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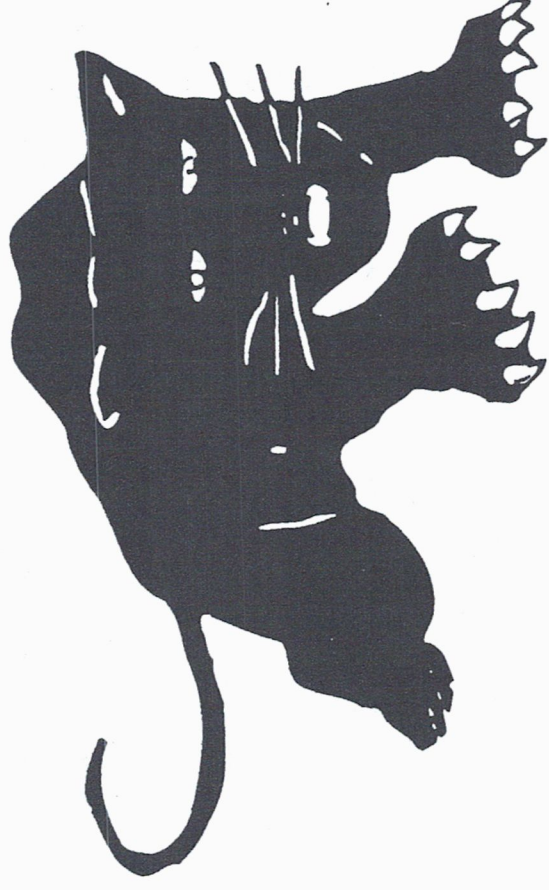
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Maoism and The Black Panther Party

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A Pamphlet by the Maoist Internationalist Movement

The Black Panther Party paved the way _____ page 3
 The Panthers: Maoists of the 1960s _____ page 8
 Going too far with Mao _____ page 11
 Community group restarts Panther paper _____ page 13

WHAT IS MIM?

The Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM) is the collection of existing or emerging Maoist internationalist parties in the English-speaking imperialist countries and their English-speaking internal semi-colonies, as well as the existing or emerging Maoist internationalist parties in Belgium, France and Quebec and the existing or emerging Spanish-speaking Maoist internationalist parties of Aztlán, Puerto Rico and other territories of the U.S. Empire.

MIM Notes is the newspaper of MIM. Notas Rojas is the newspaper of the Spanish-speaking parties or emerging parties of MIM. MIM upholds the revolutionary communist ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and is an internationalist organization that works from the vantage point of the Third World proletariat. MIM struggles to end the oppression of all groups over other groups: classes, genders, nations. MIM knows this is only possibly by building public opinion to seize power through armed struggle. Revolution is a reality for North America as the military becomes over-extended in the government's attempts to maintain world hegemony. MIM differs from other communist parties on three main questions: (1) MIM holds that after the proletariat seizes power in socialist revolution, the potential exists for capitalist restoration under the leadership of a new bourgeoisie within the communist party itself. In the case of the USSR, the bourgeoisie seized power after the death of Stalin in 1953; in China, it was after Mao's death and the overthrow of the "Gang of Four" in 1976. (2) MIM upholds the Chinese Cultural Revolution as the farthest advance of communism in human history. (3) As Marx, Engels and Lenin formulated and MIM has reiterated through materialist analysis, imperialism extracts super-profits from the Third World and in part uses this wealth to buy off whole populations of oppressor nation so-called workers. These so-called workers bought off by imperialism form a new petty-bourgeoisie called the labor aristocracy. These classes are not the principal vehicles to advance Maoism within those countries because their standards of living depend on imperialism. At this time, imperialist super-profits create this situation in the Canada, Quebec, the United States, England, France, Belgium, Germany, Japan, Italy, Switzerland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Israel, Sweden and Denmark. MIM accepts people as members who agree on these basic principles and accept democratic centralism, the system of majority rule, on other questions of party line.

"The theory of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin is universally applicable. We should regard it not as dogma, but as a guide to action. Studying it is not merely a matter of learning terms and phrases, but of learning Marxism-Leninism as the science of revolution."

- Mao Zedong, Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 208.



