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Myths About Malcolm X: Two Views

Rev. Albert Cleage and George Breitman

Major Problems of the Latin-American Revolution -A Reply to Régis Debray

By Livio Maitan

The Vanguard Party and the World Revolution

By James P. Cannon

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Contents

Major Problems of the Latin-American Revolution by Livio Maitan	1
The Vanguard Party and the World Revolution by James P. Cannon	23
Myths About Malcolm X: Two Views Rev. Albert Cleage George Breitman	33 43
Book Reviews	61

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Livio Maitan

MAJOR PROBLEMS OF THE LATIN-AMERICAN REVOLUTION

-A Reply to Régis Debray

The English translation of Régis Debray's essay, "Revolution in the Revolution?" published in the July-August issue of "Monthly Review," appeared after the reply by Livio Maitan had been written. However, all quotations from the Debray text were checked to conform with this English version.

As the author of the reply published in this issue observes, news of Debray's arrest and imprisonment by the Bolivian authorities, had just become known at the time the article was submitted. Since then a worldwide movement of protest has arisen against the attempt on the part of the military dictatorship to railroad Debray to prison, or worse, on trumped-up charges that Debray had "participated in armed action" to overthrow the Barrientos regime.

The Fourth International, its sections, co-thinkers and supporters throughout the world, including the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance in this country, are actively and energetically supporting the movement to free Debray from the clutches of the Bolivian "gorillas."

The Debray "thesis" has already engendered widespread discussion in the world press. In addition to the specific views expressed on the character and perspective of the revolutionary development in Latin America the Debray essay contains a free-wheeling attack on a number of political tendencies in the world socialist movement. Its controversial character is bound to give rise to sharp polemical exchanges as the stakes involved are no less than the future of mankind both in Latin America and the world at large.

It is unfortunate that Debray is precluded from participating directly in the discussion his essay is bound to evoke. Nor should it be made the excuse to refrain from the polemic. For, as Debray himself points out in his essay, "sacrifice is not a political argument and martyrdom does not constitute proof."

As I was writing this article, the world press reported Régis Debray's arrest in Bolivia.

Our movement has associated itself with the campaign of solidarity with Debray who is presently in the hands of the reactionary Bolivian military officers. But our elementary duty of solidarity does not obligate us to leave unanswered the attacks he has leveled against Trotskyism, all the more so in view of the particularly grave nature of the attacks and their aim of discrediting us among the Latin-American vanguard.

* * *

Régis Debray's book, which was published in Cuba a few months ago, has already engendered polemics in the revolutionary workers movement. This was inevitable, both because of the author's generalizations, which he maintains are based on the experience of the Cuban revolution, and because of his attacks, most often in highly questionable forms, against the most diverse tendencies. More specifically in regard to the Fourth International, Debray employs methods that are purely Stalinist, ranging from baseless slander to grotesque distortion and outright falsification.¹ These attacks are on such a low level that one is even tempted to make no reply at all.

However, aside from the intrinsic worth of Debray's essay, it will be read and discussed by broad strata of the Latin-American revolutionary vanguard. Thus it provides a timely occasion to state once again the past and present concepts and positions of the Fourth International with regard to the major problems of the Latin-American revolutionary movement.

The Fourth International, it should be noted here, had already clearly developed its stand on these problems in its first congresses following the war.² At a time when the traditional workers parties demonstrated the most complete lack of understanding of phenomena of the greatest import to the development of the mass movement in certain countries and adopted extremely opportunistic schemas, which sometimes put them on the same side as American imperialism and the oligarchies, the Fourth International was able to grasp the social and political content of Peronism and a series of national-revolutionary movements, to stress a living application of Leninism, the necessity to take the revolutionary road in Latin America too, and to affirm that in the historic stage which was opening up, the working-class and peasant masses could be mobilized in a victorious struggle against imperialism. After the victory of the Cuban revolution, some of these ideas became commonly accepted and are no longer debated within the broad Latin-American vanguard. But this was not so fifteen or twenty years ago, and even now there are parties with an unquestionable mass influence which do not accept certain concepts, even if at times, out of opportunism, they sign declarations reaffirming these principles.³

Also on the crucial problem of the nature of the Latin-American revolution the Fourth International has always taken the clearest

stand. On just this issue, it has been criticized, even recently, by revolutionary leaders like Douglas Bravo.⁴ Bravo's fundamental concern seems to be to avoid overly simplistic and mechanistic conceptions which could result in restricting the forces which can be mobilized in an anti-imperialist struggle.

Let us disregard the criticisms of those who judge the Fourth International's conceptions on the basis of a few Posadist documents, which in fact often border on a caricature. The only way to begin is by objectively analyzing the problem, regardless of where it leads. Proceeding in this way, we characterized the Latin-American revolution as a revolution which was destined, not by the will of some impatient agitators but by its own logic, its own intrinsic necessity, to become transformed uninterruptedly into a revolution of a socialist nature as it achieved aims corresponding to the interests and aspirations of the masses. Twenty years ago, such a conception could have been considered as either describing a very broad, long-range tendency or as an attempt to impose on the Latin-American reality criteria drawn from the historical experience of other revolutions. But after the Cuban revolution, such an interpretation is no longer possible—in four years time this revolution ran through the complete cycle from revolutionary democratic opposition to the Batista dictatorship to open struggle against American imperialism, expropriation of the indigenous possessing classes, and the establishment of a workers state.⁵

In order to provide a clearer indication of our views, I will summarize at this point what we wrote in connection with the 1965-66 polemics in the Guatemalan movement.⁶ We stressed then that these were not abstract quarrels; on the contrary, behind the formulas and even the nuances lay specifically concrete political variants. This was all the more true because the Guatemalan movement had already undergone very important experiences and because inevitably the stand of certain organizations is judged primarily on the basis of their past activity.

Thus, one could not forget the practical significance—during the Arévalo-Arbenz period up to the 1954 aggression—of the line of democratic revolution which involved collaborating with the so-called national bourgeoisie. The PGT [Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo—the Guatemalan Labor Party, the name taken by the Guatemalan Communist Party], in fact, renounced any independent role, transforming itself into a point of support for the bourgeois reformist government, which at the crucial moment capitulated before the imperialist and indigenous reactionary forces. To this must be added the fact that after 1954 the PGT raised the slogan of restoring "democracy" and that even after a turn toward armed struggle its line remained eclectic, being based also on legal activities.⁷

But the problem of the nature of the revolution becomes most concrete when it comes to determining which social classes are participating in the struggle, which classes are ready to go all the way, and which must actually play the leading role. The Trotskyist move-

ment has never denied a priori that sections of the national bourgeoisie could align themselves with an anti-imperialist struggle; but it has stressed that if the leadership is left up to such elements, the struggle will, in fact, be held back and diverted and will at best end in the establishment of a neocolonialist regime where imperialism would maintain its grip and the masses would be robbed of the fruits of their struggle. That is why it is absolutely necessary to understand what the dynamics of this process must be and to make others understand it, to establish a platform which leaves no room for ambiguity, and to ensure—this is the decisive factor in the last analysis—that the leadership is in the hands of the working class in alliance with the poor peasantry. This in no way means mixing up the beginning of a revolution with its final phase, nor does it mean raising at the outset slogans that can be materialized in reality only as the end result of an entire period of revolutionary struggle, or substituting subjective interpretations or an absurd idealization of the masses for analyses of concrete situations. What is important, let me repeat, is to grasp the permanent character of the revolution, whose profound logic is not only anti-imperialist and antifeudal but at the same time anticapitalist; to understand that possible alliances with petty-bourgeois and national-bourgeois forces at certain stages cannot be carried out at the price of surrendering or restricting the leading role of the proletariat and the poor peasantry, that is, those forces which emerge in the social context of economically backward societies as the revolutionary motor power; to realize that the test for every revolutionary leadership is its capacity to raise slogans and organize actions which, at each stage, can impel the anticapitalist dynamic of the struggle forward, while starting from a mobilization for the goals of democracy and national liberation.⁸

The problem of the nature of the revolution demands our attention all the more since false conceptions in this area have served as the primary ideological vehicle for the opportunism of the Latin-American Communist parties. Indeed, it is precisely the concept of a national democratic revolution involving an alliance with bourgeois capitalist social layers and classes which underlies the rejection of the revolutionary road and guerrilla warfare and is at the core of every eclectic and wavering notion.⁹

To conclude this point, the permanent nature—in the Marxist and Trotskyist sense of the word—of the revolution on the order of the day in Latin America must be proclaimed in the current stage more than ever before, particularly due to the following reasons: (a) the lesson of Cuba has been assimilated by all those in the vanguard and by a broad sector of the masses; (b) in no country can the so-called national bourgeoisie take a favorable or even neutral attitude toward movements which by the nature of things cannot help but align themselves with the Cubans against the bloc of U.S. imperialism and the indigenous possessing classes on a continental scale

from the very outset; (c) the struggle at least in a series of countries and for an entire period, will be much more difficult than it was in Cuba; it will exhibit a tendency to cross over the borders of the various states; it cannot be definitively won unless it spreads throughout the continent, a perspective which no national bourgeoisie will accept, even temporarily.

The Guerrilla Struggle

For almost ten years now the Fourth International has stressed the importance of guerrilla warfare as a specific form of armed struggle, pointing out at the same time that the poor peasant movement would play a major role for an entire stage of the revolution in the colonial and semicolonial countries.

Without reviewing our positions in detail, the following will indicate where we stand: In our opinion the discussion in progress within the Latin-American revolutionary movement will be useful and productive insofar as it focuses on analyzing specific situations in certain countries rather than on drawing generalizations which are at once as vague as they are enticing. It is precisely the originality of the Cuban experience—in many respects it took all tendencies in the international workers movement by surprise—which should counsel avoidance of rigid schemas, especially in connection with the concrete forms and stages of the revolutionary process.¹⁰

However, before turning to the crucial experiences of the most recent years, I would like to indicate briefly some considerations which have been raised on several occasions both by the International and by our Latin-American movement.

No one is unaware of the fact, first of all, that there are countries in Latin America whose social structure has very different features from those of the countries where guerrilla warfare is now developing or has developed in the past. If we look at Argentina or Chile, for example, where a very large percentage of the population is concentrated in the cities and employed in industry and its associated sectors, it seems very unlikely, if not excluded, that a possible rural guerrilla war could play a decisive role. The decisive element will most likely be the revolutionary struggle in the cities, in which not only the working-class masses but also the disinherited plebian masses congregated on the periphery of the great urban concentrations will participate.¹¹

In addition, in our opinion, it is clear that no guerrilla movement can achieve lasting success unless it has issued from the broad mass movement or succeeds rather quickly in establishing firm ties with it. We do not mean this as a restatement of the traditional concept of the mass movement gradually maturing until it culminates in armed struggle. We are well aware that any hypothesis of guerrilla warfare is based on the assumption that, in a general sense, a revo-

lutionary, or prerevolutionary situation exists, or can ripen very quickly in most of the Latin-American countries. We are, broadly, in agreement with such an analysis. But it does not follow that any group of bold militants can effectively begin guerrilla warfare at any time, after having met a minimum of technical requirements. It is in just this respect that the Cuban experience has been arbitrarily and improperly generalized upon. Too often the audacious character of the action of the small group that made the *Granma* landing—which clearly marked a healthy break with traditionalist and tail-ending concepts—has led people to forget the following essential factors: (a) the Cuban situation in 1956, not only from the economic and social standpoint but also from the more strictly political standpoint, was such as almost necessarily to impel the adoption of certain methods of struggle and to promote broad support for those who fought arms in hand against a ferocious dictatorship hated by virtually the entire population; (b) the very small vanguard which began the struggle included in its ranks a man like Fidel who, even aside from his having what proved to be exceptional abilities, was already known as the leader of a national revolutionary current with significant mass influence;¹² (c) despite their very close ties with the Batista regime, the American imperialists did not display such aggressive hostility toward Castro's movement in 1956-59 as to deprive it of all margin for political maneuver, even in capitalist circles in the United States.

Underestimation of these factors and failure to analyze the real situations in the early years after Fidel Castro's victory led to outright putschist moves resulting either in the useless loss of the lives of courageous militants or in the unleashing of repressions which cost the working-class and revolutionary movement dearly as a whole. That is why those who want to learn from the past in working out a revolutionary line must draw a balance sheet not only by centering fire against opportunist resistance and right-wing capitulation (which on a broad scale unquestionably represents the main danger) but also by taking into account a series of negative experiences ranging from those in Venezuela in 1962 and in Peru in the same period, to others less well known but not less significant (in Argentina for example).¹³

Finally, our evaluation of the role of the peasantry involves no concession to the idea maintained by some that the urban working class in some colonial countries is itself, in the last analysis, a privileged social layer. Such a concept—aside from its inherently erroneous nature from the standpoint of Marxist analysis—could only result in underestimating the need to mobilize the urban masses in the struggle, which is nevertheless of primary importance for even the survival of guerrilla warfare in the rural areas.¹⁴

But let us turn to the more specific accusations made against us. According to Debray, the Trotskyists are opposed to guerrilla warfare and are partisans of a strategy of self-defense, which, it is claimed,

has also been adopted by a section of the movement in Colombia.

Our attitude toward guerrilla warfare has already been specified in outline and we will return to it further on. As for self-defense, we consider it neither a method to be universally employed nor rejected a priori. There are countries—in Latin America and elsewhere—where self-defense has corresponded, or now corresponds, to a need recognized by sections of the vanguard and where giving it a concrete form has been, or would be, a step forward of major importance. In other cases, however, restricting the struggle to self-defense would inevitably involve defeat and a serious setback for the revolutionary movement.

Leaving aside certain rash parallels or certain aphorisms which are as empty as they are pretentious,¹⁵ let us take a look at the cases cited to point up the errors and failings of our movement. Aside from a very vague allusion to Brazil and the peasant leagues led by Julião, he primarily takes up the cases of Guatemala, Peru, and Bolivia. I will not return to the first country. It is sufficient to reaffirm here, to eliminate any possible misunderstanding, that guerrilla struggle must now be the fundamental method in Guatemala and that it must be centered primarily in the rural areas, where, moreover, the leadership of the revolutionary movement as a whole must normally function.¹⁶

Hugo Blanco and Peru

The Peruvian experience has undoubtedly been one of the most momentous of the past five years, an experience rich and varied, outstanding in the multiplicity of movements, the application of palpably different lines, the temporary successes followed by devastating repressions, and by tragic setbacks. No serious attempt to make generalizations valid for all of Latin America can be undertaken without a detailed and profound analysis of what has occurred in Peru. It goes without saying that such an analysis cannot be attempted here due to limited information at present on some important events and because such an analysis can be worked out only through the joint efforts of our entire Latin-American movement and the Peruvian movement in the first instance.

Régis Debray treats this paramount experience in the most offhand way: two lines on Blanco in the context of a gross falsification, allusions to Luis de la Puente Uceda brought in as part of a polemic against Huberman and Sweezy's *Monthly Review*.¹⁷ That's how you dispose of the most burning questions!

However, to gain even the slightest understanding of Hugo Blanco's work, one must start from the context in which it was executed and grasp its objective implications in the given conditions. When he began his work among the peasants, Blanco was reacting on the one hand against adventurist and putschist tendencies which had developed within his own organization; and on the other hand, he was breaking

with the tradition of a certain kind of urban left, which was, indeed, partly bound to obsolete schemas, partly always ready to *discuss* new roads but incapable of taking practical steps to establish ties with the peasant masses. Blanco's experience did not in any way develop in accordance with abstract models but in ever closer association with the real mass movement. Now, after the fact, only a blind man could fail to realize the truly historic importance such work has had in educating the peasant sectors, even aside from the fact that it is still too early to assess the impact on the future of the revolutionary movement made by the Tacna trial and the events which followed it in which Hugo Blanco emerged as a hero of the Peruvian and Latin-American people.

The self-defense concept was in fact maintained in the revolutionary movement in Peru and I had the good fortune to participate personally in intense discussions on this subject. This idea was not conceived in an imitative or artificial way. It was formulated on the basis of the experience of the land occupations and heedful interpretation of the attitudes and aspirations of the peasants who participated in them.

It goes without saying that no one from the outside drove the peasants to occupy the land. This was, in the last analysis, one of the consequences of the new situation which the Cuban revolution created in Latin America. The problem of defense was inevitably posed as soon as the government chose the repressive road and the peasants fell under the bullets of the army and the police. It was the peasants themselves who took this attitude, mulling over ways to defend their gains and to protect their lives. This was how the idea of the need for armed struggle took shape among them.

It was always clear to us that self-defense was only a stage and that once armed struggle became generally accepted it would take other forms and would have to pass through guerrilla warfare probably for a prolonged period. But it was not possible to skip a stage—even a limited one—in the subjective development of the masses. An appeal to the peasants for guerrilla warfare from the outset would very probably have fallen on deaf ears, even in those areas where there was a living movement—at most such an appeal would have been heeded by a few vanguard elements who, in any case, would have risked acting without the understanding of even the social groupings from which they came. The other alternative might have been an armed struggle taking the form of guerrilla warfare from the time when experience demonstrated in practice the impossibility of winning in a direct confrontation with the adversaries and the necessity of creating specialized mobile guerrilla detachments, which while of course representing a very small minority would nonetheless have enjoyed the active support of the overwhelming majority of the rural population in their fight. It is significant, moreover—Blanco himself stressed this fact in one of his letters from prison—that once the

Cuzco leader was forced to adopt forms of struggle which could no longer be properly characterized as a tactic of self-defense, he held out much longer, despite all the well-known difficulties, than others, including, we might add, the MIR [Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria—Movement of the Revolutionary Left] nuclei who nonetheless felt that they were following a much more effective course. The essential reason for this, of course, lay in the fact that Blanco enjoyed very wide support among the peasant population.

