A revolution involves the total people . . . Therefore it
> involves the total ways of the people, hence the culture
> and therefore our culture must be revolutionary, which by
> definition is anti-white, anti-capitalist, against imperialism,
> against the racist dogs. . . . All people of colour in the
> world want an end to the robbery of their countries and
> communities by the racist, piggish, fascist dog American white
> man . . . Black men, Black people, coloured prisoners of
> America, revolt everywhere! Arm yourselves. The only culture
> worth keeping is a revolutionary culture.[9]

In a speech to the students of Fresno State College in 1968, Murray

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7. Newton, "Interview", loc.cit., p. 12.
8. Kathleen Cleaver, "Racism, Fascism & Political Murder",
TBP, September 14, 1968, p. 8.
9. George Murray, "For a Revolutionary Culture", TBP, Nov-
ember 16, 1968, p. 13. This passage, although talking about culture and
dating from the period of the Panthers' most intense conflict with the
cultural nationalists, is primarily noteworthy and is cited here for its
emphasis on the Black, racial component of culture. Thus it is to be
read as complementary to the preceding statement by Kathleen Cleaver.

rephrased the idea of "all the people of color" and added an historical

sample of the Panthers' understanding of racism --

> All of the people of the Third World of Africa, Asia and Latin
> America are tired, slavenously tired, of being taxed without
> having any representatives in the political arena, without
> having any representatives in the court houses . . . without
> controlling and determining the destiny of their own community
> . . . the reason that the Declaration of Independence is a lie
> is because the same men who said that all men are born with
> certain inalienable rights and that among these are the rights
> of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the same racist
> dogs who had plantations full of slaves. Thomas Jefferson had
> a plantation full of slaves and he's talking about the "Rights
> of Man".[10]

The normal phrasing of the Panthers' position on the basis of racism

and its relationship to the society is that "racism is linked to

capitalism",[11] and that

> Black capitalism will not free black people. It is
> capitalism which made them poor.[12]

The fullest analysis (the only really systematic analysis they have

supplied) is the definition given by Newton:

> . . . racism cannot be eliminated until capitalism is
> eliminated. Historically racism, in the context of developing
> capitalism, provided the surplus capital that allowed American
> capitalism to become the monster that it is today. Racism is
> still believed to be a profitable and essential ingredient of
> capitalism. In our society, racism is linked to capitalism.
> Only by eliminating capitalism and substituting for it socialism
> will black people, all black people, be able to practice self-
> determination and thus achieve freedom. Freedom means the end
> of exploitation, something we have suffered from for centuries.
> And when the Black Panther Party calls for freedom, it means
> freedom now!
>   A capitalistic economy can only exist on the basis of a

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10. Murray, TBP, September 7, 1968, p. 12.

11. This phrasing is recurrent in TBP.

12. TBP, March 16, 1969, p. 10. Note, however, that in the most
recent period, the BPP has shifted its position on the question of black
capitalism. An essay by Newton ("Black Capitalism Re-analysed") marks
an essential reversal of the former position. See below, Chapter Four.

war economy, with its built-in obsolescence and its artificially stimulated demands for greater production. The victims of this capitalistic necessity are black people.[13]

Aside from its numerous flaws, from the perspective of Marx's economic analysis of capitalism, this statement is remarkable mainly for its clarity and for the extent to which it provides some sort of analytic framework. The emphasis in the Panthers' literature has always been on the racism rather than on capitalism (as distinct from their interpretation of imperialism -- and it is clear from the internal evidence that the two are not synonymous as far as the Panthers are concerned). Further, the Panthers have never analysed capitalism and racism and the relationship between them in economic terms.[14]

It is to the question of the Panthers' interpretation of imperialism that we must now turn, since it is the most important of the myths, both in terms of political practice and in its theoretical significance. The Panther proposition is encapsulated in the formula: "liberation of the colony, revolution in the mother country".[15] The United States, according to the Panthers, is the principal imperialist nation in the world. It is the imperialist metropolis, in relation to all the countries of coloured peoples around the world and to the coloured people within its geographical boundaries.

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13. Newton, "The Black Panthers", Ebony (XXIV: 10: August 1969), p. 111. It is notable that capitalism -- the economic system and its political, social and philosophical superstructures -- is not a category or myth of the Panthers' ideology. It only enters into their work in a few isolated instances such as those cited here. The one from Newton is interesting on two counts: because it was written for the major organ of the black bourgeoisie, and because it is the only economic analysis by the Panthers that I could find. This implies at least a distrust of the people's intelligence on the part of the Panthers -- the analysis can only be understood by the middle-class readers of Ebony, not by the working class blacks whom the Panthers were supposed to be trying to organise!!

14. Although the Panthers claim to be a Marxist-Leninist party (implying that the ideas of Marx and Lenin would comprise an important part of the myths), the absence of any economic analysis by the Panthers of the ghetto, let alone of the whole society, belies the claim. The closest they come to reference to Lenin occurs in contexts such as this --
    Huey P. Newton is like unto Jesus, in that he fulfilled the prophecy by picking up the gun . . . And like Lenin, Huey created the Party, an instrument designed to cope with a specific situation at a specific time in the historical process of the development of society. (TBP, March 16, 1969, p. 8).
15. Almost every issue of the party newspaper contains this formula.

Without a hint of this being a Donnean conceit, the Panthers
assert that the ghetto is a _colony_ within the United States, policed
by an imperialist army, administered by agents of the imperialist
power and subjected to racist, colonial domination. Therefore, Watts
and Vietnam are simply two arenas for the pursuit of the same racist
imperialism; two arenas for the same anti-imperialist national liberation
struggle. Since the ghetto is an _internal_ ghetto ("in the belly of the
monster"[16]) it occupies a most important strategic location for the
entire "Third World Revolution", of which it is one wing.[17]

The meaning of the Panthers' line on imperialism, and the
ramifications of that line in practical political terms, will be
scrutinised more critically in a subsequent chapter. At this point,
I am primarily concerned with stating their position clearly and
concisely.

16. This phrase has been employed both by Cleaver and by the
Weatherman group -- it has little descriptive, let alone analytic,
value.

17. There is a genealogy of at least ten years behind the
Panthers' understanding of imperialism and the "Third World Revolution".
Approximately stated, the pedigree runs from Fanon through Castro and
Malcolm X to Carmichael, Rap Brown and the Panthers. (We have indicated
above, Chapter One, n. 48, the "intellectual Marxist" proponents of the
"Third World" position). This point will be clarified below, in the
next section's discussion of symbols, and in the final chapter's
treatment of the historical-material basis of the Panthers' ideology.

<u>II***The Symbols</u>[18]

To assert the need for a revolutionary solution to the central problems facing black people in the United States is not sufficient as ideology (revolutionary or otherwise -- for, after all, every new box of detergent is a "revolutionary breakthrough"). The Panthers have defined what they mean by a revolution (approximately), the sorts of models of revolution to which comparative appeals are made, and the components of the American revolutionary alliance. This set of things is what is meant by the symbolic level of the ideology.

While it is known by several names, including "the revolution of rising expectations" and the "developmental process", the term I shall employ here is the one used by the Panthers and popularised by the mass media -- the Third World revolution. This comprises, for the Panthers, the national liberation struggles of all the coloured peoples of the neo-colonial states of Africa, Asia and Latin America against their white imperialist oppressors of Europe and North America.[19]

In practical terms, the symbolic level is the most important, since it is the most closely related to strategic political activity. For this reason, it resembles structurally the ideology as a whole, being composed of several levels of specificity/generality. At the 'highest', most undifferentiated, level, the Third World is the proletarian masses engaged in global class struggle against the

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18. I am not using 'symbol' here in the normal context of literary or cinematic criticism (e.g., "A symbolic sign demands neither resemblance to its object nor any existential bond with it.": Wollen, <u>Signs and Meaning in the Cinema</u>, op.cit., p. 123.) though there are, undoubtedly, some elements of this meaning to be discerned. Rather, I am referring to the key, middle-level referents which stand for themselves and act as touchstones of correctness, and as strategic guides to action. See also, Edelman, <u>The Symbolic Uses of Politics</u>, op.cit.

19. This position, I shall argue, is in practice a quasi-Marxist version of the crude thesis proposed by Ronald Segal, <u>The Race War</u> (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), and by others including U Thant, Gunnar Myrdal and John Kenneth Galbraith. The critical conception of this line is its focus on a world-wide struggle based on lines of racial demarcation.

white imperialist bourgeoisie. In this international class war, the black people in the United States, colonised in the ghettos inside the heart of the imperialist metropolis, are the vanguard force in the revolutionary movement of the Third World. This is, of course, where the overlap between myth and symbol is most apparent.

Within the overall symbol of the Third World, there are a number of specific examples which are referred to continually and in a number of contexts. Each of these sub-symbols has a variety of values adhering to it. There are eight essential symbols of the Third World revolution -- Cuba, Algeria, China, Korea, Vietnam, Portuguese and Southern Africa, the sub-Saharan independent black states, and the American war of independence at the end of the eighteenth century.[20] The presentation which follows will try to clarify the apparent contradiction embodied in the inclusion of the last of the eight symbols under the rubric of the Third World.

Algeria (and in more recent Panther literature, Palestine) is the representative Arab revolution against colonialism. The Algerian Front de Liberation National fought a war against the French, with a guerrilla army and a supposedly socialist programme. One of the foremost (posthumous) spokesmen and ideologues for the Algerian revolution was Franz Fanon, whose works are listed as required reading for members of the BPP. One of Fanon's books, The Wretched of the Earth, is cited as one of the three or four most formative influences of the founders of the BPP.[21] The Algerian FLN, at one point, presented as a central plank in their programme an appeal to the United Nations for a referendum on independence from France, as the Panthers today call for a United Nations-supervised plebiscite

20. This list is drawn from a study of the news and editorial content of the party newspaper, from direct references by Party members in TBP and elsewhere.
21. Franz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) was listed as required reading, throughout 1968 & 1969, in TBP. Its influence on Newton and Seale is cited by Gene Marine, The Black Panthers (New York; Signet Books, 1969) pp. 31-2; and by Seale, op.cit.,pp. 25-6.

in the black ghettos.[22] The film, The Battle of Algiers, directed by
Gilles Pontecorvo, is an important item in the Panthers' iconography:
they study it for lessons on how to engage in urban guerrilla warfare.[23]
And, from the end of 1968 until the split in the party between Newton
and Cleaver (February 1971), Algiers was the Panthers' international
office and headquarters-in-exile -- indeed, Cleaver was recognised,
at least semi-officially, as a diplomatic representative of black
America.

Closer to home, the Cuban revolution is attributed the value
of demonstrating that American imperialism can be defeated. The twin
values of socialism through guerrilla warfare are again present.
Castro and Guevara are ideologues to be respected, and at one point
Cuba was felt to be a valuable refuge for exiles from the war on the
home front.

The three revolutionary models from Asia -- China, Korea
and Vietnam -- are cited as examples of socialism, of the possibility
of defeating U.S. imperialism, and as instances of successful wars
of national liberation. Vietnam, additionally, is used to reinforce
the sixth item of the party's Ten Points -- the demand for exemption
from military service for black people: "We will not fight and kill
other people of colour in the world who, like black people, are
being victimised by the white racist government of America".[24]
The real battle-ground for the Panthers, who consider themselves
to be both metaphorically and literally at war with America, is
Watts rather than Hue or Danang.

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22. Black Panther Party Platform and Program, Point 10; see
Appendix I.
23. The Panthers study this film for lessons on how to win,
despite the fact that Pontecorvo demonstrates conclusively that the
urban guerrilla war practiced by the FLN was defeated, that the FLN
lost many members, and that terrorism-as-strategy is counter-productive
and suicidal.
24. BPP Platform & Program, Point 6; see Appendix I.

(A slight digression: the manner in which the Panthers and
Chairman Mao came together. One of the party's central slogans is:
"political power grows out of the barrel of a gun"; one of their basic
texts is Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung; and a major symbolic
hero is Chairman Mao. The party's history relates that, in the
beginning, Seale and Newton were looking for a way forward from the
stagnation they perceived in "cultural nationalism"; that is, they
broke from the organisation to which both belonged, the Soul
Students Advisory Council at Merritt College, Oakland. Newton
announced that they should seek to organise the "brothers off the
block" (Seale's phrase), and that they needed an armed organisation
to effect any changes in the ghetto. That was in 1966, when the
Cultural Revolution was in full force in China, and the "Little
Red Book" was much talked about. So, Newton and Seale sold copies
of the Quotations on the Berkeley campus to raise money for the guns
to arm their organisation. Then, as Gene Marine laconically expresses
it,[25]

> When there were enough guns and enough Panthers, they
> began to patrol the Oakland ghetto. . . . .)[26]

A major component of black politics in the United States since
the beginning of the 1960s, and especially since the birth of the
Black Power slogan in 1965, has been Africa-the-symbol.[27] At first
undifferentiated in any clear sense, the symbol has had some
distinctions introduced into it by the Panthers. First, there is
Algeria; then there is black (sub-Saharan) Africa, which comprises
two models -- independent black states on the one hand, and the
colonies and other states where liberation struggles are currently
underway. The independent states have produced (not unmixed) models

25. Marine, op.cit., p. 40
26. ibid., pp. 35-40; Seale, op.cit., pp. 72-85.
27. An important theme of Harold Cruse's cultural analysis of
twentieth century black politics in America is the influence of "Africa"
(in reality and as an image). Cruse, Crisis, op.cit. Note also the
manner in which the "image of Africa" has begun, again, to be marketed
as a commodity, since the rise of Black Power and the resurrection of
various "Back to Africa" ideas.

of Black Power in practice; heroes such as Lumumba, Nkrumah and Nyerere; and some concept of African Socialism.[28] The liberation struggles in the Portuguese colonies of Guiné-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique, and in Rhodesia and South Africa are further models of guerrilla activity, armed uprisings which claim to be socialist.[29]

Notwithstanding the claims to internationalism which inhere implicitly in the identification of the ghetto-as-colony and for obvious reasons, a large number of the Panthers' sumbols are drawn from the United States. Earlier, I included the American War of Independence within the general rubric of the Third World symbol. The discrepancy is apparent rather than real, both in terms of the event itself and in its situation in the Panthers' symbology. Although in many senses, the war of 1776 was a classic bourgeois revolution, in its anti-colonial aspects and in much of its ideological make-up it was the first of the modern national liberation struggles. It would be fanciful and fruitless to take this analogy much further than the bare outline; to do so would also be a grave distortion of its position in the Panthers' ideology. The inclusion of the war of 1776 in the Third World category is merited on the basis of the Panthers' selective exegesis.