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to write to the Governor or the defense committee of each individual prisoner. Further, their inadequate analysis of history is revealed in the arena of world politics by their support for the Cuban regime today. In their solidarity statements they say that the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are just now "retreat[ing] from socialism." MIM believes that the Soviet Union has been implementing capitalism since the death of Stalin and that Eastern Europe has no socialism to retreat from.

The statement goes on to complain about the loss of support from these regimes for Third World revolutions. But it is just this "support" that led the Cuban revolution into economic dependence on the Soviet Union, a dependence that forced Cuba to adopt a bureaucratic and authoritarian political and economic structure, ultimately adopting the USSR's form of "socialism," otherwise known as state capitalism.

Supporting Cuba without an analysis of their revolution and resultant retreat from revolutionary principles is an ahistorical view of liberation that ignores the plight of the Cuban people today.

MIM does not want people to forget the history of the Black Panther Party, a revolutionary Maoist party that was destroyed by state repression (specifically the FBI) in the 1960s. From this history there is much to be learned about effective revolutionary work. One lesson MIM takes from the destruction of the BPP is the need to organize underground, safer from government infiltration and repression.

The newspaper committee states that they are organized around democratic centralism. (see MIM Notes 52 for a theory piece on democratic centralism). But it is unclear what democratic centralism means to a newspaper staff that prints a wide spectrum of political views and does not claim to have any uniform basis of political agreement.

MIM does not agree that reforming the existing power structure is an effective strategy for eliminating the oppression of capitalism, a conclusion that these former Black Panthers are now advocating.

Black Panther Party paved the Way

"In February, 1970, Kathleen Cleaver, Communication Secretary of the Black Panther Party, living in exile in Algiers with her husband, Eldridge, was asked by a reporter from the Women's Page of the Washington Post what was a woman's role in the revolution. 'No one ever asks what a man's place in the Revolution is,' she replied in part.

Very early in the history of the Black Panther Party, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale and others moved to eliminate male chauvinism from the Party. From the early period, too, Black women were important in the work of the Party. Nor was their activity confined to the typewriter and mimeograph machine. Panther women spoke at rallies and meetings and were interviewed in the underground press." (1)

by MC42 & MC86

The Black Panther Party (BPP) was the Maoist party of the late 1960s in the United States. Dr. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale wrote the 10-point platform in October of 1966 in Oakland, California. Suddenly, the Black community had a revolutionary party for organization and protection.

MIM learns from the work and the ideology of the BPP. They were the best revolutionary party in U.S. history. We must also learn from their mistakes. The BPP had faults. They exposed themselves too much above-ground to the enemy. They picked up the gun too soon and leaned towards focoist (adventurist) strategies. They supported a cult of personality and downplayed the evils of gender oppression. They failed to recognize the Patriarchy as part of the "power structure" which needs to be destroyed.

One the other hand, the Panthers were Maoists. They created a strong internal Party discipline. They criticized cultural nationalism and Black capitalist reforms. They built coalitions. They used their newspaper, The Black Panther, as an organizing tool. They carried out programs to improve material conditions in the Black community. They built a mass base of support and unity. They struggled, with limited success, to combat gender oppression.

Community Work

The BPP began as "The Black Panther Party for Self Defense," and that is what it was. Under Newton's instruction, Panthers learned some criminal law and the Bill of Rights and carried guns to help the Black community defend itself against daily police brutality.

Responding to the needs of the people, the BPP began community service projects: breakfast for children programs, free health care clinics, and revolutionary schools. They aimed to improve daily living conditions and develop revolutionary consciousness. The BPP used their newspaper, *The Black Panther*, to educate, politically stimulate and organize the masses.

Ideology

Contrary to popular distortions of Panther ideology, the Party openly identified itself as communist: "The Black Panther Party recognizes, as do all Marxist revolutionaries, that the only response to the violence of the ruling class is the revolutionary violence of the people." (2)

Although the Panthers studied the works of Franz Fanon, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro: Maoism was the primary basis for Panther ideology. At the Party's founding, Newton and Seale had studied the four volumes of Mao Zedong's collected works, and Quotations from Chairman Mao (*The Little Red Book*) was required reading for Party members.