We do not know whether in prison Hugo Blanco has drawn an overall balance sheet of his experience or what his present views are on the future perspectives for the Peruvian revolution. Some allusions contained in a letter addressed to the November 1966 student congress seem to indicate that in his eyes the key link is still to organize the peasant movement.

In any case, Blanco has explained in some letters written in prison how he interprets certain aspects of the struggle he led.

In the first place, for those who have imputed reformist tendencies to Blanco (perhaps because he used the organizing of unions as a means and concerned himself also with the most modest needs of the peasants in his region, not overlooking the fact that partial gains could prove valuable in reinforcing the self-confidence of the peasants), the following passage should be noted: "We have discovered a broad and sure road and we are advancing. Why should we lose our heads now? Those comrades who are in prison must understand that the party cannot mobilize itself in harmony with their weariness at confinement but only in accordance with the needs of the Peruvian people and the possibilities open to them. If there are some who are free and in a hurry and who feel that they are able to be guerrillas, that is magnificent! Let them prove it by devoting themselves to a peasant union, the one in Chumbivilcas for example, coming and going on foot. After that they can talk to us about guerrilla warfare, if they have enough strength left. Doesn't organizing peasant unions train militants in the nomad life? Doesn't it give them knowledge of the terrain and the population? And it brings the most important result—the conscious incorporation of the broad masses in the struggle. We must gain as much ground as we can before the armed clash comes in order to be sure of victory." (Mariscal Gamarra Prison, June 1963.)

Here is another very important passage:

"As to the tactics of guerrilla warfare, I am completely in accord that they should be taught to defense committees. These should not be empiric, and in this respect, the vanguard party has a role to play. All knowledge of guerrilla tactics *which can be adapted* to our militia strategy must be taken advantage of.

"Manco II, for example, who surrounded Cuzco ready to crush it, was abandoned by his troops because the time for planting or harvesting—I don't remember which—had come for potatoes.

"None of that interferes with guerrilla organization. Some units can be organized to aid the militias. But the fundamental organism for the open struggle in Peru will be the militia of the unions led by the party. Let us take all the advantages of the peculiarities of our situation.

"We will not part with anything, having advanced so much.

"You say, 'it is astride the *campesino* movement that the FIR [Frente de la Izquierda Revolucionaria— Revolutionary Left Front, the Peruvian section of the Fourth International] should face the open struggle for power.' I agree, it was so in Cuba. The difference lies in that they first grabbed the arms and then mounted the horse. We are on the horse but lack the arms. Why get off the horse?" ("Hugo Blanco's Answer to Rosendo," April 7, 1964. See *International Socialist Review*, Spring 1965, p. 46.)

It is thus clear that Hugo Blanco poses these problems very concretely, in relation to what is happening in the mass movement at a given stage. It was logical, moreover, let me repeat, for him to insist above all on the necessity of linking up with the real movement when putschist tendencies were rife even in the FIR, for him to insist on the necessity of adopting means of struggle which took shape in the course of the experience of these movements, especially the experience of occupying the land. It must not be forgotten either that the fact that Hugo Blanco's methods ran counter to those of the traditional workers movement was confirmed by the openly hostile attitude of the Communist Party.

I will return later in connection with Bolivia to the question of dual power which holds a central place in Hugo Blanco's outlook.¹⁸ Here only the elementary point need be noted that dual power is neither a "theory" nor an abstract goal but a real situation which can occur at a given time, as it did in Peru, at least in certain regions, both before and after Hugo Blanco's arrest. The problem which confronted the Cuzco leader was, therefore, how to take advantage of a given situation. He made some contributions and undertook some real actions. It is on this basis that he must be judged. Or should he be reproached for not disregarding the existing conditions, including the temper and aspirations of the peasants among whom he worked?

This said, we may properly seek the causes of the negative outcome of Blanco's fight as well as that of de la Puente and Lobatón.

No one can exclude the possibility a priori that errors were committed. In my opinion, on the basis of present information, aside from any possible errors or failings, the basic reason for the setback was that the movement's success remained limited to a few regions, especially the Cuzco region, while among the working-class elements in the cities the movement never broke out of a rather sterile routinist line of activity. This was reflected, among other things, by the relative isolation of the action led by Blanco, who could count on the aid of only a small organization already hit by severe repressive measures. As for the situation in the cities, a major obstacle was the still quite

important influence of the CP, which had in no way rectified its opportunist line, contributing by this, among other things, to the defeat of attempts to rejuvenate the trade-union movement.

I will not analyze here the guerrilla experience of de la Puente Uceda's MIR. I will state, however, that on the basis of its programmatic statements, the accusations of putschism against the MIR do not seem well founded. Whether or not some lines of action were actually put into practice, as some documents referring to the very first phase of the guerrilla struggle claim, for example, is another matter. It must be stressed in addition that the ELN [Ejército de Liberación Nacional—National Liberation Army] action, which according to some sources made both more of an effort to apply valid standards for guerrilla warfare and to achieve real ties with the masses, was also unsuccessful.¹⁹

From the start of de la Puente's movement, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, since it did not have the direct information needed to make a precise political evaluation, limited itself to expressing its revolutionary solidarity with the courageous militants who had undertaken the armed struggle. As for the FIR, aside from this or that expression which may perhaps have facilitated hostile interpretations, its basic judgment was that conditions in the mass movement and the MIR's relationship to it would not permit the action to succeed, that a tragic outcome was inevitable despite the courage and revolutionary intransigence of de la Puente and his companions. I am well aware that the validity of a prediction cannot be ascertained merely by establishing a correlation between it and the actual outcome. However, the FIR's enemies and critics—who often vie with each other in sectarianism—should recognize that our comrades took a clear stand from the outset and that neither the mass mobilization nor the major social and political crisis which the MIR combatants counted on touching off or fostering by their decision to begin a guerrilla struggle occurred.

For my part, again acknowledging that the question will have to be studied in much greater detail, I am inclined to the view that the defeat of the 1965 movement was not due essentially to false theoretical conceptions, or overall line, but was rooted in an incorrect analysis that led to the belief that the conditions vital to its success existed. These conditions—namely: (a) a growing movement in the countryside; (b) real ties between the group undertaking guerrilla warfare and this movement; (c) active solidarity on the part of the exploited urban layers; (d) a political crisis so acute as to impel very wide segments of the population into struggle, eliminating those important areas of passivity and apathy which have unfortunately featured the Peruvian situation at crucial stages in the past—did not exist in 1965, nor did any such development occur after the struggle began. An understanding of the situation and the real tendencies at work would

have led the MIR either to postpone its move or, at least, to follow other criteria in carrying out the initial action.²⁰

New attempts are now being made to prepare the way for new waves. "New figures," Guevara wrote in his message, "are reorganizing the guerrilla struggle with tenacity and firmness." We are not able at present to judge the scope of such attempts. But, in any case, the fact cannot be disregarded that defeats have been suffered and that much work—even elementary, prosaic work—is required to prepare the way for a new upsurge of the mass movement, or at least, some of its important sectors. This is all the more true because the Peruvian vanguard has suffered extremely grave losses from murders and arrests, depriving the most advanced organizations and groups in particular of virtually all their most capable leaders, and because the problem of freeing the movement from the pernicious influence of the traditional opportunist organizations is far from resolved, especially in the urban sectors.

It would be absurd to think that all these obstacles could be surmounted through some small groups adopting very general schemas and applying a series of norms (whatever the intrinsic worth of such schemas or norms). I am convinced that the Peruvian reality, which is so complex, so rich, holds surprises in store for us. While there is not the least doubt that the future will definitively sweep away all theory and practice of "a peaceful road," an alliance with the so-called national bourgeoisie, of revolution "by stages," etc., at the same time we will see types of revolutionary armed struggle which no one can now predetermine. The essential thing is for the vanguard to note in time changes in the situation and new opportunities. This is not possible through fidelity to fixed schemas but only through continually updated analyses.

The Struggle in Bolivia and Venezuela

Debray devotes a little more time to Bolivia than Peru. But, his analyses, characterizations, and observations are not less arbitrary and impressionistic, even though his conclusion that guerrilla warfare is likewise required in Bolivia is fundamentally correct.

The momentous experience of 1952 and the following years is summed up by Debray as follows: "In 1952 the miners destroyed the oligarchy's army, established a liberal government, received arms and a semblance of power. The revolution turned bourgeois; the miners gradually severed connections." (p. 33.) The characterization of the 1952 MNR [Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario—National Revolutionary Movement] government as "liberal" is astonishing in itself. It doesn't hold up either with respect to form or content, in either the European or Latin-American usage of the word. But more important, the 1952 revolution was in reality, as we have pointed out many

times, and as all who have followed the political events in Bolivia in the slightest degree know, a revolution led by a revolutionary nationalist movement which at the time enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of the workers and peasants. In its first years in power, the MNR was driven by the pressure of the masses which supported it to carry out some important measures of a revolutionary bourgeois-democratic nature, going to the point of nationalizing the mines and inaugurating an agrarian reform, which despite its limitations unquestionably benefited broad segments of the peasantry and dealt a hard blow to the traditionally ultrareactionary landowning class. This is what explains the attitude of the various sectors of the masses toward the MNR regime and why a relatively long period of bitter experiences and struggles was necessary before the masses came to understand the nature of the MNR, which in the last analysis was conservative and unable to lead the revolution to its logical conclusion, becoming more and more hostile to the workers and entangled in the machinations of imperialism. With regard to the November 1964 military coup, Debray's explanation is of a superficial, propagandistic character. He is ignorant of the fact, or he seems ignorant of it, that there was actually a new upsurge in the mass movement—this time against Paz Estenssoro, who was irretrievably compromised in the eyes of the masses—that the miners won victories in armed clashes, including with the army, and that the officers in fact organized a preventive coup to derail a movement that had already become too dangerous.²¹

It was in this context that a dual power situation again emerged in some areas of Bolivia in the period immediately following the November 1964 events, independently of what the Trotskyists or the other tendencies in the workers movement might have wished or decided. In fact, the problem posed was to determine what the short—and even intermediate—term perspectives were and how to exploit a temporary position of strength. But it would have been absurd to disregard the specific, concrete factors, the mood and will of the miners in the first instance. Besides, what could they have done in the spring of 1965 when Barrientos sought a test of strength? Should they have tried to respond to the steps taken against Lechín with improvised guerrilla actions and attempted to convince the miners that they must not mobilize in a massive strike? In fact, the only possibility of blocking Barrientos was to show him that he would run into a very broad counter-attack. Even if the unions had not proclaimed a strike, the miners would have launched it on their own.

Of course, from the time that Barrientos and his advisors decided to go all the way and unleashed a ferocious repression, the strike was insufficient as a counterblow and it was necessary to formulate a new strategy. We will see directly that our Bolivian comrades by no means lost sight of this necessity and Debray could have ascer-

tained this if he had read their press and their resolutions instead of contenting himself with old anti-Trotskyist clichés. But it would be completely wrong to overlook the fact that the Bolivian situation was in fact marked for a long period by very specific features and that at certain times it was objectively possible to mobilize the masses of miners as well as broad sectors of the peasants in an armed struggle for power without going through a phase of guerrilla warfare as other countries in Latin America have experienced or will experience it. If these opportunities were not taken advantage of, it was because there was no genuine revolutionary leadership capable of uniting the movement on a national scale.²² It must not be forgotten either, to come up to the most recent years, that a certain cleavage had occurred between the workers and broad sections of the peasantry, which in fact explains why the latter did not take part in the 1964 events, subsequently maintaining a wait-and-see attitude. This is a factor which could not be disregarded without very grave consequences in any possible formulation of a guerrilla strategy and still more in its practical application.

The possibility of adopting an orientation toward guerrilla warfare had already been seriously discussed in Bolivian revolutionary circles in the final period of the Paz Estenssoro regime. Immediately after the military coup, a POR [Partido Obrero Revolucionario—Revolutionary Workers Party, the Trotskyist organization] document set as the party's number one task the centralization of arms in order to form a proletarian army and provide training and instruction in military tactics.²³ More precise decisions on this matter were taken some months later (March 1965) at a POR plenum. The headline in *Lucha Obrera* which announced this meeting is significant in itself: "Se reunió en Huanuni Comité Central del POR: aprobó documentos sobre acción armada y guerrillas." [Central Committee of the POR meets in Huanuni—adopts documents on armed action and guerrillas.] (May 1, 1965, issue.)

Further, in July 1965, when the PRIN [Partido Revolucionario de Izquierda Nacionalista—Revolutionary Party of the National Left] and CP trade-union leaders decided at an assembly of the miners to terminate the struggle in the Siglo Veinte region, the Trotskyists favored adopting forms of armed struggle. Indeed, following this assembly, nuclei, including the Trotskyist César Lora, left the urban centers where they had been active previously and tried to organize themselves as guerrilla detachments north of Potosi. Unfortunately, they were detected rather quickly and César Lora himself was murdered by the military on July 29.

Let us also note, finally, that beginning in September of that year other attempts were made to organize guerrilla warfare. Among other things, publications which called for armed struggle specifically in the form of guerrilla warfare were distributed. These explained that it was

necessary to link up this struggle with the combat conducted in the mass movement. The content of these publications was given a favorable reception in the Trotskyist press.²⁴

It goes without saying that we are ready to discuss in greater detail all the positions taken by the International and the comrades of the POR on the perspectives and roads of the revolution in Bolivia, provided our critics take the trouble to inform themselves of our views and remember that our movement deserves the respect due all those who have fought on unceasingly while suffering the cruelist repression at the hands of the class enemy.²⁵

As for Venezuela, the Fourth International gave its support to the guerrilla movement there from the outset.²⁶ And we did not confine ourselves to this broad, general position, but took clear stands several times on problems which arose.

Thus, we did not neglect to criticize adventurist and putschist tendencies.²⁷ But as soon as right-wing opportunist tendencies began to take shape, we made our position equally clear. "We are convinced," the United Secretariat wrote to the Venezuelan Trotskyists in January 1965, "that profound pessimism flowing from a rather static analysis and from a more or less conscious and avowed acceptance of the idea that any revolutionary development is doomed to failure because it would run up against major resistance from American imperialism is at the root of the present positions of the right wing of the MIR [Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria — Movement of the Revolutionary Left] and the PCV [Partido Comunista Venezolano — Venezuelan Communist Party]." And the letter added further on, in pointing to certain weaknesses in the analyses of the left wing: "The left wing, in practice, grasps the crucial point when it maintains that there must be no liquidation of the guerrilla movement (which in any case, among other things, has surmounted the major difficulties of the first phase of establishing itself.)"²⁸

As for the more recent vicissitudes, the Fourth International has taken an absolutely unequivocal stand in favor of Douglas Bravo, and supports in particular the theses expressed by Fidel Castro against the Venezuelan CP in his March 13 speech. This, then, constitutes our position on what is presently one of the major problems of the Latin-American revolutionary struggle.²⁹

In conclusion, I can affirm that we are in fundamental agreement with some of the points Debray raises, especially as to the necessity of avoiding ambiguity in the movement's orientation, of forthrightly deciding the question of where to locate the revolutionary movement's center, etc. Once it is concluded that guerrilla warfare in the rural areas is the essential road for a given country, it follows logically that the leadership center must be located in the rural areas and that its members must spend most of their time with the detachments of guerrilla fighters. It also seems to us that any new guerrilla movement

must study all the facts of the Cuban experience in depth, both in their technical as well as political aspects. It is not a question of establishing absolute norms but of taking into account the existence of a considerable number of common features and of drawing the maximum benefit from a precious acquisition.

Once Again on the Revolutionary Party

Debray examines another crucial question confronting the Latin-American fighters, the question of building a party and its role in the revolutionary process. In this connection, one can only agree with him when he finds fault with the experience of the Communist parties (including those groups which adhere to the Chinese line), when he rejects making a fetish of the party so that it assumes a primacy not justified by any real function, when he explains that a revolutionary struggle can begin and develop in countries like those in Latin America even without the prior existence of a party.³⁰ Nevertheless, I should like to make a few brief observations.

Since 1960 the Fourth International has stressed the fact that a revolutionary leadership was able to emerge in Cuba and play a decisive role in forms which it would have been hard to forecast on the basis of previous historical experience. The rise of the Algerian revolution up until 1963 also favored the conclusion that, under certain given conditions, a leadership could conduct a victorious armed struggle and move toward establishing even a workers state without the existence of a revolutionary party from the beginning or with a party still in a completely embryonic stage.³¹

But can one conclude from this, as Debray seems to do, that this variant holds for all, or almost all, the Latin-American countries? Up until now, no one has demonstrated this on the basis not of broad general analogies but of exact analyses of the real situation and the underlying tendencies which might prevail in the future.

