

To Change The System

Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party for Self-defense, has presented a direct challenge to the whole system of oppression in this country. He says that cops in the ghetto are no longer free to brutalize and torment black people without facing the consequences. His challenge also says that any changes in the system will have to come from the bottom up, and from outside such institutions as the Democratic Party, which, like the cops, are committed to preserving the status quo.

FREE HUEY! HUEY FOR CONGRESS!

Liberals and others who want to make small improvements in the system seem to have a hard time supporting the "Free Huey!" demand. Instead, they merely want to give him a "fair trial", so that they can wash their hands of him when he is found guilty. They want to make the system appear nicer and work better to fool the people and keep them from taking matters into their own hands. What Huey showed is that black people need an end to oppression, not a "better" administration of it. Huey should not only be set free, but should be given the platform of nationwide publicity which his campaign for congress will provide.

The capitalist system is oppressive and exploitative from top to bottom. It exists for the enrichment of a handful of top capitalists and their international corporations. Supported by their agents in government, these rulers take their profits from the wealth produced by the oppressed masses of the world, leaving the masses with little or nothing to show for it. Even those who have steady jobs and unions to protect them are exploited at an ever increasing rate and must constantly defend themselves against attacks on their livelihoods and working conditions. The vicious strikebreaking attack on newspaper workers by the Hearst management is part of a planned attack by the ruling class on the conditions of all working people.

BUILD A FREEDOM-LABOR PARTY!

The oppressed and working people of all races need a political party of their own to lead the struggle against the ruling class, which has always acted in unison politically and in many other ways against the workers and poor. Such a party would have to be built by a united black and white vanguard and a struggle against racism and against the special oppression of black people within the working class.

The racism of white workers, fostered by the bosses, has kept the workers divided against themselves and today threatens to destroy the labor movement and lower the living conditions of all. A racist union of Masonite workers in Laural, Miss. was destroyed recently because blacks were so fed up with white discrimination that they scabbed on a strike. The only winners in such a situation are the bosses, who promoted the discrimination in the first place. The ruling class wants nothing more than to see black and white workers at each others throats, because a divided working class will be unable to fight the increased exploitation which they, the bosses, need to reap more profits and preserve their system. The only solution is a struggle for the interests of all working people, such as a shorter work week with no loss in pay (30 for 40). This would make more jobs available for all and cut into the bloated profits of the bosses.

The Peace and Freedom Party represents a genuine radical upsurge, but unless it decides that it is basically opposed to the capitalist system as well as the two capitalist parties—which is not likely—it will become a third capitalist party and be incapable of solving the problems of the oppressed.

17 February 1968

BAY AREA SPARTACIST LEAGUE
P.O. Box 852, Berkeley. 548-0763

MALCOLM X

Of all the national Negro leaders in this country, the one who was known uniquely for his militancy, intransigence, and refusal to be the liberals' front-man has been shot down. This new political assassination is another indicator of the rising current of irrationality and individual terrorism which the decay of our society begets. Liberal reaction is predictable, and predictably disgusting. They are, of course, opposed to assassination, and some may even contribute to the fund for the education of Malcolm's children, but their mourning at the death of the head of world imperialism had a considerably greater ring of sincerity than their regret at the murder of a black militant who wouldn't play their game.

Black Muslims?

The official story is that Black Muslims killed Malcolm. But we should not hasten to accept this to date unproved hypothesis. The New York Police, for example, had good cause to be afraid of Malcolm, and with the vast resources of blackmail and coercion which are at their disposal, they also had ample opportunity, and of course would have little reason to fear exposure were they involved. At the same time, the Muslim theory cannot be discounted out of hand because the Muslims are not a political group, and in substituting religion for science, and color mysticism for rational analysis, they have a world view which could encompass the efficacy and morality of assassination. A man who has a direct pipeline to God can justify anything.

No Program

The main point, however, is not who killed Malcolm, but why could he be killed? In the literal sense, of course, any man can be killed, but why was Malcolm particularly vulnerable? The answer to this question makes of Malcolm's death tragedy of the sharpest kind, and in the literal Greek sense. Liberals and Elijah have tried to make Malcolm a victim of his own (non-existent) doctrines of violence. This is totally wrong and totally hypocritical. Malcolm was the most dynamic national leader to have appeared in America in the last decade. Compared with him the famous Kennedy personality was a flimsy cardboard creation of money, publicity, makeup, and the media. Malcolm had none of these, but a righteous cause and iron character forged by white America in the fire of discrimination, addiction, prison, and incredible calumny. He had a difficult to define but almost tangible attribute called

charisma. When you heard Malcolm speak, even when you heard him say things that were wrong and confusing, you wanted to believe. Malcolm could move men deeply. He was the stuff of which mass leaders are made. Commencing his public life in the context of the apolitical, irrational religiosity and racial mysticism of the Muslim movement, his break toward politicalness and rationality was slow, painful, and terribly incomplete. It is useless to speculate on how far it would have gone had he lived. He had entered prison a burglar, an addict, and a victim. He emerged a Muslim and a free man forever. Elijah Muhammed and the Lost-Found Nation of Islam were thus inextricably bound up with his personal emancipation. In any event, at the time of his death he had not yet developed a clear, explicit, and rational social program. Nor had he led his followers in the kind of transitional struggle necessary to the creation of a successful mass movement. Lacking such a program, he could not develop cadres based on program. What cadre he had was based on Malcolm X instead. Hated and feared by the power structure, and the focus of the paranoid feelings of his former colleagues, his charisma made him dangerous, and his lack of developed program and cadre made him vulnerable. His death by violence had a high order of probability, as he himself clearly felt.

Heroic and Tragic Figure

The murder of Malcolm, and the disastrous consequences flowing from that murder for Malcolm's organization and black militancy in general, does not mean that the militant black movement can always be decapitated with a shotgun. True, there is an agonizing gap in black leadership today. On the one hand there are the respectable servants of the liberal establishment; men like James Farmer whose contemptible effort to blame Malcolm's murder on "Chinese Communists" will only hasten his eclipse as a leader, and on the other hand the ranks of the militants have yet to produce a man with the leadership potential of Malcolm. But such leadership will eventually be forthcoming. This is a statistical as well as a social certainty. This leadership, building on the experience of others such as Malcolm, and emancipated from his religiosity, will build a movement in which the black masses and their allies can lead the third great American revolution. Then Malcolm X will be remembered by black and white alike as a heroic and tragic figure in a dark period of our common history. ■

Bay Area Spartacist Committee, 2 March, 1965