Seale: "We do not fight racism with racism. We fight racism with solidarity. We do not fight exploitative capitalism with black capitalism. We fight capitalism with basic socialism. We do not fight imperialism with more imperialism. We fight imperialism with proletarian internationalism." (3)

Above Ground: FBI Infiltration

The Panthers were destroyed by state repression. The FBI created internal conflicts within the BPP by forging letters and pretending to be Panthers breaking with the BPP line. This was easy for the FBI because the BPP was completely above-ground and very visible.

The Panthers made the mistake of relying on the same above-ground strategy that Mao and the Communist Party used during the armed struggle in China. But conditions in imperialist countries and oppressed countries are very different. China in the 1920s and 1930s had a weak government and communists could work openly in the countryside with few problems. Not so in the United States in the 1960s. The BPP either underestimated the repressive power of the state or overestimated their own power. Many of the Panthers were framed by the FBI and jailed or assassinated. (4)

Focoism is a theory that says small groups of armed revolutionaries can ignite the revolution by engaging in spectacular guerrilla actions. A tendency towards focoism was one of the Panthers' biggest weaknesses. Seizing on rigorous militancy, FBI infiltrators were able to stir up adventurism in strategically bad situations. Maoism warns that taking up the gun too soon, and without the proper support of the masses, will result in fighting losing battles. (5)

Panthers and Gender

In *Revolutionary Suicide*, Dr. Huey P. Newton described his significant changes in attitude and practice concerning sexual relationships with women, marriage and "the family." First accepting "the institution of marriage," then trying free love—and later pimping—Newton and the BPP finally developed a communal way to live.

Capitalist production requires that all workers always fight each other for

Community group restarts Panther paper

by MC17

MIM Notes 54, July 1991

The Black Panther
Spring 1991

The Black Panther Newspaper Committee

P.O. Box 519

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The Black Panther is a newspaper put out by former members of the Black Panther Party. This paper does not signify the revival of the party.

While the paper does a good job of exposing many of the injustices inflicted on the Black community by the American government, it does not have a consistent and effective analysis of how to change this situation.

The strategies and tactics for liberation of the Black Panther Party in the 1960s were those of revolution. They did not suggest that "homelessness is the end result of many things gone wrong—there is no one thing that causes it and there will be no one thing that corrects it." Instead, Black Panther Party members in the 1960s saw homelessness, drugs, and all the other means used to keep African Americans down, as symptoms of capitalism—a system that is supported by the oppression and colonization of African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and all oppressed nationalities in this country and around the world. Unlike the current newspaper staff, MIM does not see boycotts of colgate-palmolive and letter-writing campaigns to the Mayor as a means of liberation. The paper is filled with articles that attack the symptoms of oppression without discussing the causes. There is no recognition that revolution is the only way that Black people and all oppressed nationalities will ever be liberated.

The Black Panther reprints the rules and program of the Black Panther Party but does nothing to explain their position on these ideas now, or why they no longer think it necessary to organize as a revolutionary political party. They seem to support the actions of the Panthers in the past, but offer little discussion of the causes of their downfall or the need for future revolutionary organizing.

The paper does a good job of exposing the racist nature of the prison system and the large number of political prisoners held in the United States. But they offer no means to challenge this government repression beyond the suggestion

want to fight is the civil war...but this....should not be launched until the bourgeoisie becomes really helpless.”(3)

The Black Panthers and focoists after them also missed this from Mao:

“The question of China’s cities and countryside today is qualitatively different from that of the cities and the countryside in capitalist countries abroad.... It is impossible to conceive of a protracted guerrilla war carried on by the peasants in the countryside against the cities in a country such as England, America, France....”(4)

Later period of Panthers

As late as April 1971, Newton was still quoting Mao on how to look at picking up the gun for struggle.(5) In January 1970, Newton put it this way in response to the question: “What has been the most important inspiration for the Black Panthers?”

“I think that not only Fidel and Che, Ho Chi Minh and Mao and Kim Il Sung, but also all the guerrilla bands that have been operating in Mozambique and Angola, and the Palestinian guerrillas who are fighting for a socialist world.”

In 1970, when the Panthers were already past their peak, it was not such a great contradiction to say what Newton did. The differences of Mao with the Soviet Union had only been public since 1962. The differences with other countries and leaders in the socialist world were much murkier and did not become apparent right away. Mao agreed with Newton at the time in the generally rosy outlook supporting armed struggles of oppressed nationalities throughout the world.