Furthermore, we must not lose sight of a fundamental side. The problem is posed concretely because of the bankruptcy of all the traditional parties, which have proved incapable, and in all likelihood will continue to prove incapable, of leading revolutionary struggles to a victorious conclusion. It is these parties—the Communist parties above all—which have represented, and still represent, a major barrier to the development of an armed struggle and which must therefore either be defeated or outflanked. But if a real revolutionary party existed, or could be created quickly enough in one or another country, it would obviously be a favorable factor of very great importance and would greatly facilitate not only the solution of the paramount problem of linking up those waging the arduous struggle with the broad masses but also expedite the conduct of the armed struggle itself. But while it would be absurd to let the absence of a revolu-

tionary party stand in the way of beginning the armed struggle in a generally ripe situation (if Fidel Castro had accepted such logic, the Cuban revolution would not have taken place), it would be erroneous to consider such a development inevitable everywhere and to forego trying to organize revolutionary parties right now in countries where the armed struggle is not immediately in the offing. It goes without saying that even when the second alternative is taken, this does not mean getting entrapped in more or less classical schemas; the thing is to grasp the key link on each occasion. For example, Hugo Blanco held that the peasant unions might play the role of the revolutionary party in Peru. This conclusion is subject to debate, especially now, some years after Blanco's experience, but in any case it is not a traditional, "orthodox" concept.³²

Finally, although the absence of a well-organized party did not halt the victorious course of the revolution in Cuba—for a series of reasons, including the abilities of the leadership group—in other colonial or semicolonial countries this lack has proved at certain times to be a major obstacle. For example, different opinions are possible on the stages of the Algerian revolution, on the role of this or that person, on the characterization of the stage inaugurated by the June 19 coup; but it is indisputable that it was precisely the absence of a genuine revolutionary party which had very negative consequences in the evolution of an otherwise very promising situation.

* * *

Underestimation of the importance of generalizations, above all when they have practical connotations for the revolutionary struggles on the order of the day is not a characteristic of our movement. In this article itself, I have again brought up certain ideas on the nature of the Latin-American revolution, on the necessity of armed struggle, on the role of guerrilla warfare under given conditions, and I have reaffirmed the vital need to extend the struggle on a continental scale, which has rightly become the central theme of all the most advanced currents and of the most prestigious leaders from Che Guevara to Douglas Bravo.

However, careless generalizations based on insufficiently concrete analysis should be guarded against, since by their nature they cannot refute the theses of partisans of opportunist views but may give them openings for their arguments. The danger exists of nourishing endless polemics over generalities, thus permitting those who have an interest in doing so to avoid making clear choices in the here and now. That is why we think that the real positions ought to be verified through analyses, the formulation of perspectives, and practical decisions relating to one or another country in a given context. And on the most urgent problems posed at this stage (in Guatemala, Venezuela, and Bolivia, etc.), I believe our line is absolutely clear.

May 10, 1967

Footnotes

(1) Debray's principal falsification lies in confusing the Fourth International with the small sectarian Posadist groups. Aside from this, what should we say of an author who claims to be well informed yet can still write the following, among other things, about our movement: "The same analyses and perspectives serve equally well for Peru and Belgium"? (*Revolution in the Revolution? Monthly Review*, July-August 1967, p. 39.) He is obviously unfamiliar with what we have written on either Peru or Belgium! It is significant, moreover, that he does not turn to our programmatic documents or reports on activities in order to evaluate our views, but cites an article by Sartre, written fifteen years ago, in which the French philosopher expressed his views on Stalinism and the relationship between Stalinism and Leninism. We do not know to what extent Sartre would be inclined to maintain these ideas today.

(2) Attention is called in particular to the document adopted by the Third World Congress. See *Fourth International*, November-December 1951.

(3) I have in mind above all the Chilean Communist Party which shortly after the Tricontinental Congress justly became one of the main targets of Cuban polemics. The stand taken by the Brazilian CP even after the 1964 military coup could also be cited. (See especially the interview with Luis Carlos Prestes published in *l'Humanité*, January 16, 1967.)

(4) Debray's completely vulgar criticisms in reality deal with Posadist documents. (See *Revolution in the Revolution?*, p. 37. For Bravo's criticisms, see *Sucesos*, No. 1752, pp. 32-33.)

(5) In rebuttal to Debray's slanderous accusation that our movement, which he equates with the reformists (this technique of making an amalgam is not new), made the Cuban revolution a target of attack (p. 41), we call attention to the fact that the International Secretariat of the Fourth International characterized Cuba as a workers state as early as October 1960. We also call attention to the fact that our press, despite its material limitations, has published almost all the basic documents and speeches of the Cuban leaders as well as hundreds of analytical articles favorable to revolutionary Cuba. Anyone can ascertain this for himself.

(6) On Luis Turcios' criticisms of the Posadists, we have already stated that they seemed pertinent and corresponded generally to the criticisms made by the leadership of the Fourth International in its polemics of 1960-62 against Posadas' positions. (See my article published in *World Outlook*, March 4, 1966.)

(7) See on this subject the articles by J.M. Fortuni, José Milla and A. Tuzl published in *World Marxist Review*, December 1964, and April 1965.

(8) Here is an indicative passage from the resolution on the dialectics of the world revolution adopted at our Reunification Congress, June, 1963 ("Dynamics of World Revolution Today," *International Socialist Review*, Fall 1963): "As in the case of equating the *beginning* of the colonial revolution (under bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership) with

its victorious *conclusion* under proletarian leadership, any idea that this process will occur automatically or inevitably within a certain time limit necessarily leads to a distorted estimate of the actual relationship of forces and replaces scientific analysis by illusions and wishful thinking. It presupposes that the objective process will solve by itself a task which can only be solved in struggle through the subjective effort of the vanguard; i.e., revolutionary-socialist conquest of the leadership of the mass movement. That this is possible in the very process of the revolution, and in a relatively short time, has been adequately demonstrated in the case of Cuba. That it is not inevitable, and that without it the revolution is certain to suffer serious defeats or be limited at best to inconclusive victories is demonstrated by much in the recent history of other Latin-American countries; for instance, Bolivia, Argentina and Guatemala."

(9) Although Debray raises many correct criticisms of the Latin-American Communist parties, he gives the impression that he believes they in fact observe the norms of democratic centralism and that they, at least in some circumstances, have been too democratic. This means one of two things: Either Debray does not know what real democratic centralism is, or he has lost sight of how the Latin-American CP's actually function. For our part, we incline to the opinion that if democratic methods had actually been observed, the concepts and views of at least some of the parties concerned would have changed after the Cuban revolution.

(10) The Fourth International did not hesitate to draw all the conclusions from the Cuban experience which it considered legitimate. "From the Cuban experience," reads the resolution on the nature of the Cuban revolution adopted at the world congress at the end of 1960, "the revolutionary Marxist movement must draw a whole series of political and theoretical lessons of primary importance. . . The lessons to be drawn concern in particular the role played by advanced sections of the peasantry in certain specific situations; the importance of guerrilla warfare on a primarily peasant base as a form of anticapitalist revolution; the role of cadres from the radical petty bourgeoisie; the rapid generalization of a collective experience in the countryside; the organization of militia and the role that a revolutionary army can play in certain exceptional periods, even in economic organization. Most of all, however, the problem posed is that of setting up, training, and tempering a new revolutionary leadership in conditions which are specific but probably not unique." (See *Quatrième Internationale*, January-March 1961, p. 74.)

(11) See on this the "Dynamics of World Revolution Today."

(12) Che Guevara himself stressed the importance of this condition in the appendix to his book on guerrilla warfare. (*Guerrilla Warfare*, Monthly Review Press, 1961, p. 109 ff.)

(13) It is in connection with such experiences that our movement has criticized putschist tendencies that have at times appeared among revolutionaries identifying with the Castroite current: "Their weakness in particular lies in the arbitrary extension of certain specific features of the Cuban process, in the over-estimation of the military-technical aspects to the detriment of the more properly political factors, in the tendency to cut off the activity of very small foci from the vanguard and the development of the mass movement." (My report to the IEC of the Fourth International, *Quatrième Internationale*, March, 1965.) See also the criticism of adven-

turistic tendencies in the political resolution of the world congress at the end of 1965. (*International Socialist Review* Spring, 1966.) Analogous criticisms were formulated previously by sections of the revolutionary Marxist movement, particularly in Peru and Argentina.

(14) There are passages on the corrupting influence of cities on the revolutionaries themselves in Debray's essay, which over and above a few so-called sociological notes reveal a very questionable kind of revolutionary romanticism. Among other things, the author seems to forget that life in the underground in the cities during periods of terror is by no means more comfortable than participating in the activity of armed detachments in the plains or in the mountains.

(15) Note, for example, the following statement made by Debray: "The Indian uprising led by Túpac Amaru II in Peru at the end of the eighteenth century could well have been called self-defense." (p. 29.) Or this equation: "Guerrilla warfare is to peasant uprisings what Marx is to Sorel." (p. 29.)

(16) Debray talks about a Latin-American Bureau in Buenos Aires, a section (*sic!*) of the Fourth International. Thus he refers to the Posadists without explaining in any way that the small Posadist minority has not been in the Fourth International since the end of 1961. Another proof of the unsoundness of his "information" is that, far from grasping the importance of the peasant leagues in Brazil, Posadas entertained a sectarian view toward them, which he carried to the point of attacking the American Trotskyists for publishing an interview with Julião by Joseph Hansen in *The Militant*.

(17) By his explicit reference to the Latin-American Bureau, Debray intimates that Hugo Blanco was sent to Peru from Argentina on the order of the Posadists to impose an artificial line from the outside. But Blanco had no connections with the Posadists and did not import any line from Argentina applicable to the peasants of Cuzco—every serious Peruvian militant is well aware of this.

(18) Blanco wrote in another letter: "The fundamental thing is—do you believe that dual power now exists in the countryside? If you don't, you will tend toward guerrilla warfare; if you do, toward militia."

(19) Criticisms of the MIR were formulated among others, by S. Conduruna, the editor of *Vanguardia Revolucionaria*, in a very controversial document (in the Chilean magazine *Estrategía*, No. 3, April 1966) and by A. Pumaruna in an article which appeared in *Partisans*, No. 31, July-September 1966. (This article gives completely imaginary information on the Fourth International's intervention in Peru and on certain decisions of the Peruvian Trotskyists.) The MIR vigorously rejected most of these criticisms.

(20) The MIR is said to have been accused in Castroite circles of having tried to create stable zones before the minimum conditions had been fulfilled, giving up the mobility necessary for consolidation and success in the first phases of guerrilla warfare. It is obvious that such an error is all the more catastrophic if the general conditions which have been mentioned are not ripe.

(21) The fact that the army showed some symptoms of disintegration was an important element in the October-November events. On the fall of Paz Estenssoro, see the detailed analysis made by the Bolivian Trotskyists, "Position of the Bolivian Trotskyists on the Barrientos Regime," *World Outlook*, Jan. 29, 1965, p. 15.

(22) The Trotskyist organization in Bolivia has always had a very important mass influence, but it has never had the support of a nationwide majority of the miners and poor peasants.

(23) This is the document already cited, published in *World Outlook*.

(24) These publications appeared under the title *Pueblo en Armas* [People in Arms]. See indicative passages which were printed in *World Outlook* October 1, 1965. On the views of the Bolivian Trotskyists, see also the article signed H. G. M. in *Lucha Obrera*, new series, November-December 1966, p. 15.

(25) The Fourth International everywhere greeted the commencement of guerrilla action announced in the month of March 1967. A few weeks before, most of the POR leaders were arrested—together with other activists and leaders of revolutionary organizations—on the charge, made public by Minister Arguedas, of having organized the armed movement. The

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same charge was made against Hugo González Moscoso, the secretary of the POR, who was arrested a few weeks later.

(26) This position was ratified in the political resolution of the Reunification Congress (June 1963).

(27) See the document cited from the 1963 congress; see also the article "Amérique Latine 1962," *Quatrième Internationale*, December 1962. Douglas Bravo also examined the Carupano and Puerto Cabello events from a critical point of view. (*Sucesos*, No. 1751, p. 17.)

(28) See also my report published in *Quatrième Internationale*, March 1965.

(29) An article by Miguel Fuente (*Perspectiva Mundial*, March 27, 1967) explicitly expressed support for Bravo, while countering some of Bravo's criticisms of Trotskyism. Among other publications holding the Trotskyist point of view, the stand of the Argentinian weekly *La Verdad* should be noted. It began reprinting the *Sucesos* report on February 27, and wrote in the introduction, among other things, that "the Venezuelan guerrillas are the vanguard of our revolution."

(30) Let us note, however, that Debray does not point out any of the reasons for the failure of the Latin-American CP's. He states, "For reasons beyond their control, many Latin American Communist Parties made a false start, 30 or 40 years ago. . ." (p. 104.) What is the precise meaning of "reasons beyond their control"?

(31) These questions were also discussed in the report on the principal document of the 1963 Reunification Congress ("Dynamics of World Revolution Today").

(32) One may easily grasp the fact, moreover, that if there had been a revolutionary party able to mobilize broad segments of the populace in support of those engaged in the fight at the time of Hugo Blanco's experience or that of the MIR, the outcome might have been quite different.

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James P. Cannon

THE VANGUARD PARTY AND THE WORLD REVOLUTION

The greatest contribution to the arsenal of Marxism since the death of Engels in 1895 was Lenin's conception of the vanguard party as the organizer and director of the proletarian revolution and its transformation of human relations. That celebrated theory of organization was not, as some contend, simply a product of the special Russian conditions of his time and restricted to them. It is deep-rooted in two of the weightiest realities of the twentieth century: the *actuality* of the workers' struggle for the conquest of power and the *necessity* of creating a leadership capable of carrying it through to the end.

Recognizing that our epoch was characterized by imperialist wars, proletarian revolutions and colonial uprisings, Lenin deliberately set out at the beginning of this century to form a party able to turn such cataclysmic events to the advantage of socialism. The triumph of the Bolsheviks in the upheavals of 1917 and the durability of the Soviet Union they established attested to Lenin's foresight and the merits of his methods of organization. His party stands out as the unsurpassed prototype of what a democratic and centralized leadership of the workers true to Marxist principles and applying them with courage and skill can be and do.

Limited as it was to a single country, the epoch-making achievement of the Bolsheviks did not conclusively dispose of further dispute over the nature of the revolutionary leadership. That controversy has continued ever since. Fifty years afterwards there is no

This article, by James P. Cannon, National Chairman of the Socialist Workers Party, was written for an anthology to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution to be published by Merit Publishers.

lack of skeptics inside the socialist ranks who doubt or deny that a party of the Leninist type is either necessary or desirable. And even where Lenin's theory is clearly understood and convincing, the problem of the vanguard party remains as urgent as ever since it has yet to be solved in the everyday struggle against the old order.

A correct appreciation of the vanguard party and its indispensable role depends upon understanding the crucial importance of the subjective factors in the proletarian revolution. On a broad historical scale and in the final accounting economic conditions are decisive in shaping the development of society. This truth of historical materialism does not negate the fact that the political and psychological processes unfolding within the working masses more directly and immediately affect the course, the pace and the outcome of the national and world revolution. Once the objective material preconditions for revolutionary activity by the workers have reached a certain point of maturity, their will and consciousness expressed through the intervention of the organized vanguard can become the key component in determining the outcome of the class struggle.

The Leninist theory of the vanguard party is based on two factors: the heterogeneity of the working class and the exceptionally conscious character of the movement for socialism. The revolutionizing of the proletariat, and oppressed people in general, is a complex, prolonged and contradictory affair. Under class society and capitalism the toilers are stratified and divided in many ways; they live under very dissimilar conditions and are at disparate stages of economic and political development. Their culture is inadequate and their outlook narrow. Consequently they do not and cannot all at once, *en masse*, and to the same degree arrive at a clear and comprehensive understanding of their real position in society or the political course they must follow to end the evils they suffer from and make their way to a better system. Still less can they learn quickly and easily how to act most effectively to protect and promote their class interests.

This irregular self-determination of the class as a whole is the primary cause for a vanguard party. It has to be constituted by those elements of the class and their spokesmen who grasp the requirements for revolutionary action and proceed to their implementation sooner than the bulk of the proletariat on both a national and international scale. Here also is the basic reason why the vanguard always begins as a minority of its class, "a splinter group." The earliest formations of advanced workers committed to socialism and their intellectual associates propagating its views must first organize themselves around a definite body of scientific doctrine, class tradition and experience and work out a correct political program in order then to organize and lead the big battalions of revolutionary forces.

The vanguard party should aim at all times to reach, move and win the broadest masses. Yet, beginning with Lenin's Bolsheviks, no such party has ever started out with the backing of the majority of

the class and as its recognized head. It originates, as a rule, as a group of propagandists concerned with the elaboration and dissemination of ideas. It trains, teaches and tempers cadres around that program and outlook which they take to the masses for consideration, adoption, action and verification.

The size and influence of their organization is never a matter of indifference to serious revolutionists. Nonetheless, *quantitative* indices alone cannot be taken as the decisive determinants for judging the real nature of a revolutionary grouping. More fundamental are such *qualitative* features as the program and relationship with the class whose interests it formulates, represents and fights for.

"The interests of the class cannot be formulated otherwise than in the shape of a program; the program cannot be defended otherwise than by creating the party," wrote Trotsky in *What Next?* "The class, taken by itself, is only raw material for exploitation. The proletariat acquires an independent role only at that moment when from a social class *in itself* it becomes a political class *for itself*. This cannot take place otherwise than through the medium of a party. The party is that historical organ by means of which the class becomes class conscious."

