

THE PLAGUE

Capitalism + Dope = GENOCIDE

Introduction

Michael Cetewayo Tabor was one of the Panther 21. He was 23 years old, and he was charged, along with the other New York Panthers on trial before Judge John (Mudface) Murtagh of conspiring to murder policemen, blow up the Botanical Gardens, dynamite department stores and railway lines. The biggest frame-up in the history of New York.

For five years, from age 13 to age 18, while living in Harlem where he was born, Tabor was addicted to heroin, the Plague. At 13 he was "desperate and depressed" and began shooting up. He became a member of the "Cloud Nine Society" to escape the "ugly realities of ghetto life."

In this essay, which was written in prison, he raps about heroin, about what it is like to be hooked. He describes the world as the addict himself sees it. But, more important, he describes the Plague from the perspective of a revolutionary. He links the problem of drug addiction to capitalist exploitation, racial oppression, the Mafia cops in the colony, escapism and self-destruction by Black people. And he raps about the solution--Revolution, about the fundamental changes necessary to wipe the Plague from the cities of Babylon.

Malcolm X's Autobiography changed Tabor. It gave him "a new outlook on life." He became a member of the Black Panther Party, founded in Oakland, California in 1966 by Bobby G. Seale and Huey P. Newton, and kicked two bad habits--heroin and acquiescence before the white oppressor. He worked on the Panther Breakfast Program to feed hungry Black children and on the Liberation School to teach illiterate Black children to read and write. He was Defense Captain for the Bronx Chapter of the Party.

On April 2, 1969 he was arrested, held in \$50,000 bail, and placed in jail. He had been arrested and imprisoned before; for he had ripped off furs and jewels from the Mother Country to pay for heroin. He told the District Attorney, pig Phillips, "I have been in a penal institution for 23 years. All of AmeriKKKa is a State prison." Phillips asked him if he was scared when a cop with a shotgun arrested him. "No," he said. "I had a gun drawn on me when I was six years old. I've developed an immunity to it. I've developed an immunity to it. It's standard for police to point guns at Black people."

For Michael Cetewayo Tabor, becoming a Panther meant self-defense against police attacks. It means becoming "a socially productive human being." And, as Fred Hampton said shortly before he was murdered in Chicago, being a Panther means "getting high off the People." For Tabor, there is nothing higher than revolution.

All Power to the People!

Jomo Raskin

I. The Problem

Recently in the Black colony of Harlem a 12 year old Black boy was murdered by an overdose of heroin. Less than two weeks later a 15 year old Black girl met the same tragic fate. During the year 1969 in New York City alone there were over 900 deaths resulting from drug addiction. Of these, 210 were youths ranging in age from 12 to 19. Of the over 900 dead, the overwhelming

majority were Black and Puerto Rican. It is estimated that there are at least 25,000 youths addicted to narcotics in New York City--and that is a conservative estimate.

Drug addiction in the colonized ghettos of AmeriKKKa has constituted a major problem for over 15 years. Its use is so widespread that it can--without fear of exaggeration--be termed a Plague. It has reached epidemic proportions, and it is still growing. But it has only been within the last few years that the racist U. S. government has considered drug addiction "a matter of grave concern." It is interesting to note that this growing concern on the part of the government is proportionate to the spread of the Plague into the inner sanctums of the white middle and upper-class communities. As long as the Plague was confined to the ghetto, the government did not see fit to deem it a problem. But as soon as college professors, demagogic politicians, money-crazed finance capitalists and industrialists discovered that their own sons and daughters had fallen victim to the Plague, a virtual "state of national emergency" was declared. This is significant, for it provides us with a clue to the understanding of the Plague as it relates to Black people.

From the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, to the clergy, to members of the medical profession, so-called educators, psychologists, right on down to the chemically enslaved addicts on the street corner, the hopes for effectively curbing the spread of the Plague are dishearteningly dim. Despite the stiffer jail sentences being meted out to those whom the law defines as drug profiteers--a euphemism for illegal capitalists--there are more dope dealers now than ever before. Despite the ever increasing number of preventive and rehabilitative programs the Plague proliferates; it threatens to devour an entire generation of youth.