When Nixon announced his plans to visit China, the Black Panthers called on China to negotiate for the oppressed of the world, including the Attica rebellion. While denouncing Nixon, Newton said about the Attica uprising, “This is why we approached Chairman Mao Tse-tung, because we know of his peace-and-freedom loving nature.”(6)

Notes:

1. Huey Newton, *To Die for the People*, New York: Random House, 1972, p. 15.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
3. MIM Notes 47, p. 6.
4. Stuart R. Schram, ed., *The Political Thought of Mao Tse Tung*, New York: Praeger, 1969, p. 288. For MIM’s essay on focoism, order the pamphlet “What Is The Maoist Internationalist Movement?” for \$2, post-paid.
5. *To Die for the People*, p. 49.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

fewer jobs at lesser wages. Often these wages are not enough to feed a family. Capitalist Patriarchy forces women, teenagers and children to work for survival at pay rates even lower than men’s wages. People are driven out of work and forced to compete with each other for ever lower real money. Huge armies of unemployed men and women and teenagers hit the streets all fighting for the McDonalds wage or black-market turf; and the family falls apart.

This happens all over the world. Its worse in Third World countries than here. And even though the pay falls, men, as a group, still get more money than women, teenagers and children as a group. That is a suspect privilege that capitalist Patriarchy gives to men: so men and women will remain on unequal terms. Under stress, the family members go their separate ways.

The phoney Eight Is Enough nuclear family is not the reality in most neighborhoods around the planet. But some sort of “family” is required for survival when wages are below survival levels. Many people try to hold onto the extended family network—so that the burden of survival is more evenly distributed. In Amerika, people are forced to sneak in and out of their own homes so that the welfare-police won’t catch them.

The Black Panther Party developed a communal living strategy. They formed a “fighting family” living together for a common purpose to fight for their existence and their goals. (6)

Women held back—the revolution suffers

Kathleen Cleaver was held back in her revolutionary work by her husband, Eldridge, who was Minister Of Information for the Party. In 1970, rallies—at which Kathleen was scheduled to speak—were set back, because “Eldridge changed his mind and refused to let her come.” (7) Although Newton, Seale and Eldridge Cleaver himself all spoke out against “male chauvinism” in the Party, women Panthers were in fact held back. The revolutionary movement as a whole cannot succeed without the full participation of all fighters.

This points to another problem in the BPP: a heavy reliance on individual leaders and personalities to keep the ball rolling. The “cult of personality” built up around some of the BPP leaders, like Newton or Seale, created a dependence on individuals and damaged the self-reliance of the revolutionary movement as a whole. The revolution in China also suffered from the cult of personality around Mao. MIM criticizes and avoids this tendency.

The BPP and lesbian/gay movements

In the August 15, 1970 issue of the BPP’s newspaper, *The Black Panther*, Newton wrote a letter to “the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters about the Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements.” This letter attempted to open the dialogue between the BPP and these (mostly white) movements. “This was the first time any non-gay black organization ... recognized the oppression of homophobia; connected that oppression to the plight of Black people; and attempted—based on that connection—to build coalitions openly with lesbians and gay men.” (8)

It must have been a hard letter for Newton to write. Both Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver had expressed their homophobia in their books, (*Seize The Time* and *Soul On Ice*). Although there are many problems with Newton’s let-

ter—sexist overtones, ignoring Black lesbians and gay men, focusing on gay men—it can still be seen as a first step.

But only a few groups recognized it as such. Black newspapers ignored the letter altogether. Many gay and feminist groups responded antagonistically. Some of these groups showed themselves to be outright counter revolutionaries. Others ducked under a “left” cover and insisted that the BPP was still sexist and homophobic and thus unfit for coalition or discussion—even if they were in agreement on other revolutionary points.

In fact, both sides were groping. Neither the Panthers, nor most feminist and gay groups of the time, built practices firmly rooted in an analysis of the actual intersections of gender, nation and class.

The Panther analysis of oppression in the United States was incomplete without an understanding of how all women are oppressed across lines of nation and class—and how Patriarchy, enforced heterosexuality and the myth of the “nuclear family” all reinforce imperialism inside and outside the Black nation. The feminist and gay groups failed to comprehend how gender oppression is conditioned by the nationality of women and men. How dominant nation status lends extended class/social privileges to First World women and gay men at the expense of proletarian women and men.