Marxism teaches that the revolution against capitalism and the socialist reconstruction of the old world can be accomplished only through conscious collective action by the workers themselves. The vanguard party is the highest expression and irreplaceable instrument of that class consciousness at all stages of the world revolutionary process. In the pre-revolutionary period the vanguard assembles and welds together the cadres who march ahead of the main army but seek at all points to maintain correct relations with it. It grows in numbers and influence and comes to the fore in the course of the mass struggle for supremacy which it aspires to bring to a successful conclusion. After the overthrow of the old ruling powers, the vanguard leads the people in the tasks of defending and constructing the new society.

A political organization capable of handling such colossal tasks cannot arise spontaneously or haphazardly; *it has to be continuously, consistently and consciously built*. It is not only foolish but fatal to take a lackadaisical attitude toward party building or its problems. The bitter experiences of so many revolutionary opportunities aborted, mismanaged and ruined over the past half century by inadequate or treacherous leaderships has incontestably demonstrated that nonchalance in this vital area is a sure formula for disorientation and defeat.

Lenin's superb capacities as a revolutionary leader were best shown in his insistence upon the utmost consciousness in all aspects of party building from capital issues of theory and policy to the meticulous attention given to small details of daily work. Other parties and kinds of parties are content to stumble and amble along, empirically dealing

with problems as they arise in a makeshift manner. Lenin introduced system and planning into the construction and activity of the revolutionary party on the road to power, not only into the economy such a party was later called upon to direct. He left as little as possible to chance and improvisation. Proceeding from a formulated appraisal of the given stage of the struggle, he singled out the main tasks at hand and sought to discover and devise the best ways and means of solving them in accord with the long-range goals of world socialism.

The vanguard party must always be in principled opposition to the guardians and institutions of class society, guided by the methods of scientific socialism and totally dedicated to the welfare of the toiling masses and all victims of oppression. These traits can immunize it against the infections and armor it against the pressures of alien class influences. But the Leninist party must be, above all, a *combat* party intent on organizing the masses for effective action leading to the taking of power.

That overriding aim determines the character of the party and priority of its tasks. It cannot be a talking shop for aimless and endless debate. The purpose of its deliberations, discussions and internal disputes is to arrive at decisions for action and systematic work. Neither can it be an infirmary for the care and cure of sick souls or itself a model of the future socialist society. It is a band of revolutionary fighters ready, willing and able to meet and defeat all enemies of the people and assist the masses in clearing the way to the new world.

Much of the New Left, imbued with an anarchistic or existentialist spirit, denigrate or dismiss professional leadership in a revolutionary movement. So do some disillusioned workers and ex-radicals who have come to equate conscientious dedication to full-time leadership with bureaucratic domination and privilege. They fail to understand the interrelations between the masses, the revolutionary class, the party and its leadership. Just as the revolutionary class leads the nation forward, so the vanguard party leads the class. However, the role of leadership does not stop there. The party itself needs leadership. It is impossible for a revolutionary party to provide correct leadership without the right sort of leaders. This leadership performs the same functions within the vanguard party as that party does for the working class.

Its cadres remain the backbone of the party in periods of contraction as well as expansion. The vitality of such a party is certified by the capacity to extend and replenish its cadres and reproduce qualified leaders from one generation to another.

The vanguard party cannot be proclaimed by sectarian fiat or be created overnight. Its leadership and membership are selected and sifted out by tests and trials in the mass movement and in the internal controversies and sharp conflicts over the critical policy questions raised at every turn in the class struggle. It is impossible to

step over, and even less to leap over, the preliminary stage in which the basic cadres of the party organize and reorganize themselves in preparation for and in connection with the larger job of organizing and winning over broad sections of the masses.

The decisive role that kind of party can play in the making of history was dramatically exemplified by the Bolshevik cadres in the first world war and the first proletarian revolution. These cadres degenerated or were destroyed and replaced after Lenin's death by the totalitarian apparatus of the Soviet bureaucracy fashioned under Stalin. The importance of such cadres was negatively confirmed by the terrible defeats of the socialist forces in other countries extending from the Germany of 1918 to the Spain of 1936-1938 because of the opportunism, defects or defaults of the labor leaderships.

Contrary to some other students of his remarkable career, I believe that Trotsky's most valuable contribution to the world revolutionary movement in the struggle against Stalinism and centrism was his defense and enrichment of the Leninist principles of the party culminating in the decision to create new parties of the Fourth International along these lines. As he later acknowledged, Trotsky was from 1903 to 1917 opposed in theory and practice to Lenin's methods of building a revolutionary party. It is a tribute to his exemplary objectivity and capacity for growth that he wholeheartedly came over to Lenin's conceptions in 1917 when he saw them verified by the developments of the revolution at home and abroad.

From that point to his last day Trotsky never for a moment wavered in his adherence to these methods of party building. After correcting his mistake in that department, he became, after Lenin's death in 1924, the foremost exponent and developer of the Bolshevik traditions of the vanguard party in national and international politics.

Most people think that Trotsky's genius was best displayed in his work as theorist of the permanent revolution, as the head of the October uprising or as creator and commander of the Red Army. I believe that he exercised his powers of revolutionary Marxist leadership most eminently, not during the rise but during the recession of the Russian and world revolutions, when as leader of the Left Opposition he undertook to save the program and perspectives of the Bolshevik party against the Stalinist reaction and then founded the Fourth International once the Comintern had decisively disclosed its bankruptcy in 1933. The purpose of the new International was to create and coordinate new revolutionary mass parties of the world working class.

Trotsky summarized his views on the momentous importance of the vanguard party in the transitional program he drafted for its founding congress in 1938. He asserted that "the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." The principal strategic task for our whole epoch is "overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of objective revolutionary condi-

tions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation)."

He pointed out that the vanguard party was the sole agency by which this burning political problem of the imperialist phase of world capitalism could be solved. More specifically, he stated categorically: ". . . the crisis of the proletarian leadership, having become the crisis in mankind's culture, can be resolved only by the Fourth International," the World Party of the Socialist Revolution.

Have the major experiences in the struggle for socialism since this was written spoken for or against Trotsky's pregnant political generalizations? Has the crisis of mankind or the crisis of the proletarian leadership been overcome?

The fact is it has grown ever deeper and more acute with the advent of nuclear weapons and the failures of the established parties to overthrow capitalist imperialism and promote the progress of socialism.

In the revolutionary resurgence in Western Europe opened by Mussolini's deposition in July 1943, which signaled the eclipse of fascism, to the ousting of the Communists from the coalition cabinets in France and Italy in 1947, the Stalinist and Social Democratic parties repeated their previous treachery and impotence by refusing to pursue a revolutionary policy directed toward the conquest of power in a highly revolutionary situation. These defaults and defeats permitted capitalism to be restabilized in the second most important sector of that system.

In the colonial countries from 1945 on, Communist leaderships handcuffed or misled by Kremlin diplomacy have been responsible for many setbacks and disasters. These have stretched from the compromise of the Indo-Chinese Communists with the French imperialists in 1945 to Stalin's subservience to such representatives of the "progressive" bourgeoisie as Nehru in India, Kassim in Iraq, Goulart in Brazil, and Sukarno in Indonesia. The terrible reverses of the colonial freedom struggle, culminating in the Indonesian butchery of 1965, owing to such false leadership, provide powerful evidence that the need for new and better leadership is as urgent in the "Third World" as elsewhere.

The conquest of power by the Communist parties of Yugoslavia, China, North Korea and North Vietnam has induced not a few radicals and ex-Trotskyists to assume or assert that Lenin's teachings on the party, and Trotsky's reaffirmation of them, are out of date. These developments prove, they argue, that it is a waste of time, a useless undertaking, to try to build independent revolutionary parties of the Leninist type, as Trotsky advised, since the exploiters can be overthrown with other kinds of parties, especially if these are supported by a powerful workers state like the Soviet Union or China.

What substance do these arguments have? It should first be observed that Trotsky himself foresaw and allowed for such a possibility. In the "Transitional Program" he wrote: ". . . one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.) the petty-bourgeois parties including the Stalinists may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie."

In the postwar years these exceptional conditions in the more backward countries have been the prostration and collapse of the most corrupt colonial bourgeoisies, the weaknesses of the old imperialist powers in Europe and Japan, and the mighty upsurge of the indigenous peasant and proletarian masses. Certain Communist leaderships were confronted with the alternatives of being crushed by reaction, outflanked by the revolutionary forces, or taking command of the national liberation and anti-capitalist struggles. After some hesitation and vacillation and against the Kremlin's advice, the Communist leaders in Yugoslavia, China and Vietnam took the latter course and led the proletariat and peasantry to power.

In its resolution adopted at the 1963 Reunification Congress on "The Dynamics of World Revolution Today" the Fourth International has taken into account this variant of political development as follows: "The weakness of the enemy in the backward countries has opened the possibility of coming to power with a blunted instrument."

However, this factual observation does not dispose of the entire question or even touch its most important aspects. The deformations of the regimes emanating from the revolutionary movements headed by the Stalinized parties, and the opportunism and sectarianism exhibited by their leaderships since assuming power, notably in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China, demonstrate that the need for organizing genuine Marxist parties is not ended with the overthrow of capitalist domination. The building of such political formations can become equally urgent as the result of the bureaucratic degeneration and deformation of postcapitalist states in an environment where imperialism remains predominant and backwardness prevails.

This was first recognized in the case of the Soviet Union by Trotsky in 1933. That political conclusion retains full validity for all those Communist countries governed by parties which fail to uphold or foster a democratic internal regime or pursue an international revolutionary line. The experience of the Polish and Hungarian uprisings of 1956 and the restriction of the destalinization processes in the Soviet Union alike demonstrate the need for an independent Marxist-Leninist party to lead the antibureaucratic revolution to the end.

The keynote of the reunification document is that "the building of new mass revolutionary parties remains the central strategic task" in all three sectors of the international struggle for socialism: the

Communist countries, the colonial regions and, above all, in the advanced capitalisms.

If Yugoslavia and China are cited to show that any party will do in a pinch, the example of Cuba is often brought forward as proof that no party at all is required in the struggle for power or that any kind of improvised political outfit will do the job. First of all, this involves a misconstruction of the political history of the Cuban revolution. The July 26 Movement had a small close-knit nucleus of leaders which was subjected to military discipline by the imperatives of armed combat. They had to construct a broader leadership in the heat of civil war against Batista. Once the Cuban freedom fighters had become sovereign in the country, they not only found that they couldn't dispense with a vanguard party but desperately needed one. They have therefore proceeded to construct one along Marxist lines and are still engaged in that task nine years after their victory.

Wouldn't their difficulties have been lessened before and after the taking of power if they had been able to enter the revolution with a more powerful cadre and party? But the default of the Cuban Stalinists foreclosed that more favorable possibility. Moreover, it should be recognized that, since the Cuban experience, both the imperialists and their native satellites under Washington's direction are much more alerted and prompt to take repressive measures to nip rebellion in the bud.

The circumstances of the struggle for power are vastly different in the highly industrialized countries than in colonial lands where the native upper classes are feeble, isolated and discredited and the impetus of the unsolved tasks of the democratic revolution reinforces the claims of the wage workers. It would be foolish and fatal to hold that the workers in the imperialist strongholds will be able to get rid of capitalism under the direction of the bureaucratized, corrupt and ossified Social Democratic or Communist parties or any centrist shadow of them. Here the injunction to build revolutionary Marxist parties is absolutely unconditional.

The difficulties encountered by the Trotskyist vanguard over the past three decades show that there are no easy or simple recipes for solving the multiple problems posed by this necessity. The major obstacle to building alternative leaderships in most of these countries is the presence of powerful and wealthy Labor, Social Democratic or Communist organizations which exercise bureaucratic control over the labor movement but for traditional reasons continue to exact a certain loyalty from the workers. Under such conditions it is often advisable for the original corps of revolutionary Marxists to enter and work for extended periods within such mass parties.

It should never for a moment be forgotten that the prime objective of such a tactical entry is the creation, consolidation and expansion of the initial cadres and the growth of ties with the most advanced elements. It is not an end in itself. The immediate aim is to transform

a propaganda group into a force capable of influencing, organizing and directing broad masses in action. The ultimate goal is to create a new mass party of the working class along this road.

Experience has shown that there are many pitfalls in implementing an entrism tactic. As a result of prolonged immersion in reformist work and overadaptation to a centrist environment, the fibre of the revolutionary cadre may become corroded, and its perspectives dimmed and even lost. Total immersion in such a milieu has many liabilities and dangers. It is therefore essential that entrism work be complemented by a sector of open public work through which the full program and policies of the Fourth International can at all times be made accessible to the advanced workers.

It is also possible (we have seen such cases!) for entrism to be conducted in an impatient and inflexible way. Then, when adequate results are not quickly forthcoming, the group can prematurely revert to an independent organizational status. If persisted in, such a sectarian course can, under cover of a falsetto ultra-left rhetoric, lead to self-isolation and impotence. It can help the reformist and Communist bureaucrats by leaving them in uncontested command of the situation and narrowing the channels of contact and communication between the revolutionary Marxists and the best militants in the traditional parties.

Both through independent or entrism activities as the given situation warranted, the American Trotskyists have been busy building a revolutionary Marxist party in the United States ever since they discarded the prospect of reforming the Communist Party in 1933. The Socialist Workers Party regards itself as the legitimate inheritor of the finest traditions of the Socialist movement of Debs, the Socialist Labor Party of DeLeon, the I.W.W. of St. John and Haywood, and the early Communist Party. It has drawn upon and benefitted from the good and bad experiences of these pioneer attempts to create the party needed by the American workers to lead their revolution.

The history of American communism since its inception in 1919 has been a record of struggle for the right kind of party. All the other problems have been related to this central issue.

Everything that has been done since October 1917 for the advancement of socialism in this citadel of world capitalism and counterrevolution has been governed by this necessity of building the vanguard party and whatever will be accomplished in the future will, in my opinion, revolve around it. The key to the victory of socialism in the United States will be the fusion of American power, above all the potential power of its working class, with Russian ideas, first and foremost the organizational principles of Lenin's Bolshevism.

The Leninist party proved indispensable in Russia where the belated bourgeoisie was a feeble social and political force. It will be a million times more necessary in America, the home of the strongest, richest and most ruthless exploiting class. The Bolshevik conceptions of the

party and its leadership originated and were first put to the test in the weakest and most backward of capitalist countries. I venture to predict that it will become naturalized and find its fullest application in the struggle for socialism in the most developed country of capitalism.

The revolutionists here confront the most highly organized concentration of economic, political, military and cultural power in history. These mighty forces of reaction cannot and will not be overthrown without a movement of the popular masses, black and white, which has a centralized, disciplined, principled, experienced Marxist leadership at its head.

It is impossible to stumble into a successful revolution in the United States. It will have to be organized and directed by people and a party that have at their command all the theory, knowledge, resources and lessons accumulated by the world working class. Its knowhow and organization in politics and revolutionary action must match and surpass that of its enemies.

Those who claim that a Leninist party is irrelevant or unneeded in the advanced capitalisms are one hundred percent wrong. On the contrary, such a party is an absolutely essential condition and instrument for the promotion and triumph of the socialist revolution in the United States, the paragon of world capitalism. Just as the overturn inaugurated by the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky in 1917 was the first giant step in the world socialist revolution and renovation, so the Leninist theory of the party first vindicated by that event will find its ultimate verification in the overthrow of imperialism in its central fortress and the establishment of a socialist regime with full democracy on American soil.

Nothing less than the fate of humanity hinges upon the speediest solution of the drawn-out crisis of proletarian leadership. This will have to be done under the banner and through the program of the parties of the Fourth International. The very physical existence of our species depends upon the prompt fulfillment of this supreme obligation. No greater task was ever shouldered by revolutionists of the Marxist school—and not too much time will be given by the monopolists and militarists at bay to carry it through.

On this fiftieth anniversary of the imperishable October revolution which has shaped and changed all our lives, our motto is: "To work with more energy toward that goal and win it for the good of mankind."

MYTHS ABOUT MALCOLM X: TWO VIEWS

A Speech by Rev. Albert Cleage

You were very kind to ask me to be here.

I am not a Marxist—I don't pretend to be, I don't even pretend to know anything about it. I am a black man in a world dominated by white oppression, and that is my total philosophy. I would like to get rid of that oppression, and that is my total objective. So I bring to this occasion rather a simple approach—personal reflections on the significance of Malcolm X.

I can remember a number of occasions when I talked to him, when I was with him, when I spoke on platforms with him; and so I am not indebted to printed material for my impressions of Malcolm X. I remember the last time he was in the city—not so much the speech, which was not one of his best by any means; it reflected, I think, much of the tension that he was under, much of the confusion, the constant living on the brink of violence. But I can remember him backstage, in the Gold Room I think they call it, of Ford Auditorium. Recently he had suffered smoke inhalation, the doctor had given him an injection, he was trying to sleep, he was irritable. But he was here because he had promised to be here, because he thought some people were concerned about what he had to say.

I remember him at the King Solomon Baptist Church on one of the occasions he spoke there—sort of in concealment backstage, constantly harassed with the danger of assassination. And I can remember the occasion at the King Solomon Baptist Church when he gave the "Message to the Grass Roots," which I think is his best speech, his most typical statement, and which I personally think is his last will and testament. I remember him, I talked to him, I agreed with him. He was a Muslim, I am a Christian, and yet I can think of no basic matter upon which we disagreed.