The central value of the American revolution to which the Panthers appeal is the revolutionary origins of the United States, and the normative grounds on which that revolution was based. Thus, the BPP Platform concludes with the opening paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence; there have been frequent references in

28. ". . . the socialism of Africa is merely another name for nationalism". -- David E. Apter, The Politics of Modernisation, op.cit., p. 329. See also, William Friedland & Carl Rosberg, Jr.,(eds.), African Socialism (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964). This question will be further considered below.

29. See Basil Davidson, The Liberation of Guiné (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969); Gerard Chaliand, Armed Struggle in Africa (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969).

party literature to Patrick Henry ("Give me liberty or give me death"[30]); to the Boston Tea Party, and to Jefferson's and Lincoln's assertions of the need for revolution when the government no longer meets the needs of the people. A clear expression of the radical-bourgeois position this implies was given by Rap Brown:

> I consider myself neither morally nor legally bound to obey laws made by a body in which I have no representation. That the will of the people is the basis of the authority of government is a principle universally acknowledged throughout the civilised world and constitutes the basic foundation for law. Those not involved in making laws are not legally bound by them. It should be perfectly under-standable that we, as black people, should adopt the attitude that we are neither morally nor legally bound to obey laws which were not made with our consent and which seek to oppress us.[31]

The conception of the "rule of law" embodied in this staement was the predominant motif throughout the "civil rights" period, and recurs in the Panthers' politics in the instances of their frequent references to the manner in which racism in America contravenes the Constitution. There is, indeed, a deep contradiction between the assertion, on one hand, that America is racist to the core and appeals to the Constitution on the other. It is with the nature and source of this sort of contradiction that the final chapter will be concerned.

Other symbols from the American past, with other values, include John Brown and the raid on Harper's Ferry, and the slave revolts of Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey. John Brown and his mixed group of abolitionists are cited in support of both the need for political alliances of black and white and the recognition of the integral place of violence in the political spectrum.

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30. TBP, March 31, 1969, p. 9; TBP, September 14, 1968, p. 5. The writer heard the same symbol cited by Captain Joudon Ford of the New York Chapter of the BPP, in a speech at the State University of New York, Buffalo, October 1968.

31. H. Rap Brown, Statement of July 26, 1967, Washington,D.C., reprinted in SNCC Speaks for Itself (Toronto: Student Union for Peace Action, 1968; pamphlet). The characterisation of this position as "radical-bourgeois", and the connection with "Third Worldism" and "revolutionary nationalism" will be discussed more fully in the final chapter's structural analysis of the Panther's ideology.

In a special, independent position in the gallery of Third
World heroes is Malcolm X –– who is both the first statesman of the
internal colony, and the visible sign of the common links to the rest
of the neo-colonies. Indeed, Malcolm is the only black leader to
whom the Panthers extend unqualified approbation. He represents both
the formal links to the Third World (in the form of his voyages to
Mecca and to Africa) and the first spokesman for revolutionary
black nationalism as understood by the Panthers (formulated,
embryonically, in the last year of Malcolm's political activity).
The critical position occupied by Malcolm X in the development of
black politics was considered more fully above.[32]

The second overall symbol which must be considered is the
Black Liberation struggle –– the Panthers' interpretation of their
predecessors and the conclusions they draw from what has gone before:
"revolutionary black nationalism". The fundamental source, of
course, for this overall symbol is the material reality of black
politics of the past two decades. The task of analysing this
history was done in the preceding chapter. Our goal here is the
narrower one of defining how the Panthers have interpreted this
history and which aspects of it they view as central –– the symbols
they have selected to focus attention upon.

As I have stated above, Malcolm X is the critical symbol ––
the link from the "civil rights" to the 'black power' periods. The

32. Huey Newton is often described by the Panthers as Malcolm's
heir: "Huey P. Newton is the ideological descendant, heir and successor
of Malcolm X. Malcolm prophesied the coming of the gun to the black
liberation struggle. Huey P. Newton picked up the gun and pulled the
trigger, freeing the genie of black revolutionary violence in Babylon."
Eldridge Cleaver, Post-Prison Writings (New York: Random House, 1969) p. 38.
See also: "The Black Liberation forces have Malcolm X who is like unto
John the Baptist, who prophesied the coming of another. Malcolm prophesied
that his people were going to pick up the Gun and that it would be the
Ballot or the Bullet. Huey P. Newton is like unto Jesus, in that he ful-
filled the prophecy by picking up the Gun." TBP, March 16, 1969, p. 4.
Also, Marine, op.cit., p. 56

symbolic value of Malcolm goes beyond the fact that he was the first black figure in the modern period to spell out the dynamics of black nationalism. His own career -- from ghetto hustler, pimp, minor criminal to gaol and the Nation of Islam, and then away from the Muslims into politics more secular than the Muslims' -- is the proto- type for the career of Cleaver and much of the Panther recruitment. Malcolm is the model of the trajectory of the black revolutionary. Thus The Black Panther carries the admonition: "Remember Brother Malcolm"; and Malcolm's Autobiography is required reading for Panthers.

The Black Liberation struggle, according to Panther histor- iography, reached a climax with the declaration of "Black Power". Up to the time that black power became the slogan, the struggle was legalistic and barren because it lacked the "revolutionary" aspect, which was codified by the Panthers' adoption of Mao's slogan: "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun". The development of SNCC from the mixed group of organisers into an organisation of black radicals paralleled the development of Malcolm's political progress out of the Nation of Islam. The Panthers have borrowed the essential core of Carmichael's analysis of racism in the United States (seen as twofold: institutional and individual)[33] and then allied with or co-opted SNCC.[34] Carmichael and Brown were both named as Ministers of the BPP in 1968 (and both were subsequently purged).

The third element in the Black Liberation struggle which has been identified by the Panthers is the series of uprisings in the ghettoes, from Harlem in 1964 to Detroit in 1967. These uprisings signify, for the Panthers, the obvious need for an armed organisation in the ghetto which can lead the resistance to the armed repression of the state. The fact that the uprisings were crushed with overwhelming

33. Carmichael & Hamilton, Black Power, op.cit.
34. Whether the relationship was an alliance or co-optation was hotly debated in the appropriate journals during the first half of 1969: see TBP; The Guardian (New York); New Left Notes (Chicago); The Militant (New York); Leviathan (San Francisco); The Movement (San Fran- cisco); Challenge (New York). See also, Marine, op.cit., pp. 122-3; Seale, op.cit., pp. 219-20.

force by the agencies of the "white power structure" is clear evidence, for the Panthers, of the colonial nature of the ghetto/society relationship.

The conclusion which the Panthers have drawn from their interpretation of the Black Liberation struggle (given the premise that defines the struggle as one for <u>Black</u> liberation), is that blacks must fight a war of national liberation against the colonial power and that the appropriate ideology for this struggle is "revolutionary black nationalism". How is this ideology to be defined? A major part of the definition is negative -- "revolutionary" nationalism is not to be confused with "cultural" nationalism.[35] The contrast between revolutionary and cultural nationalism has occupied a large portion of the Panthers' ideological output.[36]

Revolutionary nationalism is <u>not</u> based on culture as the determinant force in social development.

> Cultural nationalism is the champion of the status quo and articulates a sensational, comical racism as a coverup for counter-revolutionary politics and concrete economic issues . . . a reactionary flight from armed struggle. It is loved dearly by the racist pigs of the power structure because it divides the oppressed and exploited workers on the basis of skin on the one hand and acts as the seed bed for black capitalism on the other.[37]

An unequivocal statement of the cultural nationalist position is the following:

> The international issue is racism not economics . . . racism rules out economics . . . Therefore we conceive of the problem today not as a class struggle but a global struggle against racism.[38]

Newton has defined the Panthers' line:

> Revolutionary nationalism is first dependent upon a

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35. Even though, in fact, they can be confused with one another: see the discussion below of the meaning of nationalism, Chapter Four.
36. <u>The Black Panther</u>; throughout 1968 & 1969.
37. <u>TBP</u>, March 16, 1969, p. 8.
38. Ron Karenga, cited by Earl Ofari, <u>Black Liberation (Cultural & Revolutionary Nationalism)</u> (Ann Arbor: Radical Education Project, 1969; pamphlet), p. 6.

people's revolution with the end goal being the people in
power. Therefore to be a revolutionary nationalist you would
by necessity have to be a socialist. . . . Cultural nationalism,
or pork-chop nationalism, as I sometimes call it, is basically
a problem of having the wrong political perspective. . . . The
cultultural nationalists . . . feel that the African culture
will automatically bring political freedom . . . We believe
that culture itself will not liberate us. We're going to need
stronger stuff. A good example of revolutionary nationalism
was the revolution in Algeria when Ben Bella took over.[39]

More succinctly, Ray 'Masai' Hewitt's phrase was "the American people
can't eat Swahili".[40] And from the party newspaper: "Poor people need
political power, not Dashikis".[41]

The polemic against the cultural nationalists (defined pejoratively
as "pork-chops" or "house-niggers") is the closest the Panthers have
come to class analysis of the "black nation" which they aspire to lead
in the national war of liberation. The cultural nationalists have been
defined as petty bourgeois -- their goal, according to the Panthers, is
to create their own little capitalist enterprises in the ghetto. In
response to this aspiration, the Panthers' original position was

Black capitalism will not free black people. It is
capitalism which made them poor.[42]

The Panthers also characterise the cultural nationalists as racist.
In response to one particular group of cultural nationalists, the
organisation called US, led by Ron Karenga in Los Angeles, the
Panthers have asserted that cultural nationalism is a creation of
and/or a tool of the American rulers -- because its representative
organisations have been infiltrated by the police forces, both
local and national.[43]

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39. Newton, "Interview", op.cit., p. 4.
40. Cited in Marine, op.cit., p. 207
41. TBP., March 16, 1969, p. 10.
42. ibid., p. 8.
43. Nevertheless, as the trial of the New York chapter of the
BPP makes abundantly clear, the distinction between "cultural" and
"revolutionary" broke down in terms of police infiltration -- the trial
evidence was mostly composed of the statements of police agents provocateurs
relating their exploits in persuading the Panthers to participate in
foolhardy and extremely foolish schemes of plotting to blow up major
strategic targets such as Botanic Gardens.

Apart from these two general ideas -- Third World revolution
and revolutionary black nationalism -- which we have defined as over-
riding symbols in the Panthers' ideology, there are other elements which
more closely approach the usual meaning of symbols.[44] These can be
reduced to three areas: the guns and quasi-military uniforms; the use
of words to define enemies; and the definition of "lumpen-proletarian
discipline" given by David Hilliard in 1969.

From the beginning of the Black Panther Party in October 1966,
there were two prevailing ideas in reference to the use of guns and/or
violence. The first was Malcolm X's slogan, which came to be the
hallmark of the "radical" wing of the black politics of the late
1960s: "By any means necessary". This phrase signified a tentative
break with the liberal phase of the movement, the assertion that
perhaps electoral means were not the best possible way. The second
idea is Mao's slogan: "Political power grows out of the barrel of a
gun". We have already remarked on the manner in which the Panthers
and Mao came together: the Panthers' adoption of this slogan is a
clear indicator of the eclecticism at work in the Panthers' selection
of ideas. From the beginning of the armed patrols on the police
forces of Berkeley and Oakland (an idea which the Panthers adopted
from a group which was engaged in the same sort of activity in Watts
since the riot), the Panthers used the slogan from Mao to justify
their practice of carrying guns -- without any of the complementary
ideas developed by the Chinese Communist Party during the construction
of the Peoples Liberation Army and the development of the revolution as
a combination of political and military activities, under political control.

The Panthers have pointed out the primary symbolic value of the
guns they carried:

Ninety per cent of the reason we carried guns in the first

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44. Edelman, op. cit., Chapter One passim.

place was educational. We set the example. We made black
people aware that they have the right to carry guns.[45]

A second value in the guns was that they represented the most visible
sign of the Panthers' <u>radicalism</u>: in the very limited sense in which
that word was (and still is) understood most often -- as a synonym for
extreme, violent, outrageous. In short, as Cleaver and Seale have
both described Newton, guns made them the "baddest motherfuckers" in
town.