Third World gay revolution

In November, 1970, three months after Newton’s letter was published, The Berkeley Tribe printed the “Third World Gay Revolution” (TWGR). Echoing the format of the BPP Platform—this anonymous document detailed the sexist crimes of “the carnivorous system of capitalism” and called out the heterosexism of all sisters and brothers who “cling to male supremacy” and “still fight for the privileged position of man on top.”

The document expanded on the BPP’s basic 10-Point analysis of national and class contradictions by infusing their content with revolutionary socialist gender-based demands. It is at least as realistic as the Panther Platform in recognizing that none of these demands can be achieved under capitalism.

On the other hand, TWGR claimed that the Panthers “struggled to maintain and to [en]force heterosexuality and the nuclear family.” On this basis alone, TWGR labelled the Panthers “counter revolutionary;” a truly ridiculous statement in the face of overall Panther practice and no visible evidence of any practice at all by TWGR.

“Third World Gay Revolution” recognizes that the idea of the nuclear family is a bogus construct—not even practiced by the rich. Gender oppression is part of the rot caused by capitalism. Women are not less oppressed as a group because they serve individual men. Nor are they less oppressed by being made to serve many men. Women are oppressed, globally, because women’s labor-power—including sexuality and reproduction—is appropriated by the capitalist Patriarchy for profit.

It is unfortunate that the “Third World Gay Revolution” was anonymously written and that the BPP never had the chance to openly struggle with and learn from the authors. Cooperation and struggle might have broadened the revolutionary-minded social base at hand, improved the analysis of both groups and

To be true to the spirit of the Black Panther Party of 1966-1969, one should read Mao Zedong’s work. The same could be said of the Filipino New People’s Army, the Vietnamese People’s Liberation Army, the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front and to a lesser extent the FMLN in El Salvador and countless other groups. In the twentieth century there is simply no greater influence in Third World liberation struggles than Mao Zedong, who set the example by liberating China from imperialism in 1949.

Notes:

1. Huey Newton, *To Die for the People*, New York: Random House, 1972, p. 25.
2. Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Black Panthers Speak*, New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1970, p. 6.
3. Roger Howard, *Mao Tse-Tung and the Chinese People*, New York: Monthly Review, 1977, p. 78.
4. *The Black Panthers Speak*, p. 6.
5. Mao Zedong, “Serve the People,” *Selected Works*, Vol. IV, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1956, p. 219.
6. *To Die for the People*, p. xviii.
7. Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time*, New York: Random House, 1970, p. 82.
8. Bobby Seale, *A Lonely Rage: The Autobiography of Bobby Seale*, New York: Times Books, 1978, p. 126.
9. Bob Avakian, “Summing Up the Black Panther Party,” Chicago: RCP Publications, 1980, p. 3. MIM’s extensive differences with Bob Avakian, chair of the Revolutionary Communist Party, are available in MIM’s Critique of the RCP available for \$10 post-paid.
10. Jim O’Brien, “American Leninism in the 1970s,” *Radical America*, p. 9.
11. *Seize the Time*, p. 83.
12. *Seize the Time*, p. 84.

Going too far with Mao

by MCS

Sometimes Newton goes too far in taking the inspiration of Mao and the Chinese Communist Party. Newton goes so far as to paraphrase Mao on guerrilla warfare to be applied in the United States.(1)

He goes on to adopt the above-ground strategy that Mao adopted in China: “If the Chinese Revolution is investigated it will be seen that the Communist Party operated quite openly in order to muster support from the masses.”(2) Newton left out that Mao pointed out that conditions were fundamentally different in imperialist and oppressed countries. In countries such as China of the 1920s and 1930s where there was a very weak government, communists could operate in many places with impunity. Not so in the imperialist countries.