Two years after his death Brother Malcolm is more important to more people than he was at any time during his lifetime. I think this is true. Young people who never saw him, who never heard him, speak of him with reverence and say, "I love Malcolm." This is a

Rev. Albert Cleage, chairman of the Detroit Inner City Organizing Committee, gave this speech at a memorial meeting for Malcolm X at the Friday Night Socialist Forum in Detroit, February 24, 1967.

tremendous thing. Older people who heard and saw him select from the things they heard and saw the things they want to remember, or even the things it suits their purpose to remember. This too is quite a thing—that an individual should be important enough to be remembered even with distortions or for reasons not quite only of love.

Brother Malcolm has become a symbol, a dream, a hope, a nostalgia for the past, a mystique, a shadow sometimes without substance, "our shining black prince," to whom we do obeisance, about whom we write heroic poems. But I think Brother Malcolm the man is in danger of being lost in a vast tissue of distortions which now constitute the Malcolm myth. The Malcolm myth or the Malcolm myths, the complex of myths which more and more tend to cluster about Brother Malcolm, remind us of what happened to Jesus Christ. I think I understand much more now the things that are written and said about Jesus, because I can understand how the life of a man dedicated to people can so easily become a focal point for the things people want to make that life mean.

The Malcolm myth or myths depend for substance upon the last chaotic and confusing year or two of his life—fragmentary statements growing out of his trip to Mecca and his efforts to bring the problems of black people in America to the attention of African leaders. Out of this period of his life comes the confusing complex of myths. According to the myth, his pilgrimage to Mecca turned Brother Malcolm into an integrationist. I've heard that seriously stated by people who claim to be scholars and students of the life of Brother Malcolm. In Mecca, they say, he saw blue-eyed whites and blacks worshipping and living together, in love, for the first time in his 39 years—and his whole concept of white people changed. This is the myth. And he rejected his former position that the white man is the enemy and that separation is inescapable. This is the myth.

The implication here is that this new insight changed his orientation; that with this new insight he was now free to join the NAACP, or to sing "We Shall Overcome" with Martin Luther King, or to become a Marxist and join the Socialist Workers Party. And certainly, if we accept this basic myth as being true, as being fact, if his experience in Mecca changed his conception of white people, then all the implications certainly follow logically. If in terms of his experience in Mecca he came to believe that there is no enmity between black and white, that blacks and whites can march together in unity and brotherhood, then why shouldn't he join the NAACP, or sing "We Shall Overcome," or become a Marxist in the Socialist Workers Party?

I say that is the myth, and from my personal point of view, realizing that we are in the position of the blind man who inspected the elephant and tried to describe what an elephant is, I say I do not believe this myth. I reject it completely, totally and absolutely. I say if Malcolm X, Brother Malcolm, had undergone this kind of transformation, if in Mecca he had decided that blacks and whites can unite, then his life at that moment would have become meaningless

in terms of the world struggle of black people, and we would not have any occasion to be here this evening. So I say I do not believe it.

Brother Malcolm knew history and he was guided by his interpretation of history. He interpreted the things that happened to him in terms of his knowledge and his understanding of the past. He would not have been taken in by what happened in Mecca. Brother Malcolm knew that the Arab Muslims had been the backbone of the slave trade. Those of you who have a sentimental attachment to the "Black Muslims" in America, or the Muslims that happen to be black, might not like to remember that the slave trade with black Africans in Africa was fostered, encouraged and carried on by the Arab Muslims in Africa. Brother Malcolm knew this. He would not have been taken in by the window dressing in Mecca. He would not have forgotten this important fact—that blacks and whites do not unite above the basic fact of race, of color. He would not have forgotten this in Mecca any more than in New York or Chicago or San Francisco. He knew that in Saudi Arabia they are still selling black Africans into slavery, they still make forays into Black Africa and bring back black slaves for sale in Arab Muslim countries. Brother Malcolm knew this. And to me it is preposterous to say that in Mecca he became an integrationist.

Also, according to the myth, Brother Malcolm tried to internationalize the black man's struggle in America. Certainly he brought the black man's struggle to the attention of African leaders. The implication is that Brother Malcolm felt that the black man in Africa could help us through the United Nations and that we would be better off before the white man's World Court than before the white man's Supreme Court. I do not believe it. Malcolm knew that one cracker court is just like another cracker court. He knew it, I know it and you know it. And to say now that he came to the conclusion that, if he could get the black man's problem in America before the World Court, it would somehow mysteriously be changed and transformed is ridiculous. To take it before the World Court would have been interesting—but certainly no solution. We are no more apt to get justice before the World Court than before the Recorder's Court downtown here in the city of Detroit. Crackers run both of them.

Don't be afraid, brothers, don't be afraid—I am not hurting the image of Malcolm. I am just trying to save it, because you are about to lose it, you are about to forget what Malcolm said. By taking the last moments of confusion, when he was getting ready to be assassinated, and saying that the confused little statements he made in those last moments were his life—that's a lie, that wasn't his life. I heard him, I talked to him, I know what his life was, and he understood the relationship between blacks and whites.

Certainly Brother Malcolm wanted to relate our struggle, the struggle of black people in America, to the struggle of black people everywhere. I say to the struggle of *black* people everywhere, because

that is a struggle that he understood, that I understand and that you understand. I am not talking about relating it to the struggle of oppressed people everywhere, but relating it to the struggle of *black* people everywhere. But he expected little help from the Africans and the African nations. Malcolm wasn't running around Africa thinking that the African nations were going to free us. Malcolm wasn't that kind of an idiotic idealist. He went to our black brothers because they were our brothers. He talked to them about our problems because their problems are our problems, and we are as concerned about their problems as we want them to be about our problems. But he didn't go to Africa expecting them to free us.

Sometimes we forget that, and we sit around waiting for somebody in Africa to send somebody over here to free us—"like Malcolm said they were going to." He never said it and they are never going to do it. If you are going to be free, you are going to free yourself, and that is what Malcolm told us. The African nations can't free us, they can't save us. They couldn't save Lumumba in Africa, they couldn't wreak vengeance upon those who perpetrated his death in Africa. They couldn't save the Congo; they couldn't save the black people of Rhodesia; they couldn't free the black people of South Africa. Then why should we sit here in our own oppression, our own suffering, our own brutality, waiting for some mysterious transformation when black armies from Africa are coming over here and free us? They could use some black armies from over here to free them.

Malcolm never said it, and don't be misled by the statement that Malcolm tried to internationalize the black man's struggle. He tried to tell us quite simply that the white man has given you hell here in the United States and he is giving black men hell all over the world. It is one struggle—black men fighting for freedom everywhere, in every country, in the United States, in Africa, in Vietnam, everywhere. Black men fighting against white men for freedom. He tried to tell you that the white man is not going to free you. I don't care what persuasion or philosophy he has, he is not going to free you, because if he frees you, he must take something away from himself to give it to you.

Funny how we can so easily forget what Malcolm said. I don't believe it. Certainly he wanted to relate it to the black man's struggle throughout the world. He knew we were struggling against the same enemy. He knew that we could expect no more justice from the World Court than from a Supreme Court. So much for the Malcolm myth.

Brother Malcolm's contribution is tremendous. What Brother Malcolm contributed to the black man's struggle in America and throughout the world cannot be equaled or surpassed by the life of any man. Oh, we can think of individuals like Marcus Garvey. When he looked at the world and said, "Where is the black man's government?" it was tremendous. Because he understood that the black man was engaged in a struggle against an enemy, and that if he was engaged

in a struggle there were certain things that were necessary—he had to have power, he had to have a government, he had to have economies, he had to have certain things. Marcus Garvey understood it. But no man surpasses Malcolm in his understanding of the meaning of the struggle in which black people are engaged everywhere in the world. And there was no subterfuge or confusion or weak-kneed pussyfooting in Malcolm as long as he lived.

I want to tell you this: we get all confused because we don't know who assassinated him. I don't believe that the Honorable Elijah Muhammad assassinated him. You believe whatever you want to, I do not believe it. And because we get confused about who assassinated him, we say there was never any good in Elijah Muhammad or the "Black Muslims." I don't believe that either. I believe that the basic truths that Malcolm X taught came from the basic philosophy and teachings of Elijah Muhammad. I believe that the basic contribution which he made, the basic philosophy which he taught, stems directly from the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and the "Black Muslims." I do not accept all the teachings of Elijah Muhammad or the "Black Muslims," but I understand what Malcolm X did to those teachings. He took the teachings of a cult, with all the mythology of the "Black Muslims," and universalized them so that black people everywhere, no matter what their religion, could understand them and could accept them.

I can accept the teachings which he abstracted from the cult philosophy and mythology of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. I do not believe in the story about Yacub and creating the white man as the devil in 6,000 years, but that has nothing to do with the essential truth. I do not believe that the white man is the devil. He does devilish things, but I don't believe that he is a devil. Because to say that he is a devil is to say that he is more than human, and I don't believe that. You know that in the Christian religion the devil was flung out of heaven; he was an angel, he was more than a man, and to believe that the white man is a devil is to attribute to him supernatural powers. That is a cult mystique. There is nothing about the white man that is supernatural. He is just exactly like we are—that's why we can understand him so well. There is nothing mysterious about what he does. He wasn't condemned to be a devil for 6,000 years—he just acts like a devil because it suits his purpose, and he mistreats us, he oppresses us, he's brutal to us, because it's in his interest—not because he is a devil.

It is closer to the truth to say that he is a beast, and that is what Malcolm said. You would like to forget that now, but every time I talked to him, he referred to the white man as a beast. And those of you who are white here will agree with him that most white people are beasts—you can't deny it. On the basis of the way the white man has treated black men in America and throughout the world for 400 years, you cannot deny that he certainly had a truth there when he said that the white man is a beast. But not a devil. A beast is lower

than a man, a devil is higher than a man. Certainly the white man is not a devil, but he is in many instances a beast.

Malcolm was different when he was in the "Black Muslims." You have got to remember that too—he had a power base then. You know, as quiet as it is kept, it is one thing to operate out of something, to talk out of something, to have something behind you when you go into a town or a city—to go knowing that there are people there who are preparing things for you. It is another thing to step out by yourself and try to go around the country without a power base, without any protection, without any organization in front. And that was the difference when Malcolm X stepped out of the Muslim movement and became an individual. Then he faced the harassment, the danger, the confusion and everything in these last years that those who want to distort Malcolm X want to make so much out of. At the beginning, when he was with the Muslims, there was a power base from which he operated, a philosophical foundation upon which he could build. And he built well and he operated well in terms of a power base. He abstracted the general truths that we still remember. And these things we have got to preserve—we have got to preserve, brothers, I'm telling you, *we* have got to preserve.

We have a great tendency to turn our leaders over to somebody else. Who is the custodian of Malcolm's tradition? Who is the custodian? (Voice from audience: "We are.") But we aren't acting like it. You know who the custodian is, don't you?—there he sits, right there. If Mr. Breitman stopped writing, nobody would write anything. And he's doing it in terms of what he believes is a proper interpretation. If we want to preserve our heroes, we have to become the custodians of that tradition. Who is the custodian of DuBois? Black people? No, we don't have one thing that he wrote. The Communist Party has it, and they will let us read what they want us to read. I'm talking to you black brothers, I don't care what the rest of these people think. We have got to become the custodians of our own heroes and save them and interpret them the way we want them interpreted. And if you don't do it, then you have to accept what somebody else says they said. Who is the custodian of Paul Robeson? (Voice from audience: "The Communists.") All right, we don't have it. The great things he said, all of the things—where are they? The CIA has taken over perhaps all of the African Encyclopedia that DuBois was working on in Ghana. Nobody knows where it is. We don't protect these things. We are careless and we get caught up in the myths that other people spin for us. In another five years our children won't know what Malcolm X was really like. Because we won't write it down, and everything that is written that they can put their hands on will be saying that Malcolm X said something he never said, that Malcolm X meant something he never meant.

I say Malcolm X was tremendously important, beyond even our comprehension today, because Malcolm changed the whole course

of the black man's freedom struggle—the whole course of that freedom struggle not only in America but throughout the world. Black people everywhere in Africa, in the United States, everywhere, black people are fighting today a different battle than they fought before Malcolm began to talk. A different battle because Malcolm laid down certain basic principles that we can never forget. He changed the whole course. The first basic principle that Malcolm laid down that we can't forget is this: *The white man is your enemy*. That is a basic principle, we can't forget it. I don't care what else they drag in from wherever they drag it—remember one thing, Malcolm X taught one truth: The white man is our enemy. We can't get away from it, and if we accept and understand that one basic truth, his life was not lived in vain. Because upon that one basic truth we can build a total philosophy, a total course of action for struggle. Because that was the basic confusion which distorted the lives of black people, which corrupted the movements of black people. That was the basic area of our confusion, and Malcolm X straightened that out.

The white man is an enemy—he said it. We must break our identification with him, and that was his basic contribution. He didn't just say it, he didn't sit off someplace and just write it—he went out and he lived it. He asked for moments of confrontation. He said we have got to break our identification, we can't go through life identifying with the white man or his government. You remember what he said down there at King Solomon Baptist Church: You talk about "your" navy and "your" astronauts. He said forget it, we don't identify with these people, they are the enemy. And that is the basic truth. We must break our identification with the enemy, we must confront him, and we must realize that conflict and violence are necessary parts of a struggle against an enemy—that is what he taught. Conflict, struggle and violence are not to be avoided. Don't be afraid of them—you heard what he said. There has got to be some bloodshed, he said, if black men want to be free—that is what he taught. Now you can't take that and say that he believed in blacks and whites marching together. He said black men have got to be willing to shed their blood because they believe that they can be free. The white man is an enemy.

We must take pride in ourselves—you know that is what he said. But he didn't make a mystique out of Africa. He didn't sit down in a corner and contemplate his navel and think about the wonders of Africa. He said we have a history that we can be proud of. Africa is our history, African blood is our blood, African soil is our soil. We can take pride in our past—not by sitting down and contemplating it, but by using it as the basis for a course of action in today's world, as a basis for confrontation with the enemy, as a basis for struggle, for conflict, and even for violence, if necessary. We fight because we are proud; and because we are proud, we are not going to lie down and crawl like snakes on our bellies. We are not going to take second-class citizenship sitting down, saying, "Well, in a few

years maybe things will change." We want to change it *now*. That is what Malcolm told us, that is what we believe, and that is the basis of our struggle today.

A corollary of that, which you must understand and which is essentially Malcolm's contribution, is that integration is impossible and undesirable. Integration is impossible—he said it time and time and time again, under all kinds of circumstances—integration is impossible and undesirable. Now this was harder for black people to take than for white people. Because white people never wanted it in the first place, and were determined that it would never come to pass in the second place. But black people had been led to believe that it was a possibility, always just around the corner. So black people had pegged all of their organizational efforts toward integration. We sang "We Shall Overcome Someday," believing that overcoming meant integrating. The NAACP pegged its whole program on the possibilities of integration. We are going to build an integrated world, we are going to build a world in which black people and white people live together, we are going to build an integrated world—that is what Dr. Martin Luther King said. "I've got a dream for America tonight, a dream when the children of slaves shall walk hand-in-hand with the children of slavemasters." And we believed it until Malcolm X told us it is a lie. And that is a genuine contribution—it is a lie.

You will never walk hand-in-hand with anybody but black people, let me tell you. If you do, it is just a moment of mutual hypocrisy in which you are both engaged, for some purpose best known to yourselves. You may build a position of strength, a position of power from which you can negotiate with strength instead of weakness, and if you are willing to negotiate, then you can talk to the white man as an equal. That is as close to brotherhood as there is—there is no other brotherhood. If you talk to a man as an equal, he is your brother. But there is no other kind of equal. You cannot get down on your knees and talk up to a man and talk about brotherhood. Because you stopped being a brother when you got down on your knees. And if you are afraid to get up and look him in the eye and take a chance of getting killed if necessary, then there is no hope of brotherhood for you. Integration is impossible and undesirable—Malcolm taught it.

We have our own communities. The white man "gave" them to us. He forced us into them. He separated himself from us. And white people went all around the country all the time Malcolm was alive, saying, "He wants separation." They had separated themselves from us in every area of life, and yet they said, "He is bad, he is wicked, he wants separation." And if he had asked for integration seriously, they would have killed him more quickly.

He said we are going to control these separate communities. We have them, the white man "gave" them to us, and we are going to

stop being ashamed of them. We are going to live in them and we are going to make them the best communities in the world. We are going to make the schools in them black schools and good schools. We are going to make our housing black housing and good housing. We are no longer going to believe that a block is no good till a white man comes and buys a house on it. We are no longer going to believe that if we can move into a community where half of the people on the street are white, that that is a better community. We are going to take our separate communities, we are going to work with them, we are going to control them, we are going to control their politics, we are going to control their economy—we are going to control our community.

Malcolm X laid the entire foundation for everything Stokely Carmichael says. Stokely hasn't said one word that was not completely implicit in everything that Malcolm X taught. He is just a voice carrying on upon the basic foundation that Malcolm X put down. Integration is impossible and undesirable. We are going to control our own communities. We are going to stop worrying about being separate. We are not worried about busing black children into white neighborhoods. We are not worried about open occupancy, except that we want the right to live any place, and unless we are given that right, we will take it. And when we take it, we will still live together, because we do not want to live with you. That is a philosophy, that is Malcolm X's philosophy. We have learned it, we still remember it, and there is nothing you can do today to take it away from us. But I'm telling you, brothers, we have got to write it down because they are about to mess it up so we won't recognize it next year.