There is a further, more general, aspect to the gun-as-symbol
(which also inheres in the quasi-military uniforms which the Panthers
adopted -- black leather jackets, black berets, military boots).
Together, guns and uniforms, stood in opposition to the Swahili and
Dashikis of the cultural nationalists. This suggests, of course,
that the Panthers' conception of revolution was somewhat rudimentary.

One of the contributions of the Panthers which will survive
them whether or not they are doomed, organisationally, to disappear, is
the application of "pig" as a generalised term of contempt for one's
political enemies. The use of words has some importance to the Panthers'
ideology:

> Every time he gave a talk, Stokely would cite <u>Alice in
> Wonderland</u>. "When I use a word", Humpty Dumpty said in a
> rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to
> mean, neither more nor less".
> "The question is", said Alice, "whether you <u>can</u> make
> words mean so many things".
> "The question is", said Humpty Dumpty, "who is to be
> master, that is all".
> Stokely told his audience that one of the most important
> aspects of the struggle for Black Power was the right to
> define. Black people have been the victims of white America's
> definitions.[46]

This passage could well be the epigraph for a linguistic analysis of

45. Newton, cited by Sol Stern, "The Call of the Black Panthers",
New York <u>Times Magazine</u>, August 6, 1967.
46. Cleaver, "My Father and Stokely Carmichael", in <u>Post-Prison
Writings</u>, <u>op.cit.</u>, p. 54.

black nationalism, for it represents the basic flaws in that ideology
-- idealism and nationalism -- which we shall consider in Chapter Four.
For the moment we are concerned with the two aspects which comprise the
linguistic symbolism of the Black Panther Party.

The first of these is the series of terms, concepts and values
which ante-date the Panthers and which are already in more or less
common usage (e.g., socialism, imperialism, revolution). Our discussion
of these will be deferred to the concluding chapter, because it is in
terms of these words that we can most readily understand the relationship
between theory and practice in the case of the Panthers.

At present, we are concerned with the words which the Panthers
have introduced into the political lexicon. The best known of these
is the most general term of abuse: "pig". At first, the term was
restricted to the police, but is has since been generalised to include
all the white members of the ruling class/power elite/Establishment.[47]
Black enemies, according to the Panthers, cannot, because of racism,
be part of the Establishment, but only its adjuncts. Therefore those
blacks whom the Panthers have defined as enemies are described with
other words: the traditional "Uncle Tom"; two from Chinese usage,
"lackey" and "running dog"; and several from the Panthers' own
devising, including "bootlicker" and "porkchop". The last of these
is normally reserved for the most hated enemy -- the cultural
nationalist. The degree of detestation for the latter can be gauged
from this statement:

> There's a hog (demagogic politician), there's a boar (avaricious
> businessman), there's a pig (racist police force) . . . and the
> porkchops are in fact as bad as the pig.[48]

47. The fact that these terms are, in Panther usage, synonymous,
and the necessary ideological confusion implied by such eclecticism will
be dicussed further in the concluding chapter.
48. Bobby Seale, in _TBP_, March 3, 1969, p. 10.

We can make several comments about the Panthers' abusive language. The primary aspect of the language is its function, which clearly consists of defining and dehumanising the enemy. The identification of the object of the word as an enemy then performs the central task of the exercise -- to strip the targets of legitimacy. In the specific case of the cultural nationalists, it is interesting that the definitive word has two valencies. On one hand, porkchops are an expensive cut of meat in relation to pigs-feet, tripe or chicken giblets (the traditional meat supplies for Southern blacks). Therefore, pork chops signify some degree of status-improvement. At the same time, as Seale's statement signifies, the term indicates the identification (ideological or otherwise) imputed between the cultural nationalists and the "pig" in the general sense; and in the particular case, this applies to the Panthers' charges that two Panthers killed by members of Karenga's US, were the victims of an indirect agency of either the CIA or the FBI.[49]

The last symbol we wish to mention is the statement by David Hilliard, Panther Chief of Staff, which appeared in TBP and The Guardian, under the heading "Lumpen-proletarian discipline versus Bourgeois Reactionism", and which was amplified in an interview by The Barb (Berkeley) with Hilliard and Seale.[50] In fact, the contents of the published accounts do not mention the concept of discipline, except in the title, and in the Panthers' threat to "kick the motherfuckers' ass" if they received any more criticism or opposition from certain, named groups. The context for this outburst is its key aspect; for its source was the opposition which had been aroused by the Panther/CPUSA's joint conduct of the United Front Against Fascism conference. The context was the conclusion of the Panthers' alliance with the CPUSA, and the conflict this had generated with other elements of the New Left.

49. The specific charges of US/police complicity and partnership in the Los Angeles killings were made in TBP, January 25 and February 2, 1969
50. TBP, August 9, 1969, contains both the Hilliard statement and the interview with The Barb. The Guardian, August 16, 1969, reprinted the statement, parts of The Barb interview, and excerpts from an interview between Seale, Hilliard and a reporter for The Guardian.

That the Panthers should have concluded an alliance with the CPUSA was
a considerable shock to many of the Panthers' erstwhile supporters.
The reason for raising this point is not whimsical: we need to examine
the relationship between theory and practice. The reasons for the
Panther/CP alliance and for the reactions this prompted among other
groups form part of the way in which we can understand the real meaning
of "revolutionary black nationalism"; as we shall attempt to do in
the final chapter.

The last section of this chapter — on the directives —
is concerned with the day-to-day political activities of the Black
Panther Party, and with their organisational politics. These are
to be understood in terms of the myths and symbols, for it is myths
and symbols which provide the logical underpinning for action.
The third and most specific level, it is assumed, exists in a logical
relation to the other two because ideology is a structured whole.

III***The Directives[51]

With this section we enter into the realm of the practical, day-to-day political activity of the BPP. The question we have to ask concerns what the Panthers do and the relationship between their actions and the ideology as outlined. Because the BPP is self-consciously ideological, the connections between theory and practice are not completely obscure. The Panthers themselves provide some ideological explanation of their actions -- whether or not to take this self-explanation literally is the question before us.

The Panthers began with Newton and Seale's discovery of the overly cultural and inherently elitist politics of the black students' organisation at Merritt College, Oakland. The context was the hiatus in the black liberation movement of 1966: verbal militance and the practical absence of really militant activity in the Northern and Western cities. SNCC had, for all practical purposes, begun to die soon after the militant wing of the organisation declared for Black Power and expelled whites from leadership positions. The failure of SNCC came, not from any inability on the part of blacks to lead their own organisation, but from the fact that the organisation had no

51. As in the case of the preceding categories, this is a descriptive, short-hand term which signifies several aspects: first, the actual orders of the party leadership (focussing on strategic lines being pursued at the time -- since July 1969, the United Front Against Fascism and the Breakfast for Children programmes); second, the activities of the party itself, the rank-and-file activists, comprise directives, in the form of moral imperatives, to outsiders.

A difficulty which we face in this particular context is the opacity of the Panthers' organisational structure; to all but leading officials and police infiltrators. Despite an official, rhetorical adherence to the Leninist concept of "democratic centralism", there have been indications that the Panthers are far from the model of the tightly-knit, highly disciplined organisation of professional revolutionaries created by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. An early indicator of the evidence pointing in this direction was Seale's admission (op.cit.) that there was a period in which new "Black Panther" chapters were springing up across the US, of which the party headquarters in Berkeley had no information, let alone control. The period of "growth" seems to have included the recruitment of large numbers of petty criminals, hustlers, lumpen-proletarian elements, whom the party leaders subsequently purged: not to mention the agents provocateurs. During 1969, almost every issue of TBP carried lists of "Panthers" who had been "purged".

independently organised base of support, which in turn reflected the
dependence of the organisation upon financial backing from liberal
foundations and other agencies of the ruling class.

The Panthers' first step out of this problem was the only
possible one the movement could have taken. Their first directive
was to organise the "brothers off the block". The first actions of
the newly organised party clearly reflect the influence of Robert F.
Williams and Malcolm X: the actions were designed to assert the right
of the oppressed to self-defense, and the claim of the Panthers to
represent that right. Their first move was to engage in surveillance
and patrolling of the Oakland Police Department's activities in the
ghetto. This activity produced confrontations with the police in front
of crowds of people in the ghetto. A further confrontation was the
result of the Panthers' armed escort for Mrs Betty Shabazz (Malcolm
X's widow) on the occasion of a visit she made to San Francisco in
February 1967.[52] The third step was the "invasion" of the State
Legislature by an armed delegation of Panthers led by Seale, in
protest against the Mulford Bill -- legislation pending passage,
which was proposing to restrict the possession of guns.[53] The
goal of all this activity was to make the party known, to win
recruits and supporters among the ghetto blacks.

At the same time as the Panthers were involved in the
publicity-making actions with the guns, they also engaged in other
actions, with much the same goal -- to win support in the Bay Area
ghettos. The first of these, and in fact, the first real public action
of the party, was their involvement in the agitation around the
killing of a black man by police in Richmond, California. The Panthers'
involvement took the form of calling public rallies, publishing the

52. See Cleaver's account in "The Courage to Kill: Meeting the
Panthers", in Post-Prison Writings, op.cit., pp. 23-9; also Marine,
op.cit., pp. 53-6; Seale, op.cit., pp. 113-30.
53. Seale, op.cit., pp. 153-66; Marine, op.cit., pp. 62-6.

first issue of <u>The Black Panther</u>, and accompanying the people when they attempted to question public officials.[54]

A similar incident is described by Marine:

In Oakland, the Panthers at one point took on what might at first glance appear to be a PTA task: obtaining a street light near a school. After three Washington School pupils were killed within two years at the corner of Market and 55th streets . . . some Office of Economic Opportunity workers, active in the area, asked the city for a street light. When they were refused, the Panthers joined in the request -- except that they called it a demand. That was in 1967; the city responded that a light would be installed -- some time in late 1968.

The Panthers called newspapers, radio and television stations, and released the text of their next message to the city: until there was a street light on the corner, the Black Panther Party would direct traffic there every day. Knowing of their discipline a saner city council might have simply been grateful for the help; but the idea was too appalling. Within days workmen were installing the light.[55]

One of the important consequences of the early actions of the BPP was the decision of various police forces in the Bay Area that the Panthers were a dangerous phenomenon which should be eliminated. There can be little doubt that, on the local level at first, and later on a national basis, the Panthers became targets for the police forces of America: the state, in brief, acted to defend itself from those who threatened to destroy it.[56] This is not to suggest anything sinister

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54. Marine, <u>op.cit.</u>, pp. 57-62; Seale, <u>op.cit.</u>, pp. 142-9.
55. Marine, <u>op.cit.</u>, pp. 73-4.
56. Edward Jay Epstein, "The Panthers and the Police", <u>The New Yorker</u> (XLVI; 52; February 13, 1971), has argued that the police have not systematically attempted to eliminate the Panthers: he is probably correct. However, there are several instances which cannot be explained as accidental death -- notably the killings of Clark and Hampton in Chicago, of Hutton in Oakland. Furthermore, early in 1969, a Berkeley Police Dept. plan for a military assault and destruction of the Panther headquarters was leaked and published. Two years successively, Hoover's annual report for the FBI placed the Panthers at the top of the list of most dangerous subversive organisations. Also, from the evidence provided at several of the main Panther trials, the party is riddled with police agents. This was, quite probably, <u>not</u> a conspiracy: simply stated, the police are in the business of defending the state from actual and potential enemies.

or abstruse: Machiavelli was well aware of this function of the state. The point is, however, that from the time of the killing of Bobby Hutton in the shoot-out in Oakland, April 1968 and the arrest of Huey Newton (six months earlier), the Panthers were often on the defensive. They became more _reactive_ than agents. This is not intended to be an explanation or justification of the ideology and practice of the BPP, but it is an important factor to be remembered.

From the middle of 1968 onwards, the Panthers' directives fall into a two-sided pattern -- the programmes which can be called "self-help" projects, and the reactive defense against repression. The three basic projects which can be characterised as "self-help" are the Breakfasts for Children programme, the establishment of Black Liberation Schools, and the attempt to create free clinics in the ghettos. All three are posed by the Panthers as cases of how to meet the needs of the people; they are declared to be socialist programmes in line with Mao's injunction to "serve the people".

> A revolutionary organisation has to maintain and righteously serve the people and not just jive them. . . . As Huey has said, "We are only like oxen to be ridden by the people . . . The Party tries to help solve their problems, to aid and assist the people and see that their basic political desires are answered."[57]

On more than one occasion, in TBP and in public speeches, the Breakfasts programme has been specifically described as socialist:

> The Black Panther Party's program of breakfasts for children is a socialistic program and socialism is a system that relates to the basic needs and desires of the people. More and more people are awakening to the fact that they are being used by the establishment and that the time is overdue for a complete change in the system under which we exist.[58]

While these projects have enabled the Panthers to point out the contradiction between theory and practice of the clergy who quote

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57. TBP, March 3, 1969, p. 11 -- quoting Seale.
58. TBP, March, 31, 1969, p. 9.