Actually Newton missed this not-often-seen quote from Mao:

“Internally, capitalist countries practise bourgeois democracy (not feudalism) when they are not fascist nor at war ... and the form of struggle bloodless (non-military) ... the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries oppose the imperialist wars waged by their own countries if such wars occur....the one war they

vision, practice, and struggle. Representative of this development is the change in Newton's title: he is no longer the Minister of Defense, but the Servant of the People."⁽⁶⁾

It's not that Newton was a plagiarist. He pointed out his admiration for Mao Zedong as often as he could. It's just that some people chose not to listen to him. "Huey made it a point that the revolutionary principles so concisely cited in the Red Book should be applied whenever they could.... Where the book said, 'Chinese people of the Communist Party,' Huey would say, 'Change that to the Black Panther Party. Change the Chinese people to black people.'"⁽⁷⁾

Citing Mao Zedong in a country that still recognized the Taiwan government instead of Mao's government as the government of China was quite courageous on Newton's part. Many people supported Huey Newton as a Black leader. They liked his standing up to cops, racism and national oppression. But many people did not like to think of Newton's ideas as coherently linked together in an ideology of communism, as they were in reality. Even Bobby Seale, the number two leader in the Black Panther Party was publicly and outspokenly opposed to communism for quite some time, even after meeting Huey Newton.⁽⁸⁾

However, while Seale seemed to follow Newton's theoretical lead, other Panther leaders at their height had admiration for Mao as well. A white Students for Democratic Society (SDS) leader explains the lesson he learned from Eldridge Cleaver, the Panther's third ranked leader:

"I was working with the Black Panther Party—this was 1967—and I was for revolution and I respected the Black Panther Party.... It took me two weeks to work up the nerve to finally ask Eldridge Cleaver why he had that poster in his house.... [H]e said, 'We've got that picture of Mao Tse-tung up on the wall because Mao Tse-tung is the baddest motherfucker on the planet Earth!'"

"I respected the Black Panther Party.... I thought they were pretty heavy, and if Eldridge Cleaver was saying this was the baddest motherfucker on the planet Earth, I better go look into it!"⁽⁹⁾

When SDS was at its peak and just about to split in 1969, the Black Panthers advocated resolving their conflicts this way: "'pick up the telephone and call Chairman Mao Tse-tung' if they doubted that the Panthers were the vanguard organization in the U.S."⁽¹⁰⁾

Seale had this to say about Huey and other people in his party: "Huey was ten motherfuckers. He would say, 'Bobby, you and I know the principles in this Red Book are valid, but the brothers and the black folks don't.... [S]o what we have to do is to get the white radicals who are intellectually interested in the book, sell the book, make the money, buy the guns ... and protect the community from the racist cops. And in turn we get brothers in the organization and they will in turn relate to the Red Book."⁽¹¹⁾

The anti-communist turned communist Bobby Seale further pointed out: "You couldn't get around Huey. He knew the Red Book sideways, backwards and forwards. There are brothers in the Party that got to know the Red Book catty-corner.... 'The Red Book and what else? The gun! The Red Book and what else? The gun!' That's what Huey would say."⁽¹²⁾ That's what happened at the beginning of the Black Panther Party.

strengthened our forces. MIM has a solid unity with the 13 beliefs and demands articulated in this Programme. The achievement of its goals would reflect the liberation of humanity from imperialism.

FBI at it again

But the Panthers' above-ground practice and lack of unity in their gender analysis gave the FBI an opportunity to attack them. "The FBI used [Newton's] open letter as an opportunity to discredit Newton's leadership. The FBI wrote bogus letters purporting to be from Party members saying, 'I have seen by last week's paper that now Panthers are supposed to relate to cocksuckers. Huey is wrong. Something must have happened to him in prison. Panthers got enough things to do in 10 point program and fighting for niggers without taking up with mother fucking queers. All power to the people.' Considering the FBI's tactics, it is not far-fetched to assume that it worked to undermine the organization and more directly the Panther-gay liberation alliance."⁽⁸⁾ The possibility of such an alliance must have scared the capitalists pretty good.

MIM does not glorify the Panthers. Individual Panthers suffered from outright male chauvinism and the BPP's undeveloped gender line fractured opportunities to build united fronts with other revolutionary groups.

However, MIM does not doubt that a revolutionary unity between the Panthers and revolutionary queers could have been built upon an analysis of modern gender relations as social inequalities of power imposed and maintained by the capitalist Patriarchy. With such a weapon, Kathleen might have inspired the masses while Eldridge stayed home and made the coffee.

Contact MIM for more analysis on gender, nation, class theory and practice.

Long live the Black Panther Party!