The whole civil rights movement has changed. The NAACP is washed up, through, finished. The Urban League is nothing but the social service agency it started out to be. The civil rights movement now is nothing but Stokely Carmichael and Floyd McKissick—that's it. Because they got the message. They are building today on what Malcolm said yesterday. The civil rights movement, the freedom struggle, the revolution—call it what you will—black men fighting for freedom today are fighting in terms laid down by Brother Malcolm. No other terms. You can't go out into the community—the brother here said "let's go out into the community"—you can't go out into the community with anything other than what Malcolm X taught. Because they won't listen to you, they won't hear you.

The whole movement has changed. The last great picnic, as Floyd McKissick said, on the White House lawn, that "great freedom march"—that was the end, that was it. From here on in, black people are trying to build, to organize. Malcolm in his last days was trying to make the transition to organization, to structure; to fight not only in terms of words, of ideas, but to build the organizational structure. He didn't do it. But he was making the transition because he realized that the next stage is an organizational stage—that if you want to be free, if you want power, you have got to organize to take it.

When you were just begging the white man to give you something, you didn't need organization. All you needed was a kneeling pad so that you could kneel down and look humble. But if you want power, you have got to organize to get it—you have got to have political power, you have got to have economic power, you have got to organize. Malcolm realized that, and the feeble beginnings he made in the area of organization were pointing the way. Today we have got to carry on that organizational struggle that Malcolm pointed out.

I was in New York, I went to his headquarters while he was over in Africa, I talked with his lieutenants. They didn't have the slightest idea of what was going on. They loved Malcolm, and they were sitting in the Hotel Theresa in a suite of rooms, but they didn't have the slightest conception of how to organize. They were waiting for Brother Malcolm to come home so he could tell them what to do. I said, "My God, one man never carried such a load all by himself! He has men here who are supposed to be doing something and they are sitting there waiting for him to come back." And they were carrying around his letters—he would write back a letter and they were carrying it around like it was the Bible: "Look, we've got a few words from Brother Malcolm."

He did not want reverence—he wanted people who could do something, who could organize, who believed in action, who were willing to go out and sacrifice; and he didn't have them. And all of us today—black people, brothers from coast to coast—when we get together and do reverence to Malcolm, let us remember that the last message was organize. We didn't do it and that is why he died. We didn't have organization enough to protect him. We didn't have organization enough to give him funds to do what he had to do. We let him die. The message is the same today, and still we are not organizing, we are not doing the work that has to be done. If you love Brother Malcolm, write your poems at night and organize and work in the daytime for power. Because until you get power, Malcolm X is just a memory. When we get power, we will put his statue in every city, because the cities will belong to us. Then we can do him reverence.

But until we get power, let's not play with images and myths. Let's remember that he gave us certain principles, certain ideas, and we have got to do something with them. All of us have the task—to organize, to build, to fight, to get power. And as we get it, as we struggle for it, we will remember that we are struggling because we believe the things that he taught. That is the message of Malcolm, and don't let anybody get you all mixed up. He never turned into an integrationist, never. He wasn't fooled in Mecca, he wasn't fooled in Africa. He told it like it was and he knew it like it was. That is our Malcolm. Some other folks may have another Malcolm—they are welcome to it. But brothers, don't lose *our* Malcolm.

A Speech by George Breitman

Three weeks ago the Friday Night Socialist Forum held its third memorial meeting for one of the greatest men of our time, Malcolm X. It was organized in such a way as to provide a broad range of opinion. There was a panel of several local poets, headed by Dudley Randall, reading their contributions to the new book, *For Malcolm: Poems on the Life and the Death of Malcolm X*. The chairman was attorney Milton Henry, who had worked with Malcolm, published the magnificent record of Malcolm's "Message to the Grass Roots," and was the principal speaker at our second memorial meeting one year ago. The speakers were Dave Wesley of SNCC, Derrick Morrison of the Young Socialist Alliance, and Rev. Albert Cleage, chairman of the Inner City Organizing Committee.

The usual custom at the Friday Night Socialist Forum is to have a discussion period after the formal talks, with the audience invited to ask questions or express opinions. But it was not considered proper to have a discussion period at a memorial meeting, and it was omitted three weeks ago. However there was an unusual amount of desire for further discussion expressed after that meeting, much of it stimulated by the remarks of Rev. Cleage. And so the committee in charge of the forum decided to have another meeting on the subject at the first open date, which was tonight, and to follow the customary practice allowing for discussion.

Much of what Rev. Cleage dealt with in his talk concerned myths about Malcolm X, or what he considered to be myths. I am going to deal with the same subject—myths about Malcolm X, or what I consider to be myths. Since I have spoken and written about this subject before and it is a vast subject, I shall try to confine myself tonight mainly to points raised by Rev. Cleage. That is, I will take his remarks as a point of departure for mine.

Someone asked me if I think it worthwhile to give a whole talk in that form. My answer, of course, is yes. In *The Last Year of Malcolm X*, I spent a whole chapter discussing the interpretations of

George Breitman, the editor of "Malcolm X Speaks" and author of "The Last Year of Malcolm X: Evolution of a Revolutionary," gave this speech at the Detroit Friday Night Socialist Forum, March 17, 1967.

Malcolm made by Bayard Rustin, the social-democratic reformist and pacifist, and I consider Rev. Cleage to be a much more important figure in the movement than Bayard Rustin. In 1964, for example, Rev. Cleage led the most advanced expression of independent black political action in the country—the Freedom Now Party—at a time when Bayard Rustin was campaigning for Johnson and pressuring the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to accept Johnson's rotten compromise offer at the Atlantic City convention of the Democratic Party. It is true that two years later Rev. Cleage took a backward step—a very wrong and harmful step, in our opinion—when he went back into the Democratic Party to run as a Democratic candidate in a primary election. But even so, he remains the spokesman for an important militant wing of the black freedom movement, and a leader and sponsor of campaigns worthy of support, which we have supported despite his backward step; and what he said in his talk three weeks ago, which I think was his first on the subject of Malcolm, deserves serious consideration.

[The next portion, a 10-minute summary of Rev. Cleage's speech, is omitted from this transcription.]

That ends my summary of Rev. Cleage's speech. Of course I haven't done it justice as rhetoric; Rev. Cleage is one of the best orators in the country, one of the few people who could speak from the same platform as Malcolm without looking bad by comparison. But I have presented all of his main ideas, points and implications as objectively as I could.

I agree with Rev. Cleage that there has been a profusion of myths spread about Malcolm in the two years since his death, and in a moment I will try to explain why. But I don't agree with him when he says there is a danger that the real Malcolm will be forgotten or obscured through distortion. There was a danger of that when Malcolm was killed, but I don't think it is a serious danger any longer; at any rate, the danger has grown smaller. I don't think the real Malcolm can successfully be distorted—whatever Rev. Cleage may say, whatever I may say, and no matter how many more myths may be manufactured and circulated. Because the truth is now too widely known, and becoming better known every day—the whole truth, and not just part of it.

When Malcolm died, there was virtually nothing of what he had said that was in print. But since then many thousands and thousands of people have had the chance to read and hear what Malcolm had said, including large numbers who had never heard of Malcolm while he was alive. Milton Henry told me three weeks ago that he had just returned from the West Coast where he had spoken at a memorial celebration for Malcolm (there were more such memorials held this year than in the previous two) and he said he had run into children, literally children, who were quoting passages from *Malcolm X Speaks*.

And they were quoting what Malcolm really said and thought, not myths. So we have to keep on knocking down any and all myths that are raised, but I believe we can do this in a spirit of optimism, not despair, because the truth is on the march.

There are many reasons for the myths. Malcolm was a remarkable man, a great man, and when he died, he became a folk-hero. Even if we leave aside the unsolved questions about who arranged the assassination, which were bound to spur various speculations and rumors, Malcolm was the kind of man around whom legends grow—not necessarily hostile legends either; favorable ones too.

But there are other reasons for misconceptions about Malcolm. One of these was the fact that Malcolm was cut down before he had finished his work, before he had formulated all of his ideas and brought them together in a consistent whole. In his last year many people thought or knew that Malcolm was developing new ideas, perhaps a new body of thought, theory or philosophy. But because of the press distortions, and because Malcolm did not yet have an organization capable of reaching the masses, they didn't know exactly or fully what his thinking was after he left the Black Muslims. This is always a breeding ground for rumor and myth.

More than that. One of the things that distinguished Malcolm from almost all of his contemporaries was his ability to grow, to change, to move forward; even—how hard this is!—to admit an error and correct it. These qualities became more prominent after he broke away from the dogmas of Elijah Muhammad and began, as he put it, to think for himself. Free to think for himself and to speak for himself, he had the courage to admit to himself he had been wrong about something if he thought that was so, and the courage to admit it publicly, and to present a new position that he thought was more correct than an old one. It is the rareness of this quality, along with the vital importance of the questions he was reconsidering, that makes a study of his evolution during his last year so rewarding.

But to people whose minds are fixed in a rut—that is, most of us—this was confusing. It wasn't that Malcolm was confused, but that some people, whose impressions of Malcolm had been formed and hardened and pigeonholed when he was a Black Muslim, some of these people became confused when Malcolm changed a position during his last year—merely because he wasn't saying word for word and slogan for slogan what they had become accustomed to hearing him say. No matter how logically, how lucidly, Malcolm stated these new positions, such people remained confused—some to this day; and when they spoke, their confusion contributed to myths about Malcolm.

And finally there was the malicious motivation for myths, which Rev. Cleage referred to. Because Malcolm became a martyr and hero after his death, some groups have tried to claim him for their own, even though they did not speak up for him when he was alive. They have tried to "interpret" him in such a way as to make his

views appear to coincide with their own. In order to do this, they have to try to make us forget embarrassing facts such as their dislike of some of the positions he took.

So what they do is chop Malcolm up, keeping the parts they like, the parts it suits their purposes to remember, and discarding the other parts as unimportant or irrelevant where they don't deny their existence altogether. This attempt to preserve only part of Malcolm, the part they find useful, while ignoring or denying the other parts that are needed if you want to see the real Malcolm, the whole Malcolm, is of course bound to result in myths, even if they are presented in the name of opposing myths.

Rev. Cleage is absolutely correct when he labels as a myth the story that Malcolm became an "integrationist" as a result of his trip to Mecca in the spring of 1964. This myth, or lie, is spread, as you can expect, by integrationists. Malcolm did not become an "integrationist" at Mecca, or at any time after that. Until the day of his death he remained an opponent of what is generally or popularly understood, or misunderstood, as "integration." I find it easy to join Rev. Cleage on this point because we, the Marxists, have been exposing and opposing this myth since Malcolm died, even though Rev. Cleage's remarks may have left some ambiguity about this.

But while Malcolm did not become an "integrationist" at Mecca, or after, his views on race did begin to change at Mecca—his views on race, race relations, black-white relations, the possibility of eventual brotherhood. They began to change there, and they changed even more after he left Mecca and went to Africa and held discussions with many revolutionary Africans. Rev. Cleage did not mention this, but the impact of revolutionary African thinking on Malcolm was much greater and deeper and more profound than the impact of Mecca.

The change, stated too briefly, was this: Not that Malcolm embraced "integration" as a solution, but that he saw the cause of racial oppression in a new light. He saw it as rooted not in merely racial or color differences, but as rooted in economic, political, social and cultural exploitation. From this he began to conclude, not that "integration" is the answer, but that racial conflict might be eliminated by eliminating exploitation; that racial enmity is not inherent in human beings or immutable or necessarily ordained to last for all time; and that it is possible (not certain) that eventually, some day (not now) oppressed blacks and oppressed whites might be able to march together in genuine brotherhood and fight together against their common oppressors and exploiters. But, and he always qualified this thought immediately, it can't happen until the blacks first organize themselves independently and create their own movement, their own power. No worthwhile alliance can be created, he insisted, until blacks come together first and create their own organization with their own uncompromising program.

Now Rev. Cleage says he doesn't believe what Malcolm is supposed to have said at Mecca; he says Malcolm wouldn't have been taken

in by the window dressing, that Malcolm was too intelligent to believe that blacks and whites could march together, and so on. Well, this is really an argument between Rev. Cleage and Malcolm, not between Rev. Cleage and people who accurately report what Malcolm said and wrote. Perhaps Rev. Cleage believes that Malcolm was not saying what he really thought; if he does, he should explain why. I, for one, after carefully studying everything I could find, believe that Malcolm said what he thought, popular or unpopular, especially after he left the Black Muslims, was no longer under their discipline and no longer required to express their ideas. If Rev. Cleage believes that what Malcolm said and wrote has been misrepresented by others, then I think he has the obligation to examine what Malcolm said (available on many tapes) and what he wrote (available in his own handwriting) and to show where the reports are inaccurate or misleading.

It is not enough to say merely, "I don't believe it." It is necessary in addition to square this disbelief with the evidence of Malcolm's own voice and Malcolm's own pen, and show why that evidence cannot be accepted or trusted. Rev. Cleage said that what has happened with Malcolm enables him to understand better the various myths about Jesus. But we have nothing about Jesus now except myths; we've got facts about Malcolm to balance along with myths. The world has changed since the time of Jesus, and in some ways it has changed for the better—especially technologically. I am thinking about the discovery and development of the tape recorder—a marvelous invention. Thanks to it, we can hear and know what Malcolm said, which is the best antidote to mythology that I can imagine.

So Rev. Cleage is on firm ground in rejecting the myth that Malcolm became an "integrationist." But the reasons he gives for rejecting it are not so sound, and the conclusions he tries to draw—that Malcolm did not change *any* of his views—have not been demonstrated factually or logically; and I don't think they can be demonstrated.

I cannot go along with Rev. Cleage when he says that it is a myth that Malcolm wanted to internationalize the Afro-American struggle. Malcolm spoke here in Detroit twice after leaving the Black Muslims—in April, 1964, and in February, 1965, one week before his death. On both these occasions Rev. Cleage was present, and at both of them Malcolm called for internationalizing the struggle. What he said both times is preserved on tape, as are many other speeches when he said the same thing. So this is a matter of fact, easily verified.

Besides the question of fact there is the question of interpreting the fact. Rev. Cleage spoke of people who have a mystique about Africa and who say that Malcolm said that the African nations are going to free American black people, and therefore all that Afro-Americans have to do is sit around and wait for that happy day. I haven't run into many people with this particular interpretation of Malcolm's call to internationalize the struggle, but of course Rev. Cleage is cor-

rect to pronounce this as a distortion and myth, which can only do harm by promoting passivity, instead of struggle.

But this particular distortion or misunderstanding of what Malcolm was talking about does not change the fact that Malcolm did advocate an alliance of Afro-Americans with Africans and other non-whites to coordinate their struggles, and even their strategy, against their common enemy, against what Malcolm called "the international power structure," whose headquarters he correctly placed in Washington, D. C. I don't see how anybody can question the fact that Malcolm became an internationalist (this is one of the things that made him so dangerous in the eyes of the imperialists and their CIA), and that internationalism, by definition, means efforts to internationalize the struggle.

One of the ways in which Malcolm sought to internationalize the struggle was by bringing an indictment of racism against the United States government before the United Nations, the so-called world court. He raised this proposal immediately after he left the Black Muslims in the spring of 1964, and he worked hard trying to get African leaders to bring the indictment into the United Nations, and to get American civil rights leaders to join in promoting this project. He did not succeed, for various reasons, but he still had it on his agenda at his death.

When he first publicly raised this project in the spring of 1964, he tended to overstate its possibilities—that is, he gave too rosy a picture of what the probable results would be. *The Militant* printed an article by me in May, 1964, supporting Malcolm's proposal to take Washington to the United Nations and expose its racism and hypocrisy, but noting that the U. S. government and its allies control the United Nations, and that the UN cannot be expected to do anything, seriously against the interests of American imperialism. I didn't say it as pungently as Rev. Cleage did three weeks ago, when he said you can't expect any more justice from the so-called world court than you can from the Supreme Court or Detroit's Recorder's Court, because all of them are run by crackers, but I said essentially the same thing almost three years ago. Even though my article was critical, Malcolm sent me a message of thanks for writing it.

Now Rev. Cleage says Malcolm *couldn't* have believed that much would be accomplished by going to the United Nations, and therefore it is a myth to say he wanted to internationalize the struggle. But this is a fallacy of over-simplification, a non sequitur. The truth is more complex, and the conclusion to be drawn different. Malcolm *did* get carried away at the beginning about the possibilities of taking Washington to the UN; I am sorry to say this now, as I was sorry to say it then, but it happens to be the truth. And the truth is what we are after, not simplifications. So: at the beginning Malcolm went overboard in what he said could be accomplished by going to the UN. Later, however, he took a more balanced view of the project, he stopped speaking of it as a move that could solve the problems

of black people, he corrected himself in assessing its probable results. But he continued to push this project. After modifying what he said about it, he continued to work for it. Because he did want to internationalize the struggle—that's no myth—and this was one way of doing it, even though it would not be the final solution, but only a step in that direction. If Malcolm was ready to acknowledge and correct mistakes, I don't think we do him or the struggle any service by denying either the mistake or the correction; or by saying "I don't believe" he made this mistake in order to deny that he wanted to internationalize the struggle.