The basic reason why the Plague cannot be stopped by the drug prevention and rehabilitation programs is that these programs, with their archaic, bourgeois Freudian approach and their unrealistic therapeutic communities, do not

deal with the causes of the problem. These programs deliberately negate or at best deal flippantly with the socio-economic origin of drug addiction. These programs sanctimoniously deny the fact that capitalist exploitation and racial oppression are the main contributing factors to drug addiction in regard to Black people. These programs were never intended to cure Black addicts. They can't even cure the White addicts they were designed for.

This fascist government defines the cause of addiction as the importation of the plague into the country by smugglers. They themselves even admit that stopping the entry of the plague is impossible. For every kilo (2.2 lbs.) of heroin they confiscate, at least 25 kilos get past customs agents. The government is well aware of the fact that even if they were able to stop the importation of heroin, dope dealers and addicts would simply find another drug to take its place. The government is totally incapable of addressing itself to the true causes of drug addiction, for to do so would necessitate effecting a radical transformation of this society, the values, mores and traditions would have to be altered. And this would be impossible without totally changing the way in which the means of producing social wealth is owned and distributed. Only a revolution can eliminate the plague.

Drug addiction is a monstrous symptom of the malignancy which is ravaging the social fabric of this capitalist system. Drug addiction is a social phenomena that grows organically from the social system. Every social phenomenon that emanates from a social system that is predicated upon and driven by bitter class antagonisms that result from class exploitation must be seen from a class point of view.

II. ESCAPISM AND SELF-DESTRUCTION

In regard to Black people, our problems are compounded and take on appalling dimensions as a result of the racist dehumanization that we are subjected to. To understand the plague as it relates to Black people, we must analyze the effects of capitalist economic exploitation and racist dehumanization.

The heinous and sadistic program of annihilating the humanity of Black people that was initiated over 400 years ago by money-mad slave masters and that has continued unabated until this very day is deliberate and systematic. It is done for the purpose of justifying and facilitating our exploitation. Since the reality of our objective existence seemed to confirm the racist doctrines of White superiority and its antithesis, Black inferiority, and since we lacked an understanding of our condition, we internalized the racist propaganda of our oppressors. We began to believe that we were inherently inferior to Whites. These feelings of inferiority gave birth to a sense of self-hatred which finds expression in self-destructive behavior patterns. The wretchedness of our plight, our sense of powerlessness and despair created within our minds a predisposition toward the use of any substance which produces euphoric illusions. We are inclined to use anything that enables us to suffer peacefully. We have developed an escapist complex. This escapist complex is self-destructive.

The depraved capitalist-racist oppressor exploits these psychological and emotional deficiencies for all they are worth. The oppressor encourages our participation in any activity that is self-destructive. Our self-destructive behavior patterns and our escapist tendencies constitute a source of profits for the capitalists. They also, by weakening, dividing and destroying us, reinforce the strength of the oppressor, enabling him to perpetuate his domination over us.

Fratricidal street-gang fighting is a direct manifestation of a self-destructive behavior pattern. It is also a form of escapism by which Black youths vent their rage, frustrations and despair on each other rather than dealing with the true enemy. Pathological religionism or the fanatical indulgence in religion is essentially escapist because it encourages the victim to concentrate his attention, energy and hope for salvation and freedom upon a dubious, mystical force. It discourages confronting the actual causes of our misery and deprivation. It encourages

the focusing of attention upon pie in the sky, rather than the securing of more lamb chops right here on planet earth. It also serves as a source of profits for those religious charlatans, preachers and ministers who exploit it.

Alcoholism is both self-destructive and escapist. It is also a source of tremendous profits for the capitalists. The amazingly high number of bars and liquor stores in the Black communities testify to this tragic fact. The capitalist liquor industry could prosper just on the business it does in the Black ghetto alone.

III. THE HEROIN ADDICT

The most escapist and self-destructive activity for us and one of the most profitable for the capitalist, and therefore the most encouraged by him, is drug addiction, specifically heroin addiction.

About 1898 a German chemist discovered diacetylmorphine, heroin. It was hailed as the perfect drug for curing morphine addicts. But soon it became apparent that it was more addictive than morphine. By the 1920's there were addicts who were injecting heroin directly into their veins. Heroin production in the United States was discontinued and the drug was no longer used as an antidote for morphine addiction and as a pain killer.