Notes:

1. *The Black Panthers Speak*, Philip Foner ed., New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1970, p. 145.
2. *Ibid*, pp. 19-20.
3. Bobby Seale, *Seize The Time*, New York: Random House, 1968, p. 71.
4. Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*, Boston: South End Press, 1988, Chapter 3.
5. See MIM Notes 47 for more on focoisim.
6. Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, New York: Ballantine, 1973, pp. 99-105.
7. *Ibid*, p. 332.
8. Alyce J. Lane in *BLK 3/91*, pp. 11-15.

The Panthers: Maoists of the 1960s

by MC5

The legacy of the Black Panthers in 1991 is becoming more and more obscure thanks to those who have an interest in rewriting the Panther history. Various activists make the Black Panther Party (BPP) out to be group with a purely nationalist bent, a group that merely sponsored breakfast programs, an historical antecedent for currently harmless political groups, etc.

For example, former Black Panther Chairman Bobby Seale, the second ranking member of the Party, is in a recent movie, *Berkeley in the 60s*, said that he did not understand anything about Mao while he was selling Mao's books in the 1960s. Another example is a newspaper dedicated to commemorating the Panthers that comes out of Oakland which focuses on social work programs and government workers.

Because the bourgeoisie, and sometimes the old Panthers, attempt to rewrite the history of the BPP, it becomes more important to understand the historical period in which the Panthers arose in order to understand just how revolutionary they were. For example, Eldridge Cleaver formerly the Minister of Information, the third-ranked Panther leader, has become a born-again Christian; Seale began a career writing bar-b-que cookbooks after leaving the Party.

Here it is important to address the historical connection of the Panthers to Mao Zedong, the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, who was still alive when the Panthers formed and died. Whatever people may say now about the Panthers from the vantage point of the 1990s, the Black Panther Party of the young Huey Newton, Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver was the Maoist party of the United States in the late 1960s.

MM members cherish the Black Panther Party of the 1960s and defend it against its own sell-out leaders and the bourgeoisie.

Mao's Influence

Recently, a speaker and former Panther in the Detroit area mentioned the importance of Mao's red book to the Panthers but also took pains to say that the Black Panthers were not communists. People who go back and read what the Panthers printed will find otherwise. As Newton said, "The Black Panther Party is a Marxist-Leninist party." (1)

Another example of Maoist influence is the similarity between the Panther's code of conduct for their comrades and the "Eight Points for Attention" of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Here are the Panther's "points of attention"

written by the Panthers:

1. Speak politely.
2. Pay fairly for what you buy.
3. Return everything you borrow.
4. Pay for anything you damage.
5. Do not hit or swear at people.
6. Do not damage property or crops of the poor, oppressed masses.
7. Do not take liberties with women.
8. If we ever have to take captives do not ill-treat them. (2)

Here are the "Eight Points for Attention" of Mao's People's Liberation Army which were added to other rules already existing in 1928:

1. Speak politely to the people.
2. Pay fairly for what you buy.
3. Return everything you borrow.
4. Pay for anything you damage.
5. Replace all doors and return all straw on which you sleep.
6. Dig latrines away from houses and fill them with earth when you leave.
7. Do not take liberties with women.
8. Do not ill-treat captives. (3)

The Panthers also adopted "3 Main Rules of Discipline" wholesale from Mao's People's Liberation Army:

1. Obey orders in all your actions.
2. Do not take a single needle or a piece of thread from the poor and oppressed masses.
3. Turn in everything captured from the attacking enemy. (4)

The very title of Newton's book, *To Die for the People*, is literally from a saying by Mao. Newton's statement dedicating the book says "To die for the ... racists ... is lighter than a feather. But to die for the people ... is heavier than any mountain and deeper than any sea."

Here Newton was paraphrasing a saying of Mao that was widely circulated in China: "In significance, to die for the interests of the people is weightier than Mount Tai, but to work hard and die for the fascists, for those who exploit and oppress the people, is lighter than a swan's down." (5)

Note here as well Mao's often used slogan "Serve the People." "Serving the People" is a chapter in Mao's "Red Book" circulated in the hundreds of millions throughout the world.

The introduction to Newton's book points out how Huey Newton wanted to be in tune with this chapter of Mao's red book:

"The lesson of the Chinese Revolution shows that it was the Communist Party which evolved a revolutionary vision for all mankind.... The Black Panther Party being led by Huey P. Newton is now developing along similar lines with