Rev. Cleage's stated intention—to explode myths in order to preserve the real Malcolm—can only be applauded. But I am afraid that he was only partly successful with some of the myths he aimed at, and that in the process he may have contributed some myths of his own.

His basic mistake, I think, is to present Malcolm the Black Muslim as the real Malcolm, the only one worth remembering, the only one worth building on and continuing from—and to dismiss as unimportant, inconsistent or irrelevant the last year of Malcolm's life, when Malcolm himself began to build on and continue from his previous positions. This, I submit, is not the way to see or understand the whole Malcolm. Rev. Cleage mentioned the blind men, each of whom touched a different part of the elephant, and came up with a different concept of the elephant. Rev. Cleage is doing that too—he's saying the hide is the elephant, and the feet and the tail—but not the trunk or the tusks. It is harder to forgive him than those blind men, because he is not blind, and all the parts of Malcolm can be easily seen by anyone who wants to look at them.

I say Malcolm is both the Malcolm of the period before the split and the Malcolm of the year after the split, and I want to see and understand the whole man. I want to see the whole man—the parts that remained constant and never changed, and the parts that did not remain constant and did change; the parts that fit preconceived notions and the parts that contradict preconceived notions; what he was trying to do after he decided to think for himself instead of with the mind of Elijah Muhammad; and in what direction he was moving. That is why in editing his speeches, I included everything available, not just the parts I agree with. That is why in the book about his evolution I was just as concerned in presenting his positions that diverge from my own as I was in exploring those that resemble or approach mine. If I didn't do that, I wouldn't really have the right to talk about myths spread by other people. A myth can consist of nothing but the exclusion of relevant facts.

Rev. Cleage wants, in effect, to dismiss the last year of Malcolm's life; he could find only one favorable statement to make about that year—that Malcolm was beginning to make a transition to organization, to structure. The last year was the period when Malcolm was

developing his own ideas rather than popularizing those of Elijah Muhammad. The reason Rev. Cleage wants to dismiss the last year is not that he agrees with all of the ideas of Elijah Muhammad, but that he disagrees with some of the ideas Malcolm was expressing in this, the independent phase of his life. In a moment I will list some of those ideas. First, I want to call your attention to the way that Rev. Cleage seeks to justify such dismissal.

In the last year, Rev. Cleage says, Malcolm was under constant harassment, under fierce pressure, under never-ending threat of assassination. All of this is completely true. As a result, Rev. Cleage continues, Malcolm made a number of confused and confusing statements, fragmentary statements, which unscrupulous people use to distort the meaning and tradition of Malcolm. Is *that* true?—not how Malcolm's statements are used or misused, but is it true that Malcolm's last year was distinguished by confused and confusing statements?

Rev. Cleage says it is true, I say it is not true, and it is up to you to find the answer. Because on it will depend your judgment about whether the real Malcolm tradition ended when he left the Black Muslims, or whether it continued and reached a higher level after he left.

How are you going to decide this? Rev. Cleage more or less invites you to take his word for it, since he doesn't suggest any alternative or offer any documentation or evidence. I invite you not to take my word, because there is an alternative. And that is: Read what Malcolm said during his last year. Read it for yourself and judge for yourself if it is confused or confusing—or just the opposite. Read the book *Malcolm X Speaks*, which contains everything from his last year that was available at the time it was published at the end of 1965. It has been in print now for one and a half years and has now been read by tens of thousands of people. So far, not one challenge to its veracity or accuracy has been publicly presented by anybody. *Liberator*, a magazine which is not sympathetic with the views of the editor of *Malcolm X Speaks*, calls it "the source book for what Malcolm actually said."

Then, after you have read it, if you have the slightest doubt about its accuracy, you should listen to the tapes from which most of *Malcolm X Speaks* was taken. I have listed them all at the end of *The Last Year*—22 tapes from Malcolm's last year—which are available for anyone who wants to listen to them. And since *The Last Year* was printed there are three more tapes from that period that have become available.

By this method, I contend, you can arrive at a solid judgment not only about the accuracy of the printed material by Malcolm, but also about whether the ideas presented there are confused or confusing; and about whether they are fragmentary, that is, presented out of context. I have no doubt whatever that the outcome of this method of investigation will establish conclusively that it is a myth to assert

that Malcolm's statements in his last year were anything but lucid, carefully thought out, closely argued, and amazingly consistent, despite all the adverse conditions under which he had to operate.

Now what were some of the main ideas that Malcolm developed and adopted in his last year? I cannot deal with this fully tonight, but I have tried to do it in *The Last Year of Malcolm X*. There I have presented Malcolm's main ideas, citing in each case the source, the place, the date, etc., and including both the ideas I agree with and the ones I question or differ with. In addition, I have given my interpretation, *my* interpretation of the significance, trend and direction of these ideas. It will not surprise me if some people will disagree with my interpretations, but it will surprise me if anyone successfully challenges the facts I have presented there.

Malcolm came to the conclusion that the Black Muslims had gone as far as they could go, and he wanted to go farther. He wanted to get into the active struggle, influence it ideologically, and revolutionize it. He wanted to build a new movement, on new foundations, and therefore he reviewed all his ideas—keeping some, modifying others, casting aside still others. He began to move to the left.

The concept that "the white man is the enemy," which Rev. Cleage calls the essential strand in Malcolm's philosophy, is the beginning of wisdom for black people who have had illusions that the white power structure is going to hand them freedom on a platter some day. To reject that illusion, and to get to understand that the black man has to fight for freedom, and that he has to depend first of all on his own organized strength, on black power—that is a great step forward, an indispensable step. But it is the beginning of wisdom, not the end of it; it is not a formula sufficient by itself for achieving freedom. After the need for independent black power is learned and absorbed and becomes a guide for action, there are other questions that have to be asked and answered.

If the white man is the enemy, are all white men equally enemies?—both the white men who have the power in this country, the rulers, and the white men who don't have power, and who are exploited by the rulers—not exploited as much as black people, but exploited too? If the white man is the enemy, is there some way of dividing the enemy, splitting them, driving a wedge in among them, setting them to fighting each other—to the benefit of the black man? If the white man is the enemy, is there some way of transforming the situation so that some of the whites can be demobilized, or neutralized, or even, under certain circumstances, turned into allies or potential allies of the black man because it would be in their own self-interest?

These are some of the questions Malcolm was beginning to think about and work out in his last year. The main allies of Afro-Americans, he decided, are the black, brown, yellow and red people of the world; but then he also began to see the possibility of alliances with what he called "militant white" Americans. In fact, he said,

to bring about the changes that are needed such alliances will be necessary. He didn't think they would be consummated right away—first, he always stressed, blacks must organize themselves independently, with their own leaders, their own movement, their own program. After they did that, which was his main preoccupation—then there might be alliances with militant whites, the right kind of alliances. And by the right kind of alliances he did not mean working in the Democratic Party.

None of this made him into an "integrationist." But it did make him go beyond the simple formula, the white man is the enemy, which is not the end of wisdom. It did make him think about and study the causes of racism and to see the possibility of its elimination some day. It led him to study the nature of American capitalist society, and of world capitalism—always from the viewpoint of how the interests of black people could be promoted and protected. And from his thought and study—especially from the thinking initiated through his discussions with African revolutionaries (whose impact on him far exceeded the influence of the religious Muslims in Mecca)—he came to the conclusion that capitalism is the cause of racism, that you can't have capitalism without racism, and therefore socialism should seriously be considered as an objective by black Americans as well as by Africans and Asians and Latin Americans. At the very least, you can say that in his last year he became pro-socialist and anti-capitalist.

Now these are only a few of the ideas Malcolm was thinking about and trying to work out in his last year, and on some of them, I want to be the first to stress, he had not completed his thinking when he was struck down. Rev. Cleage, who doesn't agree with some of these ideas, wants to discard these parts from the Malcolm tradition as irrelevant, as confused. He says the great speech, "Message to the Grass Roots," made while Malcolm was still in the Nation of Islam, is his last will and testament. But I think the evidence shows that Malcolm added to that testament, if you want to call it that, much that is rich, valuable, indispensable, and that he did it knowingly, consciously, and with a clear mind. You may not agree with what he added, but you can't say he didn't add it or that he added it out of confusion.

I would also like to offer an explanation of why Rev. Cleage rejects the contributions of Malcolm's last year. Rev. Cleage is, and has been since the end of 1963, an advocate and defender of black nationalism. Now when I say that, I am not—as anyone who knows me or the Marxist position is aware—I am not attacking him or using the term as an epithet. As I have said and written for many years, black nationalism is progressive and potentially revolutionary. To show what I mean by black nationalism, to show that it is not a negative thing to me, I would like to read you the definition of black nationalism presented in *The Last Year of Malcolm X*. Black

nationalism, I say, "is the tendency for black people in the United States to unite as a group, as a people, into a movement of their own to fight for freedom, justice and equality. Animated by the desire of an oppressed minority to decide its own destiny, this tendency holds that black people must control their own movement and the political, economic and social institutions of the black community. Its characteristic attributes include racial pride, group consciousness, hatred of white supremacy, a striving for independence from white control, and identification with black and non-white oppressed groups in other parts of the world." End of definition. In the same chapter I try to show why black nationalism should not be equated with what is called separatism by those who advocate a separate black nation, but I can't go into that here.

If the definition of black nationalism I have just given is correct, then Rev. Cleage is a black nationalist, and that is not an epithet but, from my standpoint, a scientifically correct designation and an expression of respect. Also, according to this definition, Malcolm was a black nationalist, and remained one to his last day—even though in his final months he began to wonder if that was the right label to describe what he was after.

But within the broad category of black nationalism it is possible to see many subdivisions. (This is one of the reasons why the various kinds of black nationalists unfortunately have been unable so far to unite into a single nationwide movement.) For present purposes I cannot discuss the various subdivisions of black nationalism but have to concentrate on the one I call pure-and-simple.

In *Marxism and the Negro Struggle*, written in 1964, and again in *The Last Year*, I have presented the argument that "The pure and simple black nationalist is concerned exclusively or primarily with the internal problems of the Negro community, with organizing it, with helping it to gain control of the community's politics, economy, etc. He is not concerned, or is less concerned, with the problems of the total American society, or with the nature of the larger society within which the Negro community exists. He has no theory or program for changing that society; for him that is the white man's problem."

When Rev. Cleage became a black nationalist, he became a pure and simple nationalist (in fact, it was by studying his statements, activities and development that I first became aware of this subdivision), and he remains a pure and simple nationalist. Malcolm too was a pure and simple nationalist before he left the Black Muslims, and he remained one for the first few months after the split. But then, after his first trip to Africa in the spring of 1964, mainly as a result of the thinking started by his discussions with African revolutionaries, he began to move beyond pure and simple nationalism, to transcend it—if not transcend it, to add something to it that changed it into something else. What was it he added? He added the belief that society as a whole has to be changed, revolutionized, if black

people are to achieve their freedom. This did not contradict his conviction that blacks must control their own community, that is, his black nationalism; it was an addition to his black nationalism. Black control of the black community, yes—but that is not enough, because even a black-controlled black community inside a reactionary and exploitative social and economic and political system cannot provide full and genuine freedom. The implication is that Afro-Americans must fight not only to gain control of their community but also to change society as a whole, to reconstruct it on a truly non-exploitative basis.

Malcolm accepted this implication, which is profoundly revolutionary, without ceasing to be a black nationalist. Rev. Cleage does not accept this implication. That, I believe, is the theoretical explanation for Rev. Cleage's tendency to reject most of Malcolm's last period, and, perhaps, not even study it with the care it deserves.

This is not only a mistake, but a sad mistake, because Malcolm was ready to give his life, he did give his life, for the right to be able to say the things he did in his last year. I mean that literally. He could have lived by keeping quiet. But he had things to say in his last year that he considered vital, things that it is dangerous to say, things that he knew it was dangerous to say—and still he put his life on the line for the right and opportunity to say them. To discard what Malcolm himself considered the most important part of his legacy, and for which he gave his life—that is indeed a sad mistake.

Despite my differences with Rev. Cleage's evaluation of Malcolm, which I have tried to present objectively and without personal rancor, I think I agree with what may have been the main intention of his talk three weeks ago. If I understood it correctly, his main intention was to inspire black people to make the Malcolm tradition their own—to interpret it according to their lights and needs, cherish it, make it a weapon in their struggle for freedom. With that intention I am in full accord.

I think this is already being done, to a far greater degree than Rev. Cleage does. The same night he spoke here, Eldridge Cleaver spoke in San Francisco about how the ideas and tradition of Malcolm have been "internalized" by black people all over the country. That is true, and in addition there is a growing body of written literature about Malcolm by black people, interpreting him and shaping his tradition, which Rev. Cleage overlooks or may not be aware of. On the West Coast there are people like Cleaver, not only writing about Malcolm but trying to continue what he began. In the Midwest, Milton Henry, Robert Higgins, Lerone Bennett, David Llorens. In the East, LeRoi Jones, Calvin Hernton, Rolland Snellings, Lawrence Neal, A. B. Spellman, Robert Allen, John O. Killens, Robert Vernon, Sara Mitchell, C. E. Wilson,—these are only a few of the many black people whose articles spring to mind (I hope the others will forgive

me for not mentioning them too)—whose interpretations I may not always agree with, just as Rev. Cleage may not, but which show that black people have been doing what he urges, in sufficient quantity to fill many volumes. James Baldwin is reportedly considering writing a play about Malcolm's *Autobiography*; a play called *Message from the Grass Roots* is soon to open in England. And the poets—I detected a slight tone of condescension or irony in Rev. Cleage's voice about the poetry by black people about Malcolm, a little surprising when you consider that in his profession he quotes poetry every Sunday—the poets too, in their own way, and it is not a way without influence, are making contributions to the preservation of the real Malcolm.

I agree, as I say, with what I take to be Rev. Cleage's intention. Malcolm is more than a hero and martyr, he is what Eldridge Cleaver calls "the standard" and "the model." I think he is and should be the standard and model for revolutionary and radical-minded people of all races, and will be for all who take the trouble to investigate him without prejudice and to learn from him. But he does belong, in a special sense, to black people first of all, and especially to young black people, whom Malcolm counted on to lead their people to freedom. If anyone should be the custodian of the Malcolm tradition, it should be they.

Rev. Cleage called me the custodian, perhaps softening it a bit by granting my sincerity. To make sure, I looked up the word "custody" in the dictionary. It says: "1. keeping, guardianship, care: (example) *in the custody of her father*; 2. the keeping or charge of officers of the law: (example) *the car was in the custody of the police*; 3. imprisonment: (example) *he was taken into custody*." Well, I am not the custodian of the Malcolm tradition, I have not been, and I do not aspire to be. What I have been, or rather, what Marxists have been—because Rev. Cleage really means the Marxists rather than me personally—are (1) the chief *circulators* of the Malcolm material, and (2) *interpreters* of it, from our own point of view.

Circulators, because nobody else showed any interest in doing that job. Of this we are quite proud; we feel it has been a genuine contribution—but it is a task that we do and will gladly share with anyone else. The circulation of this material has been a contribution to everyone, black and white. It is the raw material—not distorted in any way, not dragged in, not partially presented or partially withheld to suit anybody's factional purposes—it is the raw material which everyone, white or black, can use in order to understand and then fashion the Malcolm tradition. In addition, as I said, we Marxists have interpreted the raw material—again, not by distorting what Malcolm said, only by giving our analysis and opinion about what he said and did. That is everybody's privilege, that is the duty of anybody who considers himself a radical, and we hope that all tendencies will work out and present their interpretations, as we have done, so that all interpretations can confront each other openly and

provide a sound basis for what will be the historical judgment and tradition.

So I join with Rev. Cleage in urging black people to find out what Malcolm really said and stood for, write about it, preserve it, interpret it, circulate it, and use it in the struggle. All I say is that when you do this, don't do it partly—do it all the way; don't chop the Malcolm tradition to pieces—preserve the whole thing, confront the whole Malcolm, preserve the whole Malcolm, utilize the whole Malcolm to advance and win the struggle. If you do, and if your aim is to revolutionize society, then I think you will cherish the final part of the whole Malcolm, the part that he gave his life to add, as the most useful part because it is the most revolutionary.

From the Discussion Period

Question: Rev. Cleage said he didn't know anything about Marxism. You say Malcolm was not a Marxist, but did he know anything about it—had he read or studied it?

Answer: What Rev. Cleage actually said—and I quote from the transcript of his speech, which I have here—was, "I am not a Marxist—I don't pretend to be, I don't even pretend to know anything about it." Maybe the key word here is "pretend." I don't know how much he knows about Marxism, but in one speech he gave in this hall some years ago, and in at least one article he wrote, he gave some reasons why he does not accept Marxism. So I imagine he has some knowledge about it. Or else I don't see how he could reject it.

Of course I think everybody, and especially leaders, should find out about Marxism, whether they will accept it or not. I can't say for sure whether Malcolm did, or how much. I know that he read papers and magazines that claim to be Marxist, including small, obscure and unimportant ones. When I wrote an article for the *International Socialist Review* in 1964, attempting to present a Marxist defense of the Freedom Now Party against various misconceptions, including some spread by so-called socialists, I know that Malcolm ordered a couple dozen copies for leading members of his organization because he thought they should be acquainted with this point of view.