Christ ("Suffer little children to come unto me") and refuse use of
church premises for the Breakfasts for Children, they have also led
the Panthers themselves into some very deep contradictions. The basis
of this lies in the fact that the money for the projects has usually
come from an unofficial "tax" of one per cent levied by the Panthers
on merchants operating in the ghetto. The contradiction became
clearest in the case of the long struggle waged by the Oakland chapter
to obtain contributions from a branch of the Safeway chain. During the
course of the struggle, the Panthers denounced the chain as "avaricious
capitalists", but when the corporation decided to contribute something
to the programme, the Panthers declared that the leopard had changed
his spots -- that the capitalist supermarket chain was now "righteously
serving the people".

> After months of hassling, Safeway, which is one of the largest
> and richest chain stores in this country, finally came through
> for the people. On Saturday, April 26, 1969, Safeway began a
> policy which I'm sure will spread throughout the country once
> the people get word of it. That policy I am speaking of is
> donations to the Breakfast for School Children Program.
>   Since Safeway has taken this initial step in showing
> a socialistic attitude towards the needs and desires of the
> people . . . the Black Panther Party thanks Safeway for taking
> this Revolutionary step towards the people.[58]

Several months later in an interview for The Movement which was reprinted
in TBP, Seale commented on the Breakfast programme:

> This is a socialistic program. We take it away from the big
> businessman. It's a socialistic program. We're educating the
> people through a practical functioning operation of a
> socialistic program is valuable to them, they won't throw it
> away. By practising socialism they learn it better.[60]

Seale's bold assertions notwithstanding, saying so doesn't make it so.

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59. TBP, May 19, 1969. (Seale's victory speech).
60. TBP, August 12, 1969, p. 11.

Two projects which overlap the categories of self-help and reaction to repression are both centred on petition campaigns which have been carried on for the past three years. The first of these is embodied in the final point of the BPP's Ten Point Program:

> 10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of the black people as to their national destiny.

Whether consciously or not, this demand is a replica of the major plank of the early campaign of the Algerian FLN. Internal evidence suggests that it was a conscious decision. It is notable that the fictional documentary movie about that period, The Battle of Algiers, to which the Panthers have looked for guidance on how to operate demonstrates quite clearly the utopianism of the demand for intervention by the United Nations (the UN restricted itself to a statement of pious hopes for the just and peaceful settlement of the struggle).[61] The demand for United Nations recognition of the Black Panthers as representatives of the black nation in the United States can be regarded as no more than a form of utopianism, in keeping with their nationalist perspective and indicative of the Panthers' considerable confusion about the nature of the electoral process in bourgeois society.[62]

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61. We are, of course, using the term "utopian" in the sense ascribed to it by Marx and Engels, The Manifesto of the Communist Party; Socialism, Scientific and Utopian; The Poverty of Philosophy; and Anti-Duhring.

62. The precise nature of the Panthers' utopianism consists of two parts. On one hand, there is the false belief that the United Nations somehow stands sufficiently outside the class struggle to be "impartial"; whereas in fact, the UN, being composed exclusively of bourgeois representatives of bourgeois states, is bourgeois in its most fundamental reflexes. In Korea, Cyprus, the Congo and the Middle East the UN has acted in the interests of the various blocs of imperialists which comprise its leadership. In the second place, the specific demand for which the Panthers are demanding intervention is a plebiscite -- in other words, individual balloting, which differs from the normal electoral process only in that it is directed towards a Yes/No decision rather than to the election of parliamentarian politicians. The Panthers' confusion about electoral politics is more clearly indicated by their petition for community control of the police.

The other petition campaign has received more publicity and is accorded more importance by the party -- the demand for "community control of the police". Arguing that the problem of the police is that they are racist agents of the establishment and that they live outside of the communities that they patrol (and therefore beyond the reach of community sanctions, with particular reference to the police in the ghetto), the Panthers have proposed the "solution" of "community police", who live in and be responsible to the areas they patrol. This position represents a change from the original demand spelled out in the Ten Points:

> 7. We want an immediate end to the POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.
> We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organising black self-defense units that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people ahould arm themselves for self-defense.[63]

During the first two years of activity the Panthers carried out this original line -- by organising self-defense units to patrol the police in the Bay Area. The Panthers also claimed that this was a successful policy, since it drew the attention of the police away from the ghetto in general, onto the Panthers in particular. Since late 1968, however, the Panthers have maintained their verbal adherence to the militant line ("political power grows out of the barrel of a gun"), while in practice they have thoroughly de-emphasised the role of violence or arms in political struggle. The current line of the party (the dominant one since mid-1969) is that all Panthers (all black people) should have a gun by the door of their house, as a means of self-defense against illegal entry by the police.

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63. See Appendix I.

The community control demand was formulated in 1969 and
codified by the conference to organise a United Front Against Fascism
(July 1969), comprises three parts —— an elected "neighbourhood
council", which will be empowered to "discipline officers", who must
live in the community they patrol.[64] The petitions which the National
Committee to Combat Fascism (the organisation born at the conference)
has circulated call for placing the issue of "community control" on
the ballot in the respective city or town. The import of this
project is explained by Bobby Seale:

> In essence, what it will do, policemen would have to live
> in the community, and he would be able to protect the
> people, their property and their lives —— and at the same
> time educate the policemen to serve the police institutions
> that will be governed by the (neighbourhood) councils.[65]

In our view, this position, like the demand for the United Nations-
supervised plebiscite, is marked by a disastrous failure to under-
stand the real nature of the political system in the United States
and the world.

The other set of activities which form the core of the Panthers'
directives are focussed on the trials in which approximately one
hundred Panthers have been involved throughout the country. It is,
perhaps, not simply coincidental that the de-emphasis of armed
struggle and the development of the legal-defense position of the
BPP can be seen to have begun at the end of 1968. During the final
months of 1968 the attacks on the party were intensified. This was
true especially in the Bay Area, where police (on- and off-duty)
followed the Panthers on a continual surveillance basis. An incident

64. Interview with Ray "Masai" Hewitt, TBP, June 21, 1969, p. 16.
65. Seale, TBP, February 7, 1970, p. 3. That this interpretation
lacks the Leninist (and Marx's) conception of the nature and function
of state organs under capitalism is evident. The ramifications of
this lack will be examined in the final chapter.

arising from these patrols of the Panthers by the police led to the death of an Oakland policeman and charges being laid against Newton of murdering the policeman.[66]

Although the formal charges against Newton were for murder, the de facto reason for the trial was Newton's position as leader of the Black Panther Party. The trial may have, in formal terms, revolved around whether or not Newton was guilty of murdering a cop; in reality the trial concerned the position of the Black Panther -- its continued existence.[67] Given Points 8 and 9 of the party's platform, the Panthers' position was that Newton could not receive a fair trial, since the judicial system is simply another arm of the racist ruling elite. From the time of his arrest in October 1967 to the commencement of the trial in June 1968, the Panthers built considerable mass support for Newton. Mass rallies, demonstrations, recruitment to the party, the alliance with the Peace and Freedom Party, all manifested the support which existed for Newton and the Panthers. Every day during the original stages of the trial, the Panthers demonstrated outside the court (they were prevented from attending by the security measures of the Oakland Police Department). As the trial drew to a close the Panther newspaper carried the banner headline: "Free Huey
. . . or the sky's the limit!"[68] But when the verdict (a compromise:

66. See Marine, op.cit., pp. 77-105; Seale, op.cit., pp. 201-74; Cleaver, Post-Prison Writings, op.cit., "Affidavit #2", pp 80-94; TBP, October-November 1967.

67. There are two grounds for this assertion: first, the nature of the judiciary as an arm of the bourgeois state, structured to try Newton, individually, for murder and the party, collectively, for its radicalism. Second, the racism built structurally into the American political system treats blacks differently from whites in the court-room, and in the case of radical blacks this is most clear. A more recent example is the wholesale slaughter of the radical prisoners at Attica (at the expense of their hostages, shot also by the troopers and police); which was characterised by an implicit "oh-well-they're-only-blacks" attitude on the part of most of the media, and by the judicial and governmental agencies involved.

68. TBP, August-September, 1968.

voluntary manslaughter) was announced, the Panther leadership spent
much effort explaining that the verdict was a compromise, and toning
down the militancy of the protests, by asserting that they would give
"the system" one last chance, and go through the proper channels of
appeal.[69]

The reason for the de-emphasis of mass militancy which marked
the progress of the Newton trial, and which has increasingly been the
hallmark of the subsequent trials of party members, must be sought in
the sorts of legal advice which the party has received, and in the
influence wielded by the legal advisors to whom the party has turned.

The general strategy which the Black Panthers have followed
has been to attempt to defeat the judicial system on its own ground.
This has necessarily meant disjunction between theory and practice.
In the first place, the theoretical position of the party, embodied
in the Ten Points and in party statements in The Black Panther, is
that the courts are part of the overall system, the laws serve the
ruling elite, the judges and police are racist. The whole system
of which the judiciary is a part is imperialism, of which, in turn,
racism is the central and dominant characteristic. Blacks are a
colonised nation, therefore black revolutionaries cannot receive a
fair trial. On the other hand the trajectory of three years of
litigation in the cases of the Panthers has been progressively to
deny more and more of the revolutionary nature of the party's strategy
and tactics, inevitably at the cost of the purported goals. The Panthers
have argued, through their lawyers, the technicalities of trial
procedure, the unconstitutionality of the proceedings, the illegality
of the government's use of wire-taps and agents provocateurs to collect
evidence.

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69. TBP, September 14, 1968, pp. 2, 5, 8. (The appeal by
Newton, against both verdict and sentence, has been published, in serial
form, by TBP, throughout 1969.)

They have, in practice, chosen to challenge and denounce the
judicial system on its own terms, and therefore, necessarily, in
not-so-splendid isolation[70] -- that is, the more they have relied on
legal stratagems the less mass support they have been willing and able
to engage in the struggle. In the original instance, when Newton was
convicted and not set free, the Panthers had to argue very strenuously
against mass action -- after all, the slogan "the sky's the limit"
implied more than legal manoeuvres. Then, as later in the community
control campaign, the Panthers have been calling for patience, for
another chance for the democratic procedures. The dislocation between
the "last chance" idea (especially when it tends to be recurrent), and
the apocalyptic revolutionary image of the "end of Babylon" is the
most basic contradiction.

· One of the central tenets of the party's ideology has been the
need for white allies if there is to be a revolution in the United
States -- the concept encapsulated in the formula of "liberation of
the colony, revolution in the mother country". The Panthers talk
about "mother country radicals", meaning whites. In particular, the
role of liaison between the Panthers and white radicals was the one
for which Cleaver was cast: as an editor of Ramparts, as the author of
Soul on Ice, and as presidential candidate for the Peace and Freedom
Party in 1968.

One of the first consequences of the Newton trial was the
adoption of the Panthers as clients by the National Lawyers Guild,
specifically the connection between the Panthers and Charles Garry
and William Kunstler. The alliance with white radicals, since then,
has consisted, de facto, of growing ties with the Communist Party of
the USA. Garry, Kunstler and Kennedy (another Panther lawyer) are
closely connected with the CPUSA, and through them the Panthers have
become increasingly tied to the CP. Part of this process has included

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70. The isolation is a structural element of the courtroom
situation: the individual, not a group, is tried because the liberal
polity only recognises the individual. The Panthers have increasingly
accepted, and not combatted, this structural difficulty. Thus, their
isolation has been of the self-defeating variety, especially in terms
of their (correct) theoretical understanding of the nature and functions
the bourgeois judicial system.

a growing tendency of coincidence between the Panthers' ideological definition of imperialism and their conduct of the trials.

As they have relied more and more on the "people's lawyers", the "Lenin of the courtroom" and legal stratagems, and less on mass support, the Panthers have become increasingly reliant upon their "political alliance" with the CPUSA. The formalisation of this process (it was a process which took more than a year to come to fruition) occurred in July 1969. The Panthers called for a conference to be held in Oakland, to create a United Front Against Fascism. Formally, all political tendencies were invited to attend; but practically, the United Front comprised the Panthers and those groups which agreed with them without demurral: the CPUSA, the Socialist Workers Party (Trotskyites), the Revolutionary Youth Movement and several smaller fractions.[71]

The conference centred around the Panthers definition of American imperialism as fascist, their claim to be the vanguard revolutionary force in America, and their proposal to create the National Committee to Combat Fascism. The Panthers demanded of all other groups that their participation in the United Front required of them that they circulate the petitions calling for community control of the police. The Panthers' definition of Fascism is the following:

> Fascism is the open terroristic dictatorship of the most
> reactionary, the most chauvinistic (racist) and most
> imperialist elements of finance capital. It does not stand
> above both classes —— the proletariat and the bourgeoisie,
> nor is it supra-class government, nor government of the
> petty-bourgeoisie or the lumpen-proletariat over finance
> capital. Fascism is the power of finance capital itself.
> FINANCE CAPITAL manifests itself not only as banks, trusts,
> and monopolies, but also as the human property of FINANCE
> CAPITAL —— the avaricious businessman, the demagogic politician,
> and the racist pig cop. FASCISM is the organisation of
> terrorist vengeance against the working class, and the

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71. The SWP is the "official" American wing of the Trotskyite Fourth International; RYM is the right-wing force which left the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) at the 1968 Convention —— it subsequently split into two faction the majority retaining the name RYM, the smaller group becoming Weatherman.

revolutionary section of the peasantry and intelligentsia.