Heroin addiction, the plague, the scourge of the Black colonies of Babylon. The plague, whose spiritual, moral, psychological, physical and social destructive powers greatly exceed that on any disease hitherto known to humanity. The plague, opium from Turkey, shipped to Marseilles, converted into morphine base, then processed into heroin, smuggled into America, cut, diluted, then placed into the Black ghetto. The plague, poisonous, lethal, white powdery substance, sold by depraved, money-crazed beasts to Black youths who are desperately seeking a kick, a high, a means, anything that will help to make them oblivious to the squalor, to the abject poverty, disease and degradation that engulfs them in their daily existence.

Initially the plague does just that. Under its sinister

influence, the oppressive, nauseous, ghetto prison is transformed into a virtual Black Valhalla. One becomes impervious to the rancid stench of urine-soaked tenement dungeons, unaffected by the piercing cries of anguish of Black folks driven to the brink of insanity by a sadistic, social system. Unaffected by the deafening wail of pig-police car sirens as they tear through the streets of the Black Hell en route to answer a 1013 call from some other pig-police who is in a state of well-deserved distress. Unaffected by the trash cans whose decayed, disease carrying, garbage has overflowed to fill the ghetto streets.

Yes, under its ecstatic influence one is made oblivious to ugly realities. But there is a trick, a cruel monstrous trick, a deadly flim-flam awaiting its naive, youthful victim, for, as the illusionary beauty of the heroin-induced high begins to vanish, correspondingly, the temporary immunity from reality attained under its chemical trance vanishes. The reality that the pathetic victim sought so desperately to escape, once again descends upon and re-engage him. The rancid stench of urine-soaked tenement dungeons begins to assail his nostrils. Those Black cries of anguish seem to blend with the wailing sirens of pig-police cars. He hears them now, very loud, and very clear--in stereophonic sound. And that garbage that flows over into the streets from uncollected trash cans is felt underfoot.

The young victim is not long in discovering that only by taking another dosage will he be able to attain sanctuary from his hideous reality. Each shot of the plague that he injects into his blood system brings him that much closer to the grave. Soon he is strung-out, hooked. He is physiologically and psychologically dependent on the plague. Both his body and mind have become addicted to heroin. He has now become a full-time, chartered member of the Cloud 9 Society. His physical body begins to take on a decimated appearance. A shameless disregard is displayed toward his clothes. That his shirt is filthy and his shoes are soleless, leaving him virtually on his naked feet, does not matter. That his unwashed body now emits a most foul odor disturbs him but little. That his non-addicted friends now shun him and look upon him with contempt matters not, for the feelings are mutual. They no longer have anything in common. Everything ceases to matter. Everything except heroin, the plague.

As he continues, his body begins to build up an immunity to the drug. Now, in order to attain his euphoric high he must increase his dosage. This means that he must obtain more money. So enslaved has he now become that he will do anything for a bag, for a "shot." To lie, to steal, to cheat, to rob is nothing to him. Whatever he must do for a "shot" he will do, he must do, for he is a slave to the plague.

The vicious cycle grinds into motion. He violates what the ruling class defines as being the law in order to secure money to feed his sickness. Inevitably he gets flagged-off, busted. He goes to jail, and after he has served out his sentence he is released. The first thing he wants is a shot. The cycle continues. And he plunges deeper and deeper into the abysmal pit of degradation. And there, always there and ever willing, for a price of course, to meet the addict's demand for dope is the cop-man, the dealer, purveyor of poison, distributor of death, merciless, murdering scum of the planet, vile capitalists, salesmen of death on the installment plan, the dope pusher, the plague-man.

IV. Capitalism and Crime

Dope selling is beyond a doubt one of the most profitable capitalist undertakings. The profits from it soar into billions. Internationally and domestically the trade and distribution of heroin is ultimately controlled by the Cosa Nostra, the Mafia.

Much of the profits amassed from the drug business is used to finance so-called legitimate businesses. These legitimate businesses that are controlled by the Mafia are used to facilitate their drug-smuggling activities. Given the fact that organized crime is a business and an ever-expanding one at that, it is constantly seeking new areas of investment to increase profits. Hence, more and more illegal profits are being channeled into legitimate businesses. Partnerships between the Mafia and "reputable businessmen" are the order of the day. There is a direct relationship between legitimate and illegitimate capitalists.

Over the years a number of politicians and foreign ambassadors and wealthy businessmen have been arrested in this country for drug activities. Others, because of their wealth and influence, were able to avoid arrest. In the fall of 1969 it was discovered that a group of prominent New York financiers was financing an

international drug smuggling operation. No indictments were handed down. Shortly after that a group of wealthy South American businessmen were arrested in a plush New York City hotel with over \$10 million worth of drugs.