Someone who knew Malcolm in prison before he became a Black Muslim, and later worked closely with him in the Nation of Islam, told me that Malcolm did read and study more than radical papers and magazines; that even while he was in prison he read some radical books and pamphlets, and that he later read some basic works of Marxism. But I am not sure of this from my own knowledge.

Question: Rev. Cleage said that if Malcolm had actually become an "integrationist" at Mecca, then he could have become a Marxist and joined the Socialist Workers Party. Does he really think that be-

lieving in "integration" is a condition for joining the Socialist Workers Party?

Answer: What Rev. Cleage said was that if Malcolm had actually become an "integrationist" and accepted the ideas that go with that concept of race relations, then there would have been nothing to stop him from joining the NAACP, or singing "We Shall Overcome" with Martin Luther King, or becoming a Marxist and joining the Socialist Workers Party. In fact, Rev. Cleage said, these things would follow logically.

On the contrary, leaving the bit about the NAACP and King aside, there is nothing logical about it. The Socialist Workers Party does not view "integration" as the solution any more than Malcolm did, or than Rev. Cleage does; in fact, the Socialist Workers Party reached this conclusion before Rev. Cleage did. So even if Malcolm had become an "integrationist," that wouldn't have been any reason for him to join the Socialist Workers Party.

Let it be clearly understood: Malcolm was not a Marxist, and he was not about to join the Socialist Workers Party. That's what we said when he was alive, and that's what we've said ever since. The only ones who circulated a contrary story were his enemies—as a way of discrediting him, they thought.

The facts are these: Malcolm respected the Socialist Workers Party, and was willing to work with it in certain areas—just as he would have been willing to work with *any* organization that he believed was opposed to racism and the racist government. He praised *The Militant* as one of the best papers anywhere, and there were copies on sale at his headquarters. He had become pro-socialist in his outlook after his trips to Africa, urging black people in this country to learn about socialism—and he did this not only when he spoke before socialist audiences, but also "at home," when he spoke before his own organization in Harlem.

Despite this, he was not a Marxist, for reasons I have discussed in *The Last Year of Malcolm X*. Whether he would ever have become a Marxist, nobody can say. The most you can say is that it was possible in the long run. But he was not a Marxist at the time of his death, much as we wish he would have become one, and we Marxists have never claimed he was. Anybody that says we do is guilty of misrepresentation.

Question: The impression I got from listening to Rev. Cleage last month is that he was saying that after Malcolm died and couldn't speak for himself, the Marxists jumped on the bandwagon in order to distort his views and print speeches which he wouldn't have printed, "fragmentary statements" and so on. Will you comment on this and Malcolm's relations with the Socialist Workers Party?

Answer: Well, Rev. Cleage did not quite make that specific charge against the Marxists in his talk three weeks ago. But I do believe that when he spoke about distorters, calling them "they" and "somebody

else," when he said certain people remember "the things it suits their purposes to remember," when he said "everything that is written that they can put their hands on will be saying that Malcolm X said something he never said, that Malcolm X meant something he never meant," when he said, "I don't care what else they drag in from wherever they drag it," and similar statements—I do believe that he meant at least to include the Marxists among his targets. And that would support the impression you got.

First of all, I should point out that our interest in Malcolm, the sympathetic interest of the revolutionary socialist movement in his ideas, did not begin after his death in 1965. Nor did it begin only after his split with the Black Muslims in 1964. It goes back further than that, to the time when he was still a Black Muslim. You can read the pamphlet, *Freedom Now*, adopted in the middle of 1963, and see that the Socialist Workers Party, in that resolution adopted at its national convention, pointed out the progressive potential of black nationalism—that is, while Malcolm was still a Black Muslim, we were pointing out the good aspects of what he was saying. If that can be called jumping on a bandwagon, all I can say is that there weren't many other people on it besides us.

Even before that, the Friday Night Socialist Forum of Detroit was the first socialist hall in the country where a Black Muslim was a guest speaker—Wilfred X, who was received in a sympathetic way because we saw the potential of the Black Muslims while Malcolm was a leader. Later that year, in the fall of 1963, Malcolm was a speaker at a meeting sponsored by the Young Socialists at Wayne State University—still while Malcolm was a member of the Nation of Islam.

When Malcolm broke with the Black Muslims in March, 1964, *The Militant* was the only paper in the country to point out its great significance for the future of the freedom struggle and the radical movement as a whole—we predicted then that he could change the whole course of the movement, the same thing Rev. Cleage said after the fact here in 1967; and it was the only paper in the country to print Malcolm's Declaration of Independence in March, 1964.

In the following 50 weeks Malcolm spoke three times at the Militant Labor Forum in New York, and the last time he said he'd speak there again any time he was invited. Again and again he praised *The Militant*, not only when he spoke at the Militant Labor Forum, but also when he spoke before his own Organization of Afro-American Unity in Harlem. In his talk on Afro-American history one month before his death, he mentioned that the Negro press largely ignored what the OAAU was trying to do, while *The Militant* reported it accurately and fully.

Malcolm's three Militant Labor Forum speeches were all printed in *The Militant while he was alive*, not later. He didn't think they were inaccurate in any way. If he had thought so, you can be sure he would have said it, and he wouldn't have had a bundle of *The*

Militant on sale in his office. He did not think the printing of those speeches was something "dragged in"—on the contrary, he was grateful that this paper was willing to print them at a time when nobody else would. A month before his death, he agreed to go on a national speaking tour for the Young Socialist Alliance; and if he hadn't been killed, he would have spoken here in Debs Hall during that tour.

Excuse me for taking so long with this, but I'm still speaking about the myths about Malcolm, and I want to say a few words about the key book to understanding him, the book of speeches, *Malcolm X Speaks*. This book begins with the "Message to the Grass Roots," when Malcolm was still a Black Muslim, and which Rev. Cleage admires; but the rest is from his last year, after the split, about which speeches Rev. Cleage had nothing good to say. The idea for this book, it is true, was suggested by Marxists, who wanted to help Malcolm publicize his independent ideas. But it was not a book thought up after Malcolm's death—it was suggested to Malcolm himself, while he was still alive, as a book of his speeches following the break with Elijah Muhammad. Malcolm's response to the suggestion was favorable, and he was going to select the speeches himself. But he was killed a month later, before he could start on the project.

Merit Publishers then asked one of Malcolm's closest co-workers, who had been present at the original discussion about the proposed book, to select the speeches for the book and edit it. In *The Last Year of Malcolm X*, I have told how I was later brought in as co-editor, to speed up the publication, and how finally Malcolm's co-worker withdrew from the project. But before he withdrew we had agreed on the contents, most of which had been supplied by him—the speeches the book contains. So their selection was not a unilateral choice of Marxists, but one made in collaboration and agreement with one of Malcolm's closest collaborators—who, I should add, not only was not a Marxist, but did not approve of Malcolm's entry into any kind of politics. The book contains everything from Malcolm's last year—I repeat, everything—that was available when the book was published in 1965. Since then, other speeches have become available, such as the one by Malcolm on Afro-American history, and that has been published too, verbatim, without any change.

I stress "everything" because I want to make the point that the material was not picked over to present only things that Marxists like and agree with—it includes what *Malcolm* liked and agreed with, and that was the sole and overriding criterion that was used in preparing *Malcolm X Speaks*. So, yes, "everything we can get our hands on" has been printed, but, no, nothing has been "dragged in." I told you earlier how you can check this for yourself.

This is important because *Malcolm X Speaks*, more than anything else, and more than what people claim they remember without any documentation, is the basis for forming your judgment about the value of Malcolm's last year. You know, Malcolm was not a fool;

if he had thought we might misrepresent his ideas, he wouldn't have trusted us an inch. And he did trust us. But you don't have to trust us or take our word for anything. Malcolm himself had some wonderfully pertinent words about this in his remarks to Mississippi students visiting Harlem two months before he died. He said:

"One of the first things I think young people, especially nowadays, should learn is how to see for yourself and listen for yourself and think for yourself. Then you can come to an intelligent decision for yourself. If you form the habit of going by what you hear others say about someone, or going by what others think about someone, instead of searching that thing out for yourself and seeing for yourself, you will be walking west when you think you're going east, and you will be walking east when you think you're going west. This generation, especially of our people, has a burden, more so than any other time in history. The most important thing that we can learn to do today is think for ourselves.

"It's good to keep wide-open ears and listen to what everybody has to say, but when you come to make a decision, you have to weigh all of what you've heard on its own, and place it where it belongs, and come to a decision for yourself; you'll never regret it. But if you form the habit of taking what someone else says about a thing without checking it out for yourself, you'll find that other people will have you hating your friends and loving your enemies. This is one of the things our people are beginning to learn today—that it is very important to think out a situation for yourself. If you don't do it, you'll always be maneuvered into a situation where you are never fighting your actual enemies, where you will find yourself fighting your own self." (*Malcolm X Speaks*, pp. 137-138, paperback edition.)

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REVIEWS



LABOR SPIES

THE LABOR SPY RACKET by Leo Huberman. Republished from 1937 Modern Age Books edition by Monthly Review, with post-script on McClellan Committee hearings (1957). 209 pp. \$5.00.

In this era when labor statesmen like Walter Reuther and George Meany are trying to prove that there is no class war and there are no class distinctions, the republication of this valuable handbook on anti-labor techniques and tactics as they have been developed throughout the whole history of organized labor, is welcome indeed.

Huberman wrote his original book in 1937, basing himself on the first eight volumes of the LaFollette Civil Liberties Committee. This committee spent months delving into the anti-union activities of big business in the turbulent '30s when the CIO was on the rise. Much of the text of the original book is actual testimony by reluctant witnesses from business, from the then burgeoning labor espionage industry, from labor spies themselves, and from workers "hooked" into stooging on their fellow workers.

Perhaps one of the most infamous cases involves Richard Frankenstein who was the first president of the independent Automotive Industrial Workers Assn. Frankenstein's best friend, John Andrews, the vice president of AIWS paint local at Dodge, was a spy. During

the long period that he and Frankenstein worked to build the union he appeared to be a strong union man, an able organizer, a good speaker, ready and willing to do anything to build the union.

The wives and children of the two men also became inseparable. The two families even shared a summer cottage for one vacation while the plant was shut down. Every night during that long association John Andrews wrote a detailed report to his agency—the Corporations Auxiliary Co., a private detective agency hired by Chrysler Corp. John Andrews was paid \$40 a month for his treachery. The Chrysler Corp. paid Auxiliary \$9 a day for his services.

Multiply John Andrews by many thousands and you get a vague idea of the bigness of these "labor relations" operations.

In his postscript Huberman deals with the very short hearings of the McClellan Committee (Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor and Management Field of the U. S. Senate, 1957). This committee spent many months delving into possible racketeering connections of the labor movement, but took only two months to investigate "improper" activities in the management field. But their revelations were interesting.

While "labor statesmen" may believe the old days of class war are all over, the capitalist class has no such illusions. It still looks upon the working class as its class enemy. It still employs every weapon at its disposal to keep its supremacy. In the north, in the big industrial cities where the unions are well established the methods used are more modern—bugging devices everywhere, even in union headquarters, take the place of most of the old fashioned labor spies. But it is a different story in the south where runaway plants are now in danger of being organized. There the old methods still serve.

For instance, in North and South Carolina, the J. T. Stevens Company, headed by former Secretary of the Army Stevens, is fighting an organizing drive of the Textile Workers Union with labor spies. More than 100 workers have been fired for union activity. Recently an appealed NLRB award, ordering the Stevens company to rehire 87 of those workers, has been upheld by a Circuit Court of Appeals. Now Stevens is taking the case to the Supreme Court.

And in McKeesport, Tenn. Pinkerton thugs are guarding scab labor at the McKeesport Press, where several unions of the printing trades have been on strike for *five years*.

Much of the material in this book will be new to the young generation of students, civil rights fighters and workers. To many young people the history of the labor movement, especially that dynamic period beginning in the 1930s is either entirely unknown or thought of as one views an historic novel—interesting but dramatized beyond reality. To those of us who lived through and fought in the battle to bring unionization to the masses of American workers it is anything but mysterious and over-rated. It was life. And it was very real.

Today there is a new turbulence in the labor movement, a new fighting spirit especially among young workers who refused to be led

by their noses into bad agreements by "labor statesmen" who insist the class war is over. This book should be read and studied by all union members, by all students, civil rights workers and antiwar fighters. It is a good idea to know your enemy. And it is even better to be fully aware of his arsenal of weapons.

Marvel Scholl

AHMED BEN BELLA

AHMED BEN BELLA by Robert Merle. Walker and Co., 1967, 160 pp., \$5.00.

Ahmed Ben Bella is a pseudo-autobiography put together by Robert Merle on the basis of 30 hours of taped interviews with Ben Bella. Since it was published after Ben Bella's downfall and confinement, it is impossible to say how close it is to what Ben Bella would have written himself. However, the narrative throughout is in the first person.

This book has certain value as a panoramic view of the Algerian revolution and through its insights into the effects of colonialism on Ben Bella specifically and the Algerian people generally.

One episode of the independence struggle of particular interest to Americans is the role of the CIA in the struggle against the French. Ben Bella points out the political sophistication of the CIA in providing arms to the Algerian nationalist movement. He states that the CIA provided arms to the FLN in hopes of "reaping rewards after Independence," and to strengthen the hand of right wing and traditionalist elements in the independence movement to the detriment of the socialist wing. At the same time the CIA never provided enough arms to make a difference in the struggle.

Ahmed Ben Bella's discussion of the effects of colonialism on the individual is interesting. The frustrations of being a "foreigner" in one's country of birth, cut off from the traditions of one's people are movingly presented.

He points out the plight of the majority of Algerian intellectuals, more at home in French than Arabic. "When the colonial learns a

foreign language," states Ben Bella, "he more or less adopts the mental attitudes which that language interprets." Even those like himself who consciously maintained their links to the Arabic of the masses, feel a conflict between "thinking in French," and "feeling in Arabic."

Ben Bella discusses at some length the need to maintain French as a link to the technical knowledge of the West while at the same time expanding and redeveloping the roots of the Algerian people in the Arabic language.

Among the other points of interest are Ben Bella's favorable reaction to Cuba and his description of the mechanics of the first wave of nationalization of French owned land.

The major shortcoming of the book is that, according to Robert Merle, Ben Bella refused to discuss any internal disagreements since he was hoping for reconciliation. We therefore get no insight into the reasons for Boumedienne's coup.

Will Reissner

BOOKS RECEIVED

DEVELOPING EGO FUNCTIONS IN DISTURBED CHILDREN:

Occupational Therapy in Milieu by Lela A. Llorens and Eli Z. Rubin. Wayne State University Press. 147pp. \$2.50 paper.

LATIN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES by Edward J. Williams. University of Tennessee Press. 305pp. \$7.50.

THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY by Samuel B. Griffith, II. McGraw-Hill. 398pp. \$10.95.

THE ATLANTIC IDEA AND ITS EUROPEAN RIVALS by Harold van B. Cleveland. McGraw-Hill. 186pp. \$2.95 paper.

AMERICAN DISCIPLES OF MARX: From the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era by David Herreshoff. Wayne State University Press. 215pp. \$7.95.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE: Chaos or Community? by Martin Luther King, Jr. Harper and Row. 209pp. \$4.95.

THE INTELLECTUALS AND McCARTHY: The Radical Specter by Michael Paul Rogin. M. I. T. Press. 366pp. \$12.50.

THE COMING DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION by J.R. Burke. Published by J. R. Burke. 68pp. \$1.75.

CHARISMA AND FACTIONALISM IN THE NAZI PARTY by Joseph Nyomarkay. University of Minnesota Press. 161pp. \$5.00.

NATIONALISM AND SOCIALISM: Marxist and Labor Theories of Nationalism to 1917. Monthly Review Press. \$7.50.

NAACP: a History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Vol. 1: 1909-1920 by Charles Flint Kellogg. The Johns Hopkins Press. 332pp. \$8.75.

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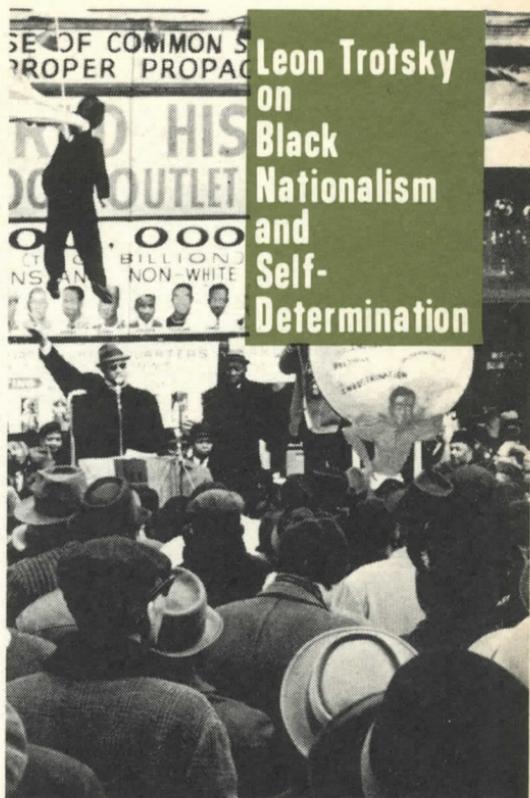
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