CAPITALISM PLUS RACISM EQUALS FASCISM[72]

The final, capitalised phrase is the Panthers' post-conference slogan, expressing their fundamental analysis of American society. The critical problem with their definition of fascism (apart from the fact that it contradicts earlier statements about the integral relationship between capitalism and racism sans reference to fascism -- were Washington and Jefferson fascists?) is the same problem that lies at the core of the Panthers' ideology as a whole -- its lack of a comprehensive Marxist-Leninist analysis. Let it suffice, for the moment, to point out that, in practical terms, the Panthers' version of fascism includes two basic errors: it neglects one essential aspect of the original definition -- that fascism is a different form of bourgeois state other than liberal democracy; and it is employed to propose the theory of the "lesser of two evils". Thus, to argue for more black cops, under community control, suggests that the bourgeois state (freed from fascism) can serve the proletariat; and that because Safeway agrees to donate to Panther-organisaed charity it is less capitalist (more feudal, perhaps?) than the other chains.

One more component of the directive-level of the Panthers' ideology is the question of the nature of the political allies favoured by the Panthers and favouring them. We have already mentioned the development of the Panthers' alliance with the CPUSA, as it grew with the rise of Garry and Kunstler as spokesmen and strategists for the Black Panthers and the decline of mass struggle of all sorts. This alliance is clearly evident in the space accorded to spokesmen for the CP in the pages of The Black Panther, in the statement "We have no disagreement with the Communist Party",[73] and most importantly,

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72. TBP, June 21, 1969 (reprinted in several subsequent issues); the bulk of the definition, of course, is a précis of the formulation presented, in August 1935, by Georgi Dmitrov, "The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fasicsm", Report to the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, in For a United and Popular Front (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1968), pp. 115-16.

73. A party spokesman at the UFAF conference, cited in The Guardian, August 2, 1969; and in Progressive Labor (VII; 2; August 1969), p. 19.

in the pursuit of the entire legal strategy developed by the CPUSA in
the 1950s, in response to the various Smith Act trials. The thrust
of this strategy is formed of two complementary parts — denial that
one is really a revolutionary, and search for friends and allies in
the "progressive", liberal wing of the ruling class. The form of
"friendly alliance" this strategy leads to is both sectarian and
opportunist. It is the former in that the alliances are always, by
definition, leadership affairs which exclude the masses; and the latter
by virtue of the fact that the Panthers will only ally with those who
recognise, without question, the Panthers' claim to be the vanguard
and their version of nationalism.

Finally, we shall comment on the nature of party literature.
The Black Panther is remarkable in two aspects. First of all, the
paper's domestic coverage[74] consists almost entirely of reports of
Panther activities: of police attacks on the Panthers, party statements
about the situation — the heroes are the Panthers, the people's role
in the struggles is, at best, ancillary. Secondly, most of the
coverage of the party's activities consists of the elevation of
selected party leaders — Seale, Newton, Cleaver, Hilliard and one
or two others — plus the enshrined martyrs — Bobby Hutton, Bunchy
Carter, Fred Hampton. Thirdly, in other party publications, which
have been reprinted in the paper, the style is bombastic, replicating
some of the worst excesses of the style of bourgeois governments, as
in Newton's "Executive Mandates from the Minister of Defense".[75]

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74. See above, pp. 71 ff. for the foreign news coverage in TBP,
composed almost entirely of articles drawn from Hsinhua and Prensa Latina
and reprints of statements by nationalist and revisionist leaders in the
Third World.
75. The "Executive Mandates" are reprinted in Newton, Essays
from the Minister of Defense (Oakland: BPP, pamphlet, 1968).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FAILURE OF BLACK NATIONALISM

I***Preliminary Apologies

The preceding chapters have covered relatively open terrain --
the historical context and present content of the ideology of the Black
Panther Party. In this, concluding chapter we venture into the denser
undergrowth of the attempt to present a critical synthesis of the
elements already laid out. The first comment to be made is that this
essay makes no pretence to be the account of a "neutral" or "objective"
observer. It is a critical assessment written from the perspective of
a political commitment to Marxism, in theory and in practice. Therefore,
the question which is posed by the action of writing this essay is an
essentially practical one: are the Panthers a progressive force? do
they advance or retard the goal of a socialist revolution in America?

The second "apology" (though we are not in the slightest
ashamed of its subject) concerns the apparently Byzantine nature of some
of the discussion which follows. It is a common complaint from the
liberal perspective that debates between the various factions "of the
left" have the air of Jesuitical casuistry. Our liberal interlocutor
says that, after all, imperialism is imperialism, no matter how it is
posed. It is my contention, on the contrary, that the manner in which
a question is posed is the source of the answers. Apparently small
"doctrinal" differences in the ways in which individuals and groups
approach the major phenomena (such as imperialism) lead to much larger
divergences when they are translated into the realm of practical
political strategy.

This final chapter will be built around three elements: a brief
recapitulation of the essential points of our presentation of the

historical basis and political developments in the post-war period
which have culminated in the Black Panther Party will be the first
part. Next, we must reconsider the practical and theoretical significance
of the main points which we have identified in the Panthers' ideology.
Finally, we shall present an analysis of the class nature and function
of nationalism: in order that our critical perspective on the Panthers
and their ideology of "revolutionary black hationalism", (and of course
that of the many other organisations which share a similar perspective)
may be clearly understood.

II***Imperialism -- the Highest Stage of Capitalism

The world in which our story takes place was defined, in 1918, by Lenin. While it is not necessary to repeat Lenin's argument in detail, it is absolutely imperative that we recognise two facts. In the first place, Lenin's analysis was formulated in response to the betrayal of the working class by all the parties of the Second International, in the political struggle against revisionism. Therefore, it was written with a primarily political perspective: just as in Marx, the analysis of capitalism was the framework for the "guide to action", so with Lenin we must recognise the political imperatives. The second aspect follows the first. If imperialism (the political-economy of advanced capitalism) is to be defeated, it can only be on the basis of a correct understanding of the class relations which imperialism embodies. Therein lay, as we have indicated, the fatal flaw of the Bolsheviks and the Third International -- the failure to complete the translation from economy to polity, to realise the economic analysis in the essentially political realm of the class struggle.

What, then, does this mean for our analysis of the Black Panthers? The most fundamental fact is proletarianisation. In short, we must consider the historical basis of the Panthers, the subject matter of Chapter Two, in terms of the developments of class relations. The black population's class role was described above (p. 34) as both marginal and critical. This description can, in fact, be applied to the working class as a whole, of which blacks form a part. In other words, workers are always critical insofar as without them there is no production; and at the same time, the individual worker is marginal to the extent that the capitalist can lay him off and hire another. This situation has been, and is increasingly, the one faced by blacks in particular, because of racism. The ideas and practice of racism are a feature of class society -- and under capitalism, the highest pre-historic form of class society, they are fully expressed. Racism in America is, simply stated, an integral part of the way in which the

bourgeoisie rules. And when workers, black or white, accept racist ideas as "natural" then racism is the strongest weapon in the bourgeois arsenal.

The focus of this essay upon ideology rests, in part at least, on the fact that the sophistication of the continued hegemony of the bourgeoisie is largely located in their control over the superstructural production of social ideas. Thus although the reflection is definitely not a direct mirror-image, we may look to the ideological struggles in society for keys to an understanding of the developments in the class struggle. One of the most crucial aspects of the ideological class struggle which Lenin identified in his political analysis of imperialism was the influence of the bourgeoisie over the workers' struggle, the importation into the socialist movement of bourgeois ideas (and therefore, practice). In brief, revisionism. And, of course, there must be a material basis for this phenomenon, defined by Lenin as the creation of the "labour aristocracy" out of the fruits of imperialist exploitation.

In the preceding chapters we briefly surveyed the progress of the class development of the black section of the American proletariat and its (post-war) political actions. We identified the wholehearted proletarianisation of that section of the population and we described the progress from legalism to mass uprisings. It is our contention that these developments, ideological and political, represent, however hesitantly and often even transitory, attempts to break with the ruling class. That theory and practice are never perfectly synchronised is self-evident: our task is to understand the lack of synchronisation. It will not be possible to cover all the ground which is desirable; so we shall restrict our discussion, in the main, to the particular failure of the Black Panther Party to achieve the synchronisation of theory and practice which faced them at the end of the 1960s.

III***The Black Panthers and Revisionism

When we talk about revisionism, we are referring to bourgeois ideas in socialist garb; more specifically, the phenomenon of reformism masquerading as revolutionary politics. Just as Lenin, Luxembourg, Liebknecht and others focussed their critiques in the period of World War I on the revisionist leadership of the biggest and strongest "socialist" parties of Europe, so today the struggle against revisionism must be directed against the ideology and practice of its foremost exponents: the Communist Parties of China and the Soviet Union. Inevitably, no matter the formal demise of the Communist International in 1943, this struggle encompasses the parties around the world which follow the leadership of the twin capitals of revisionism. The hallmark of revisionism, whether in its original appearance in the Second International or its modern dress, is the rejection (first in practice, and then in theory) of the most fundamental categories of Marxist analysis. Of these categories the most important is the conception of classes; not simply as socio-economic formations, but as antagonists in a social war. The contradiction between labour and capital remains the cornerstone of the socialist analysis of the capitalist system.

When we talk about the Black Panther Party and revisionism, we refer to three aspects of their ideology: nationalism, the nature of alliances and the conception of socialism. The topic of nationalism must be deferred to the subsequent sections of this chapter, because it is a large one and because it is the central premise of the Panther's ideology.

The first topic under which we shall discuss the Panthers' revisionism is their concept of alliances. The definitive statement of this position was made in 1969, at the Oakland conference called by the Panthers to found a United Front Against Fascism. Taking their text (in the main, verbatim) from Dmitrov's report to the Seventh World

Congress of the Communist International, the Black Panthers declared
that the United States is a fascist state and that it was necessary
for all "progressive forces" to unite in the struggle against fascism.
It is not of primary importance that the Panthers were incorrect (or
perhaps only premature) in declaring the United States fascist, because,
even were they correct, the strategy they were proposing to combat
fascism was even more disastrously incorrect.

Both in its original formulation and practice, and in the
Panthers' contemporary version, the strategy of United Front which
has been the key strategic perspective guiding the international and
domestic policies of all the parties of the Third International since
1935, has in practice reversed the most important conclusion reached by
Lenin in his analysis of revisionism. The keynote of revision was
collaboration with the class enemy, and it was precisely this class
collaboration which the United Front line brought back into the
socialist movement. The focus of the United Front policy has always
been to ally with "the lesser of two evils". Fascism being "the open
terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic,
and most imperialist elements of finance capital", then communists had
to find the less reactionary, less chauvinistic, not quite so imperialist
elements -- like looking for a woman only slightly pregnant. This
nonsense was, and is, dressed up in so-called dialectics, with the
assertion of internal contradictions within the bourgeoisie between
the fascists and the liberal wing of the ruling class, which was opposed
to fascism, which suffered under fascism and with which the working
class could unite. This liberal wing of the bourgeoisie could, in some
metaphysical way, cease to be bourgeois; it could shed its class spots
at will. Therefore the working class must unite with the liberals,
since neither liberals nor workers had anything to gain from the impending
war which the fascists were engendering. This put the communists in
the unenviable position of having to prove that they were the best
bourgeois democrats -- they had to square the circle and attempt to
prove that war and fascism were not, after all, inevitable symptoms of
imperialism. The corollary, the more damaging to the workers' movement,
was the implicit (even, at times, explicit) view that the working class

was not strong enough to defeat fascism, or its source, the imperialist system. The results of the practical exercise of this strategy by the parties of the Third International included the destruction of the working class movements in Spain and Germany, and the disarming of millions of workers all over Europe at the end of World War II. In effect, there was no practical difference between the Second International's strategy of "social defense of the fatherland" and the Comintern's United Front Against Fascism. Both were a betrayal of the working class into the hands of their respective bourgeoisies.

This is the strategy which the Black Panther Party has revived and brought into the forefront of their activities. It is necessary to consider some examples of the Panthers' practice since their adoption of the United Front policy. The first, and in long-range perspective, the most destructive aspect of the new-old policy was the fact that it brought the Panthers into a formal alliance with the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). The alliance was in existence for about one year before it was formalised at the Oakland conference. The CPUSA initiated the connection, in their search for fresh blood and re-invigoration, by offering to the Panthers the use of their lawyers. From the first Newton trial on, the Panthers have relied on a handful of lawyers close to the CPUSA (Kunstler, Garry, Kennedy). Starting early in 1969, the Panther newspaper began to carry articles by William Patterson, the leading black spokesman for the CPUSA. There are two aspects of the growth of the influence of the CPUSA over the Panthers during 1969 and 1970 which we must examine.

In the first place, the loan of the lawyers was not interest-free. There were conditions: specifically, the lawyers became strategic and tactical "spokesmen" for the Panthers, and increasingly, the spokesmen became leaders and formers rather than mouthpieces. The initial, and correct, instinct of the Panthers had been to meet oppression, whether police harassment on the streets, the living conditions in the ghetto or the racism of the judicial system, with mass organisation. During the early stages of the Newton trial the Panthers mounted large and militant demonstrations at the court. However, the strategy and

tactics demanded by the legal experts -- no demonstrations at the court, reliance on legal stratagems, appeals to the conscience of liberalism, the creation of "broad defense committees" -- have had the practical effect of not engaging mass support for the Panthers. By posing the possibility that through the exploitation of supposed contradictions between liberal and reactionary judges, the Panthers could obtain justice in the courts, the legal experts and the Panthers following their guidance have abandoned one of the essential propositions of the Marxist class analysis -- the definition of the state as "the executive committee of the ruling class". Just as the United Front strategy proposes that there is/can be so fundamental a split in the ruling class as to cause the liberal wing to cease to be bourgeois, so the legal strategists proposed the conception that the bourgeois state could dispense something other than bourgeois justice.