Given the predatory and voracious nature of the capitalist, it should come as no surprise that so-called legitimate businessmen are deeply involved in the drug trade. //Capitalists are motivated by an insatiable lust for profits. They will do anything for money. The activities of organized crime and the "legitimate capitalists" are so inextricably tied up, so thoroughly interwoven, that from our vantage point any distinction made between them is purely academic.

The legitimization of the Mafia, their increased emphasis upon investing in, and establishing corporations, has been accelerated by the stiffer prison sentences that are being meted out to drug profiteers. In New York this has resulted in the gradual withdrawal of the Mafia from their position of actual leadership of the New York drug trade. The New York drug trade is now dominated by Cuban exiles, many of whom were military officers and police agents in the pre-revolutionary Batista regime. They equal the Mafia in ruthlessness and greed.

These new local dope kingpins have established a broad network of international smuggling operations. They utilize the traditional trade routes and create new ones, as indicated by the increased number of Narcotics Bureau seizures of dope coming from South America.

The concept of Black Power has influenced the thinking of every segment of the Black community. It has come to mean Black control of the institutions and activities that are centered in the Black community. Black teachers demand Black community control of the ghetto schools. Black businessmen and merchants advocate the expulsion of White businessmen from the ghetto so that they can maximize their profits. Black numbers-game operators are demanding total control of the ghetto numbers operations. And Black dope dealers are demanding community control of heroin. It is a tragedy that in New York the greatest gains made in the realm of Black community control have been made by Black racketeers, numbers-game bankers and dope dealers, by the Black illegal capitalists. Prior to 1967 it was a rarity to find a Black dope dealer who handled more than 3 kilos (1 kilo equals

2.2 lbs.) of heroin at any given time. Independent Black importers were unheard of. Now, there is an entire class of Blacks who have become importers, using Mafia supplied lists of European connections.

The extent and instant rate of profits reaped from the dope industry could arouse the envy of U.S. Steel, General Motors and Standard Oil. From the highest level to the lowest, the profits are enormous. If the individual is sufficiently ambitious, cunning, ruthless and vicious, he may graduate from the status of street peddler to big-time wholesaler and distributor in a short span of time.

A characteristic feature of class and racial oppression is the ruling class policy of brainwashing the oppressed into accepting their oppression. Initially, this program is carried out by viciously implanting fear into the minds and sowing the seeds of inferiority in the souls of the oppressed. But as the objective conditions and the balance of forces become more favorable for the oppressed and more adverse to the oppressor, it becomes necessary for the oppressor to modify his program and adopt more subtle and devious methods to maintain his rule. The oppressor attempts to throw the oppressed psychologically off-balance by combining a policy of vicious repression with spectacular gestures of good-will and service.

Given the fact that Black people have abandoned the non-functional and ineffective tactics of the "Civil Rights" era and have now resolved to attain their long overdue liberation by any means necessary, it has become necessary for the oppressor to deploy more occupation forces into the Black colony. The oppressor, particularly in New York, realizes that this cannot be done overtly without intensifying the revolutionary fervor of the Black people in the colony. Therefore, a pretext is needed for placing more pigs in the ghetto.

And what is the pretext? It goes like this: Responsible negro community leaders have informed us, and their reports concur with police findings, that the negro community is ravaged by crime, muggings, burglaries, murders and mayhem. The streets are unsafe, business establishments are infested by armed robbers, commerce cannot function. City Hall agrees with negro residents that the main cause for this horrible situation is the dope addicts

who prey on innocent people. Yes, the dope addicts are to blame for the ever-increasing crime rate. And City Hall will answer the desperate cry of negro residents for greater protection--send in more police!

That victims of the plague are responsible for most of the crimes in the Black ghettos is a fact. That Black drug addicts perpetrate most of their robberies, burglaries and thefts in the Black community against Black people cannot be denied. //But before, out of desperation, we jump up and scream for more police protection, we better remember who put the plague in Harlem, Bedford Stuyvesant and the other Black communities. We better remember who ultimately profits from the drug addiction of Black people. We better remember that the police are alien hostile troops sent into the Black colonies by the ruling class, not to protect the ~~lives of Black people~~ Black people, but rather to protect the economic interests and the private property of the capitalists and to make certain that Black people don't get out of place. Rockefeller and Lindsay could care less about the lives of Black people. And if we don't know by now how the police feel about us, then we are really in bad shape.