We should also note that the alliance between Panthers and CP was not without some tension and contradictions. On the Panthers' side the alliance's growing visibility caused considerable consternation and dismay among supporters of the Panthers who had, understandably, grave misgivings about the CPUSA's revolutionary will and capacity. This anxiety led Seale and Hilliard to issue an official denial of the alliance:

> We are not aligned with the CP. The CP is an autocracy controlled by Gus Hall. We are aligned with factions within the CP who want to move towards a better society. Those are the people we worked with on the conference, and those are the people we will continue to work with.[1]

This denial notwithstanding, the alliance is a reality; and the seriousness of the opposition to the alliance was the source of David Hilliard's threatening words about "lumpen-proletarian discipline".[2]

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1. Hilliard, Interview with The Guardian, August 16, 1969, p. 14.
2. Hilliard, TBP, August 9, 1969, p. 11.

The CP has also experienced some difficulty with the alliance, particularly in the field of exegesis. Thus, while the Panthers have defined the United States as fascist, the CP's current line appears to be that the American bourgeoisie has not quite overcome feudalism --

> . . . the possibilities that remain openly to fight for the completion of the bourgeois revolution and its transference into a socialist revolution offer irrefutable proof that this position that fascism dominates the American scene is not consistent with reality.[3]

And, as substantiation of his argument, Patterson cites the reversal of the first sentence passed on Newton, in the California Appeals Court.

The second feature of the alliance with the CP, the core of the Panthers' version of the united front, has been the development by the BPP of a practice as thoroughly opportunist at that of their partners. The most significant aspect of the Panthers' opportunism is embodied in the numerous "tactical" alliances which they have made with a variety of liberal forces. A highly publicised version of this practice was the time spent during the winter of 1969-1970 at cocktail parties given by luminaries such as Leonard Bernstein. These fund-raising and publicity ventures were aimed specifically at the guilty conscience of the liberal middle class.

More significant than the ventures into upper Manhattan and Westchester County, was the development of a more deep-seated drive towards respectability and towards a rapprochement with the black bourgeoisie. During 1970, the Panthers started to develop a new posture towards the people that they had previously denounced as Uncle Toms and bootlickers. (A foretaste of the new posture was to be found in the invitation to black Congressman Willie Brown to attend a Panther rally in support of Newton: Brown had been denounced a very short time prior to the invitation). The result of this new line was the publication of the Panthers' official "re-analysis" of black capitalism in 1971 --

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3. William L. Patterson, "Black Panther Party", Communist View-Point (Toronto), (II; 5; September-October, 1970), p. 14.

an event which, along with the split in the party which preceded it, we shall discuss below.

The sources for the reversal of the attitude towards the black bourgeoisie lay in two aspects of the ideology. The development of the united front as a primary focus of party activity provided the theoretical justification for the new alliance with people whom the Panthers could define as anti-fascist.[4] Deeper-seated was the nationalism of the party, which allowed them to be more lenient in their assessment of black officials than white ones.

The form followed by the Panthers' pursuit of their new strategy corresponded with its development in the parties of the Comintern. In each case, the united front was an alliance, at the top, between representatives of the organisations involved. The majority of the organisations which the Panthers have allied with are sections of the New Left. Common to all of them has been a mistrust of mass action, particularly of the working class.

Other than alliances, the focus of the Panthers' revisionism centres on their conception of socialism and their reformist idea of the changes required -- an idea essentially devoid of class analysis. The most indicative of the examples of this aspect of their ideology was the struggle waged around their attempt to obtain donations from ghetto supermarkets for the breakfast-for-children programme. In the first instance, the BPP had previously defined the programme as socialism in practice, which bring socialist ideas to the people. This assertion, in itself, is at least dubious, since it could lead one to claim logically that the Salvation Army is a socialist organisation

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4. The black bourgeoisie is anti-fascist, according to the Panthers, because the operation of racism in the USA prevents them from wielding any power. Needless to say, this is a slightly monolithic conception of racism and, more significantly, of the bourgeoisie -- black and white. There is, as we shall see, a clear relationship between the Panthers' nationalism and their failure to understand racism; a relationship based on the fact that racism and nationalism are two sides of the same, bourgeois coin.

because it supplies meals to transients, or that the welfare system is socialist because it supplies food and money to people. Having defined the party's activities as socialism in practice, the Panthers proceeded to compound the error during the course of the struggle with the Safeway chain over the question of contributions to the Panther programme. When, after several months of picketing and boycotts, Safeway announced that it would commence contributions to the party, Bobby Seale held a press conference, at which he said, in part,

> Since Safeway has taken the initial step in showing a socialistic attitude towards the needs and desires of people . . . the Black Panther Party thanks Safeway for taking this revolutionary step towards the people.[5]

There is one central confusion here. Essentially, the description of Safeway as "socialistic" is the contemporary equivalent of the most elementary error committed by the CPUSA since the mid-1930s -- the ommission of the class analysis of the state. If the capitalist state is not recognised for what it is -- the political arm of the coercion inherent in bourgeois class relations -- then there can be no subsequent analysis of the class relations themselves. And it is precisely the absence of an analysis based on class as the most basic category which has hag-ridden the Panthers' nationalist politics.

A short comment about the content of The Black Panther can help illustrate some of the points we have been making. Since its inception, the paper, like its publishers, has changed. While nonetheless nationalist from the start, it did originally attempt to live up to the sub-head in its mast-line: "Black Community News Service". That is, the paper carried stories of activities of the black community. There were treatments of current issues (mostly in the ghettos around the Bay Area) -- such as conditions in the schools, stories of police oppression and coverage of people's struggles against oppression. Starting in 1968, however, the paper came to be dominated by two distinct aspects; with

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5. TBP, May 9, 1969.

the practical result that the paper became much more sectarian.

The major feature of the paper's new look was an overwhelming increase in the number of stories of police attacks (direct or by proxy, since most of the party's opponents are defined as police agents) on the Black Panthers. The devotion of at least half of the paper's space to articles about beatings and shootings inflicted on the Panthers by the police was justified by the Panthers, in speeches and in the paper, on the grounds that they were "educating the people" about capitalist repression. This element of the paper's new look was and remains sectarian in at least two respects; first, because of its elitist assumption that "the people" don't already know which class the police serve, and second, because the only people whom the police deemed worthy of attack (apparently) were the Panthers.

The other half of the paper's space was devoted to the quasi-internationalism of the parties of the Third International, through the coverage of international affairs with stories culled from the press services of Cuba, North Korea, China, the Soviet Union and Algeria; plus news releases from the CPUSA.[6] The continual barrage of lengthy, badly-written commentaries on "the development of socialist Korea"(Algeria, Cuba, etc.) was not calculated to illuminate the world situation to its readers. Moreover, the style of the writing was/is marked by turgidity rather than lucidity; and the content's sectarianism revolves around an exclusive concentration on the speeches and actions of the leaders of the communist parties of the country involved.

Both aspects of the paper's content were sectarian in that they alienated people from the party rather than won people to it.

6. In the light of the Sino-Soviet split and the CPUSA's connections with the CPSU, the alliance between the CPUSA and the BPP was a somewhat remarkable example of opportunism, since, at no time during the alliance, have the Panthers disavowed their preference for Peking.

People who wished to fight, who were looking for a way forward, could only have been discouraged by reading the paper's description of the latest police attack on the Panthers, for the impression gained was of the invincibility of the bourgeois state and of the, therefore, senseless heroism of the Panther martyrs.[7]

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7. Perhaps the most extreme form of the Panthers' "internal" sectarianism was the publication, in weekly serial form, of the affidavits, legal arguments, trial transcripts and detailed analysis of the prior hearing which comprised Newton's appeal against both conviction and sentence in the case of the death of an Oakland cop. The sectarianism in this case comprised two parts: the enormous tedium and inflated importance of the legal documents (with no explanation), and the implicit assertion of the paramountcy of Huey Newton. This simply compounded the fact that the Panthers had long since ceased to make the trials foci of mass political struggle.

IV***The Failure of Black Nationalism

      As a preliminary to our consideration of the Panthers' version of "revolutionary black nationalism" it is necessary to pose some elementary premises about the class basis of nationalism as an ideology and as an historical force.   Despite all the equivocation and doubt as to the practical position to adopt towards nationalists, every major socialist, from Marx to Stalin has been agreed that nationalism represents the urge of the bourgeois class to consolidate the national market, within defined boundaries, under its own hegemony. The practical question which has faced socialists has been how to deal with the fact of nationalism and national struggles. In the nineteenth century, Marx and Engels adopted a very relativistic attitude: they approved of those national struggles which did assure the triumph of the bourgeoisie over feudalism, while condemning and opposing most vehemently nationalist struggles which were "nationalist for its own sake". That Marx and Engels varied in their position is explained by the fact that the development of capitalism occurs unevenly, and by the fact that there were, in 1848, only two countries which could be called examples of developed capitalism.

      By the beginning of the twentieth century the form of the imperialist system was already in evidence, although still relatively crude and unsophisticated. The relative underdevelopment of the imperialist system meant that there was a shortage of trained "local lackeys", and therefore that the extremity of the "anti-imperialism" of national struggles in the colonies was greatly exacerbated. Thus, although both Lenin and Stalin attacked nationalism (particularly in the form of the great nation chauvinism of the imperialist nations), they were misled into believing that the nationalist uprisings in the colonies were objectively allied with the Soviet Union (the centre of world anti-imperialism). From there it was but a sleight of hand to declare that such nationalist struggles were also socialist.

The essential error in this false logic consisted of a confusion of form and content: because of the relative underdevelopment of the imperialist mode of exploitation the nationalist uprisings were apparently intensified and looked "more revolutionary" than they actually were.

It is only in the most recent period that a re-appraisal of the meaning of nationalism in relation to imperialism has been undertaken, by the Progressive Labor Party. As a result and on the basis of a thorough analysis of the history of the socialist movement in the last hundred years, it is possible to see that the Leninist position is incorrect. Nationalism remains an ideology with a bourgeois basis, and it can be demonstrated to have caused setbacks rather than advances for the workers' movement. It is necessary to point to some of the bases of this argument before we relate the critique of nationalism more directly to the Black Panther Party.

The first legacy of the Leninist theory on national self-determination is the proposal that national struggles are anti-imperialist. This argument rests on three grounds. In the first instance, there is the political determinism of the perspective which insists that all nations and states must pass through a period of indigenous capitalist development, for the creation of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This argument denies the proposition of Marx and Engels that Russia could avoid a lengthy period of capitalist development, and far more importantly, it is denied by the history of the twentieth century which contains scores of examples of nations which have not had the mixed benefit of indigenous capitalist development but which are nevertheless bourgeois states tied to the imperialist system. Secondly, the position rests on Lenin's "pre-imperialist" perspective on the peasantry, on the analysis of the class relations in the colonies as "semi-feudal": in brief, on the failure to recognise the internationalising influence of imperialism. Finally, the most important aspect of the Leninist position in terms of contemporary political strategies is the inept and contradictory analysis of the role of the national bourgeoisie.

The national bourgeoisie is bourgeois. Therefore its interests and those of the proletariat are opposed. But the Bolshevik position, in support of "revolutionary nationalism", urges the proletariat to support the colonial national bourgeoisie's specious anti-imperialism. The historical basis for calling the "anti-imperialism" of the colonial bourgeoisie specious spans more than fifty years -- from the Irish national liberation struggle to the war in Vietnam.[8]

The past quarter-century has seen the rise of dozens of national liberation movements and the creation of scores of newly independent states, out of the ruins of the old European empires. To the extent that the struggles which founded these new states were directed against the power of the old empires, they were anti-imperialist. If, however, we are to be at all analytic we can readily see that that the practical result of these national liberation struggles has been limited within very narrow confines. Following the perspective of the Bolsheviks, it has been argued that national liberation is a step on the road to socialism. As concrete examples of this proposition, the adherents of revolutionary nationalism have pointed to the "African Socialism" of Tanzania and Zambia, the "Arab Socialism" of Algeria and Egypt, "Cuban Socialism", etc. As far as we are concerned, socialism can only mean one thing -- that the working class holds and wields state power for the purpose of eliminating capitalist relations of production. Has revolutionary nationalism achieved this goal anywhere in the world? The answer is no, and for proof we need only look at the relations which prevail between the imperialist states and the newly independent former colonies.

In the aftermath of the coup which overthrew Nkrumah in 1966,

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8. For a fuller discussion of the points raised in this section, see "Road to Revolution III", Special Issue of _Progressive Labor_ (VIII; 3; November 1971). Also, Degras, op.cit. Vol. I; Lenin, _Collected Works_; William Z. Foster, _The Negro People in American History_ (New York: International Publishers, 1954); Wilson Record, _The Negro and the Communist Party_ (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951); Record, _Race and Radicalism_ (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964); Cruse, _ops.cit._

an important study of the nature of modern imperialism was published,
in the form of a case-study of the Ghanaian events.[9] It could serve
as a model for any of the supposedly "progressive" independent states.
Fitch and Oppenheimer detailed how "independence" was "granted" when
British capital was assured that its interests would be safeguarded:
cocoa in Ghana, rubber in Malaya, bauxite in Guiana, tea in Ceylon,
land in Kenya, copper in Zambia. The story is the same in every former
colony -- while formal political power is vested in the hands of a
local ruling class (often hand-picked and trained by the imperialist
power), the real economic power remains in the hands of the owners of
capital: inevitably the imperialist powers given the uneven development
of capitalism on a world-scale. A common feature, the critical point,
is that each new local ruling class has risen to its present position
on the premise of a nationalist ideology. The major difference between
"revolutionary" and moderate nationalists is that where the latter have
been willing to maintain ties with the original imperialist power, the
"revolutionaries" have sought to improve their position by turning to
another imperialist for support against their erstwhile masters.[10]
Thus, the Panthers' favourite revolutionary nationalist state, Algeria,
along with the "radical" Arab nationalists, has turned increasingly to
the Soviet Union for political, material and ideological support. In
fact, a characteristic which the majority of the Panthers' models share
is their willingness to be clients of Soviet imperialism.

The reliance on the Soviet Union means two things: first,
integration into imperialism Soviet-style and second, the adoption of
a Soviet model of economic development. It is the latter which is
more important, for it ensures that the nationalist rulers in the Soviet
empire will follow an accelerated capitalist form of economic

9. Bob Fitch & Mary Oppenheimer, _Ghana, End of an Illusion_ (New
York: Monthly Review Press, 1966).
10. This "revolutionary" position is often dressed up with
spurious dialectics and explained as the "exploitation of contradictions
between imperialists"; essentially, this is the same perspective as the
idea of the "lesser of two evils", some capitalists are better than others,
the justification for the united front strategy.

development. There are, perhaps, two models of Soviet development --
the primary one is the contradictory programme of socially controlled
capitalist development embodied in Soviet economic planning from the New
Economic Policy to the first Five Year Plan; the other consists of the
whole-hearted and truncated capitalist development forced upon all
dependent states by their imperialist masters, embodied in Soviet policy
towards Eastern Europe since the end of World War II, and towards Cuba
since 1962.

Whether the nationalist anti-imperialism of the ex-colonies has
been militant or moderate, whether it has consisted of peaceful transfer
of power or forcible seizure, the overwhelming fact remains that the
former colonies are still tied to the imperialist system.

> In any case, political democracy -- even if it is in theory
> normal for so-called pure capitalism -- is only one of the
> possible forms of the superstructure over capitalism. The
> facts themselves prove that capitalism and imperialism
> develop under and in turn subjugate any political forms.[11]

There have been only two breaches of the imperialist chain in this
century -- the Soviet and Chinese revolutions; and both of them have
suffered setback and reversal because of the compromises they have made
with nationalism. Our central proposition is that it is quite feasible
for a nationalist position to be "anti-imperialist" within very closely
defined limits: nationalist anti-imperialism may be directed against
one or more imperialist powers and at the same time not be opposed to
imperialism-the-system. That is, anti-imperialism is not sufficient;
because the only alternative to imperialism (the dictatorship of the
bourgeoisie) is socialism (the dictatorship of the proletariat).

There is, further, a demonstrable link between nationalism
and revisionism. The essence of nationalism is the assertion of over-
riding commonality of interest among members of the same national,
racial or ethnic group. National unity against the foreigners, the
oppressors, the enemy is demanded as the first priority of all members

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11. Lenin, cited by Georg Lukacs, Lenin (London: NLB Editions,
1970), p. 20.

of the national group. Whether consciously or not, this necessarily
must be at the expense of class solidarity. The alternative of class
or nation is not an artificial one. Marx's statement that the
"workers have no country" refers to both their exclusion from the
national (bourgeois) feast (with the notable exception, of course, of
the labour aristocracy); and to the way in which capitalism must
increasingly impose the same pattern of exploitation on workers every-
where.

During the First World War, the parties of the Second International
all joined with their "own" respective bourgeoisies in leading workers
to the slaughter. That they did so behind so-called dialectical slogans
of "social defense of the fatherland" does not alter the objective nature
of the role they played. The most succinct word is betrayal, class
collaboration. Nor is it any accident that the leading revisionists of
that period were the foremost in calling on the workers to defend the
interests of "their" bourgeoisie.

In similar fashion, shortly after Soviet sponsorship of the
Dmitrov line on united fronts, the Bolshevik party led the Russian war
effort in terms of defense of the fatherland. The Bolshevik slogan of
the First World War ("Turn imperialist war into civil war") was nowhere
to be seen. Today, the Chinese revisionist leadership is not only
nationalist on its own behalf -- posing its demand for a seat in the
United Nations entirely on the grounds of bourgeois statehood -- but
also for a variety of reactionary allies, including Pakistan, and
several military dictatorships in South America. Every party of the
former Comintern poses as the defender of the "sacred", "glorious"
traditions of their nation.

All these different strands come together if we survey the
trajectory of black nationalism in the United States. Our first question
is -- where does black nationalism come from? The real source, we
believe, was the development, in the period from the end of the Civil
War to the beginning of the twentieth century of the infrastructure of
a black bourgeoisie in America. Frazier argues that there was some
considerable development of a class of professionals, mostly petty

bourgeois in terms of the whole American class structure, but clearly risen out of the ranks of the mass of blacks, acting as agents for the ruling class and fulfilling service tasks to reinforce the racial separation in American society.[12] These people were, essentially, a nascent black bourgeoisie (whose birth was aborted) which sought to carve out for itself a capitalist base. Like Irish nationalism in the same period, and the Third World nationalisms since World War II, black nationalism was and remains a bourgeois ideology; the ideology of a class of capitalists seeking to rule over its "own" nation. The contradictions which were faced insurmountably by Washington and DuBois at the turn of the century have become more insoluble rather than less.

In the decade immediately preceding Emancipation, a debate raged among the black Abolitionists on the question of the role blacks should play in a post-slavery America. In this debate, whose main protagonists were Martin R. Delany and Frederick Douglass, were sounded the main themes of integration versus separation which have continued to dominate the perspective of the black intelligentsia down to the present. However, although posed as early as the 1850s, the question did not assume its critical nature until the end of the nineteenth century; mostly because the rapidly shifting and confused developments of the intervening period provided no firm foothold. The point at which the debate became critical was dependent upon the development of the class forces at stake. It is for this reason that Harold Cruse asserts that

> In dealing with black nationalism today, we are dealing with
> what is essentially a twentieth century movement, which has
> its origins, main compulsions and ideologies in the twentieth
> century. . . . The roots of black nationalism in America
> must be found both in the failures of the black Reconstruction
> and the rise of the American imperialistic age . . . [13]

In the same essay, a critique of the Aptheker school of black

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12. E. Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie (Glencoe: Free Press, 1965); and On Race Relations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

13. Harold Cruse, "Behind the Black Power Slogan", in Rebellion or Revolution?, op.cit., p. 215.

historiography, Cruse further maintains that the most significant aspect of black nationalism is its bourgeois class outlook. In this light, the view that Washington and DuBois and later DuBois and Garvey were in contradiction to one another becomes nonsensical. All three were, in short, bourgeois nationalists.

What basis is there for the assertion that Washington and DuBois were ideologues for an aborted black bourgeoisie? The principal evidence, of course, is the subject matter of Frazier's book: the rise of the black bourgeoisie in both South and North, "serving" the segregated black population in banking, real estate, news media and service industries. With, therefore, the infrastructure of a capitalist economy, the black bourgeoisie had to seek two things. Because of the operation of racism, and the subsequently racial perspective of blacks, the question was posed in terms of integration or separation. When the bourgeois strategists proposed the goals necessary for the black bourgeois revolution they did so in fragmentation. The most central questions facing any aspiring bourgeoisie are those of the operation and consolidation of a market, and the necessary political hegemony to buttress and protect the sovereignty of that market: i.e., the political economy of the nation state. Washington's programme of self-help was addressed to the former; DuBois' programme of political action to the latter. By being posed separately and as opposed neither was adequate.

The material contradiction (therefore the most real one) facing black nationalists was already present at the turn of the century. They experienced the historical misfortune of arriving too late. The development of the black bourgeoisie occurred at the same time as the American white bourgeoisie was completing the first, national, stage of its career. The white capitalists had had more than a head start. Therefore, even had the twin strategies of Washington and DuBois been integrated, the black bourgeois revolution was destined to be still-born. The closing of Turner's frontier was the opening of the American imperialist epoch -- on the basis of the achievement, for and by the real American bourgeoisie, of the very goals proposed by the black ideologues. There was then, as now, no room for another capitalist

state within the national territory already claimed by American capital; otherwise, why should the bourgeoisie place such an emphasis on the achievement of its two central goals?

Obviously, neither Washington nor DuBois thought of themselves as bourgeois or nationalists: no more than CORE or the NAACP do today. The main problem is that of the false dichotomy: integration or separation, which has obscured the real values behind the perspectives involved. Just as the British and French bourgeoisies presented themselves as the saviours and representatives of the whole people, so the most basic error common to integrationists and separatists (whether conscious or not of their nationalism) has consisted of the continual emphasis on the "Negro people" or the "Negro race", to the disregard of the actual class distinctions within that race or people. This phenomenon is precisely what Marx had in mind:

> For each new class which puts itself in the place of the
> one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to
> carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the
> common interest of all the members of society, put in an
> ideal form: it will give its ideas the form of universality,
> and represent them as the only rational, universally valid
> ones.[14]

In reality, furthermore, it is important to point out that the black bourgeoisie is not truly a bourgeoisie: there has never been a successful black bourgeois revolution in the United States. America's small black capitalists have never had much capital at their disposal; certainly, they have never been in a position to challenge, economically, politically or socially, the hegemony of the most important white capitalists. Secondly, with the progressive development of capitalism through the stages of monopoly and cartel-isation, the black(petty) bourgeoisie has suffered/enjoyed the same fate as its white counterpart -- liquidation as a class, and absorption into the structures of capital as salaried personnel, or pauperisation into the ranks of the proletariat.

On the basis of these remarks, it is instructive to look at the development of CORE since the formulation of the Black Power slogan

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14. Marx, GI, pp. 40-1.

in 1966. One of the reputedly militant organisations, a leading force
in the development of the civil rights movement, and one of the first
civil rights organisations to attempt to develop a base in the northern
ghettos, CORE is also the clearest example of the failure of black
nationalism to effect a clear break with the hegemony of liberalism.[15]
Because of the two basic reasons -- strong anti-communism, and the
perspective of more or less traditional ethnic group politics -- CORE
was "snared by corporate liberalism and reformism".[16] In short, the
Ford Foundation bought control of CORE, through the simple enough means
of being the only organisation prepared to give money to the group.
Starting with an address by McGeorge Bundy in 1966, to a meeting of the
National Urban League, the Ford Foundation began to develop a strategy
for dealing with black militancy.[17] The response to Watts was the search
for a way of channeling the anger which had caused the rebellion. The
Foundation's answer was to combat the "failure of communication", by
developing a new, responsible leadership. Bundy's annual report to the
Ford Foundation for 1967 announced that

> . . . no one who has dealt honestly with legitimately
> militant black leaders will confuse their properly angry
> words with any conspiracy to commit general violence. . .[18]

The reason for Bundy's confidence lay in the success of the Foundation's
advocacy of a very similar position to that of the Panthers' idea of
the united front for black unity. Discussing the black united fronts
which were formed in many cities in 1968 and 1969, Allen comments

> The simple but unfortunate fact is that the militants are
> usually less well organised than the Urban League, NAACP,

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15. For CORE's early period, see Bell, CORE & the Strategy of
Nonviolence, op.cit., passim.
16. Robert L. Allen, Black Awakening in Capitalist America
(New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 132.
17. ibid., p. 60
18. cited in ibid., p. 126.

SCLC, preachers, teachers, and social workers who are invited to participate in the united fronts also. Consequently, it is relatively easy for these representatives of the privileged black bourgeoisie to take control of organisations ostensibly dedicated to militant reform, to enabling black people to assume control over their own lives.[19]

The case of CORE is by no means isolated: but this does not mean that the failure of black nationalism is due to a conspiracy or even a plan on the part of the ruling class to subvert the "just struggle of the Negro people". A more important source for the "subversion" of black nationalism is internal to the ideology and its practitioners: the nature of the leadership and their strategic perspectives. This is what we mean by stressing the importance of the failure to break the ideological hegemony of the American ruling class — i.e. liberalism. Whether posed as integration or separatism, the basic strategies have foundered on the Scylla of the purely individual solution (tokenism) or the Charybdis of ethnic self-improvement (the melting pot myth). Permanently absent has been a political perspective based on a class analysis of American society and of the black people.

The Black Panther Party claims to have solved this problem. They claim that their ideology is based on class analysis (indeed, that it is Marxist-Leninist), and that it rejects the principles of both integrationism and separatism. Is their claim substantiated? We think not: and we propose to demonstrate why by examining a number of crucial elements of the ideology.

The first point we wish to make concerns one of the very few statements which the Panthers have made about the material basis of racism (as opposed to the truistic assertion that "racism and capitalism are connected"):

> Historically racism, in the context of developing capitalism provided the surplus capital which allowed American capitalism to become the monster that it is today.[20]

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19. ibid. p. 120
20. Newton, "The Black Panthers", Ebony, loc.cit., p. 111.