V. Pig Police

The plague could never flourish in the Black colonies if it were not for the active support of the occupation forces, the police. That narcotics arrests have increased in no way mitigate the fact that police give dope peddlers immunity from arrest in exchange for money pay-offs.

It is also the practice of pig-police, especially narcotics agents, to seize a quantity of drugs from one dealer, arrest him, but only turn in a portion of the confiscated drugs for evidence. The rest is given to another dealer who sells it and gives a percentage of the profits to the narcotics agents. The pig-police also utilize informers who are dealers. In return for information, they receive immunity from arrest. The police cannot solve the problem, for they are a part of the problem.

When you consider that a kilo of heroin purchased by an importer for \$6,000, when cut and bagged and distributed will bring back a profit of \$300,000 in a week's time, it becomes easier to understand that even if the death penalty were imposed on drug

profiteers, it would not deter the trade.

The lying devious puppets of the bourgeois ruling class, the demagogic politicians of Capitol Hill have now passed a law which gives narcotics agents the right to crash into a person's home without knocking, on the pretext of looking for narcotics and other "evidence." This law was ostensibly passed to prevent dope dealers from destroying the dope and "other evidence." Now, anyone who thinks that this law will be confined to just suspected drug dealers is laboring under a tragic and possibly suicidal delusion. To assume that only suspected drug dealers will be affected by this law is to negate the reality of present-day America. To allow yourself to think for one moment that this law only applies to suspected drug dealers is to deny that the laws being passed, the policies being implemented, and the methods and tactics of the police have become blatantly and shamelessly fascist.

It should come as no surprise when the homes of revolutionaries and other progressive and true freedom-loving people are invaded by the police on the pretext of searching for drugs and "other evidence." A number of revolutionaries have already been imprisoned on framed-up narcotics charges. Lee Otis was given 30 years and Martin Sestre was sentenced to 41 years on trumped-up narcotics charges. Rest assured this policy will be intensified. It would do us well to consider what kicking in a person's door in search of drugs and "other evidence" actually means. What is "other evidence?" The bourgeois, fascist law-makers have not specified what constitutes "other evidence." The No-Knock Law is an integral part of the fascist trip that this country has embarked upon.

Before, when the home of a Black person was burglarized by a drug addict, or a sister had her purse snatched, the police took all night to respond to the call, or didn't respond at all. The burglar or purse-snatcher was hardly ever caught. In most instances, when someone was arrested, it was the wrong person. But when an exploiting capitalist business establishment in that very same ghetto, especially a White one, gets ripped-off, there are immediately 15 siren-wailing police cars on the set, and three dozen pigs are running up and down the street, waving guns in everybody's face. And you can lay 5 to 1 odds that somebody is going to jail for it. Whether or not the arrested person perpetrated the act is irrelevant from the pigs' standpoint. The

racist pig-police use Blacks as an outlet for their sadistic impulses, inadequacies and frustrations. Now that more police have been sent in, the situation has gone from bad to worse.

VI. Revolution

The racist pig-police, the demagogic politicians and the avaricious big businessmen who control the politicians are delighted that Black youths have fallen victim to the plague. They are delighted for two reasons: one, it is economically profitable, and two, they realize that as long as they can keep our Black youths standing on the street corners "nodding" from a "shot" of heroin, they won't have to worry about us waging an effective struggle for liberation. As long as our young Black brothers and sisters are chasing the bag, as long as they are trying to cop a fix, the rule of our oppressors is secure and our hopes for freedom are dead. It is the youth who make the revolution and it is the youth who carry it out. Without our young, we will never be able to forge a revolutionary force.

We are the only ones capable of eradicating the plague from our communities. It will not be an easy task. It will require tremendous effort. It will have to be a revolutionary program, a people's program.

The Black Panther Party is presently in the process of formulating a program to combat the plague. It will be controlled totally by the people. We, the people, must stamp out the plague, and we will. Dope is a form of genocide in which the victim pays to be killed.

SEIZE THE TIME!

INTENSIFY THE STRUGGLE!

DESTROY THE PLAGUE!

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

Michael "Cetewayo" Tabor

N.Y. Panther 21, Political Prisoner