Racism, historically and currently, is the ideological justification for and practice of super-exploitation of blacks (and others); it serves as the strategic basis for the division of the American working class to the extra profit of the ruling class. The division of the working class is an aid to the bourgeoisie's accumulation of surplus capital, but the source of surplus capital is not racism, but the far more basic exploitation of labour-power. In itself the error made by Newton is not necessarily overwhelming; but it does indicate the ad hoc, completely unsystematic manner in which the Panthers have approached Marxism — part of the reason for the lack of precision in their analysis of American society. That it occurs in one the few places where there is any analysis suggests, at least, sloppiness.

Of more significance is the Panthers' explanation of "revolutionary nationalism". The Panthers have adopted in full the old Bolshevik perspective that revolutionary nationalism, anti-imperialism and socialism are synonymous. Thus, they proclaim their solidarity with the "revolutionary" states of the Third World — states which we have identified above as being tied to one or other imperialist power. We can identify two strands in the practical political demands which the Panthers have formulated on the basis of their revolutionary nationalism.

The first theme comes under the heading of the myth of imperialism which we identified above (Chapter Three). This position defines the black population of the United States as a nation, living under colonial subjugation, with legitimate claims to political independence. This position bears within it two aspects: first, a continuity with the separatist strain in black history; and second, an attempt to express common cause with the coloured populations of the present and former colonies. The principal focus of the national definition comprises an embryonic form of foreign policy. The first, rudimentary step in this direction was taken by the adoption of Stokely Carmichael as Prime Minister of the Black Panther Party at the end of 1968, the period after Carmichael's world tour of the revolutionary

nationalist states: Cuba, Guinea, North Vietnam, Algeria.[21] Thereafter, the Panthers increased the tempo of their campaign to demand a United Nations-supervised plebiscite of the "black community". The demand was first raised, in the United States, by William L. Patterson in 1951;[22] but in the Panthers' case it appears that the model is the same demand which was made by the Algerian Front de Liberation National. The most that the FLN achieved was a piously worded resolution calling for non-violence and a constitutional settlement to the struggle in Algeria. There is no reason to suppose that a similar appeal from the Panthers will fare any better. Were the United Nations not dominated by the major imperialist powers, the power of the United States outside that body would deter even the most militantly anti-imperialist of the former colonial nations from attempting to interfere in what the US government regards as its internal affairs (as did the French government in 1959). The most important aspect of the demand is that it spreads illusions about the nature of imperialism, in suggesting that the United Nations Organisation is above or outside the international capitalist system.

The second strand in the nationalist politics of the Panthers is the self-help community programme's -- a later development, of militant reforms in the tradition of the revisionist practice of the CPUSA. These have been, in the Panthers' phrase, "educational" -- designed to teach the black community about socialism. Breakfasts for children, free clinics, and Liberation schools have all been centred on a perspective of providing, within capitalism, the "socialist" alternative. Like all such programmes which attempt to bring people to socialism little by little, through the medium of radical reforms, these of the Panthers have fallen into the problem of being better (sometimes) than the capitalist norm, not different.[23] Of course, they have also

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21. See Allen, op.cit., pp. 6, 50-1; Carmichael, Stokely Speaks!, op.cit.

22. William L. Patterson, We Charge Genocide (New York: Civil Rights Congress, 1951).

23. The Panthers have claimed, for instance, that because their programmes are free, they are therefore revolutionary. Capitalism has, however, discovered that free giveawayscan be profitable, particularly in terms of political and social capital; for example, the rash of free rock festivals sponsored by various ruling class forces in the past three years as explicit alternatives to political action.

run into the more technical problems of having to find funds, and needing to turn to the capitalists for them. The radical reform perspective fits into the whole schema of the United Front strategy, because the object of the latter, in essence, is for the communist or left-wing to be "better" bourgeois democrats than the bourgeois.[24]

The essential failures of the United Front strategy and the corollary community control programmes are summed up in the Panthers' demand for community control of the police. The basic feature of the police proposal is a purely administrative reform, amounting to decentralisation. The argument is that if only the police lived in the area they patrolled and were subject to supervision from a "community" board, there would be no more graft, brutality and murders of blacks by police. The Panthers continue to push this idea after three years of black mayors, sheriffs, and Congressmen -- none of whom have been able (even had they wished it) to alter the relationship between police and society. Like so many of their radical reform demands, this part of the Panthers' programme embodies the absence from their politics of any understanding of the state as an agency of the power of the ruling class.

The implication, of course, is that the Panthers put nation before class -- to the exclusion of class. This implication is borne out categorically if we look at the very limited example of the BPP's attempt to organise black workers. In the summer of 1969, a couple of Panthers formed a black workers' caucus within the United Auto Workers in a Ford plant in Detroit. The caucus was joined by several workers, who, disillusioned by the UAW's failure to fight on-the-job racism or the perpetual speed-up, sought to recruit other workers -- black and white. The Panthers vehemently opposed this idea, and when they found themselves outvoted, dissolved the caucus and ceased their attempts to organise in the plant. After two brief mentions in TBP, there was nothing further heard of black workers in the party organ.[25] The Panthers'

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24. Not a difficult task, since the bourgeoisie has never, when pressed, been really concerned about its version of democracy. See the three studies of France by Marx, op.cit.; Progressive Labor, loc.cit.; and Lukacs, op.cit.

25. TBP, May to July, 1969; Progressive Labor (VII; 2; August 1969).

attempts to organise a working class base lasted less than a year; the
end of the period coincided with the United Front Against Fascism
conference.

What of the overall pattern of the Panthers' political practice?
They have often cited Mao's admonition to "serve the people", and pro-
claimed that they must unite with the masses. Their practice has not
lived up to these ideas. Their history has been marked by oscillation
between sectarianism and opportunism -- neither of which will unite the
party with the masses. In the pre-conference period, the dominant motif
was a sectarian definition of the Black Panther Party as the revolution.
Within the party, only selected leaders and party chapters had anything
of validity to say about the revolution. Further, the tenor of the
party paper's coverage of news during the first period was almost
exclusively devoted to stories of the "pigs vamping on Panthers". The
inevitable result of such stories was to discourage people from
engaging in struggle, since the only result which followed, according
to the Panthers, is death or injury or gaol.

The second period, of opportunism, was marked by the abrupt
reversal of the Panthers' adamant opposition to and denunciation of the
Uncle Toms and bootlickers. The BPP began to cultivate friendship and
alliances with the people they had previously declared beyond the pale;
seeking to win the attendance of Willie Brown, black Congressman, at a
rally for Huey Newton. The culmination of this line was the statement
issued in June 1971, by Huey Newton, that black capitalists could be
won to the revolution (see below). The Panthers have also made common
cause with the various united fronts which have sprung up in a number
of American cities -- the organisations whose function has been defined
by Fitch and Oppenheimer as transmission belt between the imperialist
masters and colonial slaves.[26]

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26. Fitch and Oppenheimer, op.cit.; this means of course, the
acceptance by those who fulfill the roleof at least some part of the
conception of the black population as a homogeneous "national minority".

The key element which ties all the aspects of the Panthers'
politics together is the central phenomenon of the contradiction between
class and race. By continually emphasising a demographic entity -- "the
black community" -- over the class structure of American society, the
Panthers have been trapped in the position of having to rely on the
"community leaders" whom they have tried to replace. It is, in other
words, impossible to rely on both bourgeoisie and workers at the same
time. The Panthers have, de facto, made the choice of turning to
the black bourgeoisie for support; calling on black leaders to support
them when theyhave been attacked by the police; continually de-emphasising
mass mobilisation to attack the judicial system when they have been in
court, and even, in some cases, defending black officials from attacks
by working class people.[27]

27. Two examples: the Panthers joined with the UAW union
bureaucrats in denouncing black and white rank and file militancy during
the 1970 General Motors strike; they also attacked high school students
who were hanging their (black) principal in effigy.

V***Postscript: The Unbridgeable Abyss

Almost as if they wanted to substantiate our argument, the Panthers have recently taken another, firmer step towards the right. The occasion was the first official statement by Newton in the aftermath of the split in the party. Let us recapitulate the steps chronologically. In February 1971, the bourgeois media were delighted to report on the recriminations, denunciations and accusations flying back and forth between party headquarters in Oakland and Algiers. Newton and Seale announced that Cleaver and his followers in Algeria and in the New York chapter of the party had been purged -- for "ultra-left adventurism". In reply, Cleaver denounced the West Coast leadership as "right-wing revisionists" and for financial mismanagement. In fact, both sections are correct in regard to the other. Cleaver has declared himself in favour of revolution by "exemplary action" -- i.e. terrorism. Newton and Seale, the victors in a one-sided conflict, have completed the party's shift to the right. Whether the revolution is the exemplary deed of individual terrorists or the forging of alliances with the "progressive bourgeoisie", the two factions are in fundamental agreement -- the working class is to have no part of the Black Panther revolution.

In June, Newton issued his first major statement in regard to the party line since the split. Entitled "Black Capitalism Re-Analysed", this article summed up and rationalised all the worst implications of their nationalism. He makes the following points:

> In the past the Black Panther Party took a counter-revolutionary position with our blanket condemnation of Black Capitalism. . . . the objective interests of the national bourgeoisie are in many ways similar to those of the people who are victimised . . . So far as capitalism in general is concerned, the Black capitalist merely has the status of a victim, because the big white capitalists have the skills, they make the loans, and they in fact control the Black capitalist. If he wants to succeed in his enterprise, the Black capitalist must turn to the community, because he depends on them to make his profit. He needs this strong community support because he cannot become

independent of the corporate capitalists who control the large
monopolies . . . In return for these contributions(to the party)
the Black Panther Party will carry advertisements of these
businesses in our paper and urge the community to support them.
We will never sell advertising space in the paper, but we will
give space in return for contributions to the survival programs
which are given free to the community(!!). In this way we will
achieve a greater unity of the <u>community of victims</u>, the people
who are victimised by society in general, and the Black
capitalists who are victimised by the corporate capitalist
monopolies. <u>In this way we will increase the positive qualities
of Black capitalism until they dominate the negative qualities,
and exploitation will no longer be the reality which the
community reluctantly accepts.</u> [28]

Needless to say, this ludicrous mixture of wishful-thinking and self-
delusion is described as "dialectical materialism". The depths to which
the <u>troika</u> of ills they acquired from the CPUSA is clearly expressed in
this statement -- opportunism, nationalism, revisionism. Nothing could
be less socialist than the attempt to dress up capitalism as a good
thing. With the CPUSA's assertion of the need to complete the bourgeois
revolution in America, the Panthers' attribution of positive, progressive
qualities to capitalism of a specific colour ranks as the most ridiculous
"revolutionary" position espoused in recent times.

The Panthers have been trapped in a contradiction of their own
choice. In trying to bridge the race/class chasm they have attempted
to have their cake and eat it. They try to be both nationalists and
Marxists. The problem is that no matter how dainty their "dialectical"
footwork has been, it has not saved them from slipping inexorably into
the quagmire of nationalism. One or other ideology had to triumph, since
they are contradictory. The greatest irony is that the result is that
the Panthers are in the worst position of all -- they are condemned as
revolutionaries and distrusted by their real (bourgeois) allies, and they
are necessarily and increasingly isolated from the people whom they are
attempting to mislead into the arms of the ruling class.

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28. Newton, "Black Capitalism Re-Analysed", <u>TBP</u>, June 5, 1971,
(all emphasis supplied).

The Black Panther Party Program and Platform (adopted October 1966)

<u>WHAT WE WANT ** WHAT WE BELIEVE</u>

1. <u>We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our black community.</u>

We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

2. <u>We want full employment for our people.</u>

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessman will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organise and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. <u>We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community.</u>

We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue deby of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germand murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million black people; therefore we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

4. <u>We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.</u>

We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

5. <u>We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that</u>

teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our
people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of
himself and his position in society and the world, then he has
little chance to relate to anything else.

6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.

We believe that black people should not be forced to fight
in the military service to defend a racist government that does
not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of colour
in the world who, like black people, are being victimised by the
white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from
the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military,
by whatever means necessary.

7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER
of black people.

We believe we can end police brutality in our community
by organising black self-defense groups that are dedicated to
defending our black community from racist police oppression and
brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the
United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe
that all black people should arm themselves for self-defense.

8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state,
county, and city prisons and jails.

We believe that all black people should be released from the
many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and
impartial trial.

9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be
tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their
black community, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.

We believe that the courts should follow the U.S. Constitution
so that black people will receive fair trials. The Fourteenth
Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried
by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic,
social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial
background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury
from the black community from which the defendant came. We have

been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no
understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the black community.

10. We want land, bread, housing,education, clothing, justice
and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-
supervised plabiscite to be held throughout the black colony in
which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate,
for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their
National destiny.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary
for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected
which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the
powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the
laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect
to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the
causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are
created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain
inalienable rights; that among these are life liberty and the
pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments
are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent
of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes
destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter
or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its
foundations on such principles, and organising its powers in such
form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and
happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long
established should not be changed for light and transient causes;
and, accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more
disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right
themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.
But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing
invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them
under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty,
to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their
future security.

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