

The Panthers And Black Liberation

While I do not want to detract from Mr. Halbrook's excellent article, and while I realize that the great majority of revolutionary anarcho-capitalists are highly enthusiastic about the Black Panthers and their potential for leading a black liberation movement, I must record my serious reservations about the value of the Panthers.

The Panthers have three great virtues: (1) their enormous ability to upset and aggravate the white police, simply by going around armed and in uniform--the supposed Constitutional privilege of every free American but apparently to be denied to radical militant blacks; (2) their considerable capacity for organizing black youth; and (3) excellent black nationalist ideas--particularly in emphasizing a black nation with their own land in such areas as the Black Belt of the South--as expressed in some writings of Eldridge Cleaver.

But there are growing offsetting tendencies so serious as to call the overall merit of the Panthers into grave question. In the first place, there are increasing tendencies for the Panthers to abandon black nationalism almost completely for the Old Left virus of black-white Marxist working-class action. The problem is not only increasing infusions of Marxist rhetoric into the Panther material, but an unfortunate eagerness to reach out and make alliances with white radicals, thereby contradicting the whole point of black power, which is to develop separate black movements resulting in black national self-determination. Even tactically, the original idea was to have alliances between strong, independent black and white radical movements; neither the Panthers nor the white radical movements have grown sufficiently to validate any sort of alliance now, even as a tactic. The most absurd example of this was the decision of the Peace and Freedom Party last year to nominate Eldridge Cleaver for President--a ridiculous decision for

both the white and black movements since it involved a supposed black nationalist running for President of a white Republic--the U.S.A. It makes black nationalist sense to run candidates from Harlem or Watts; but not for Senators or Presidents from predominantly white constituencies. The question then arises: are the Panthers *really* black nationalists?

The second big reservation comes from the increasingly thuggish and Stalinoid tendencies in the Panther movement: viz. (1) the inexcusable pulling of a gun by the Panthers on SNCC leader James Forman, a fellow revolutionary black-nationalist, at a presumed peace meeting between the two groups. Pulling a gun on the State enemy is one thing; pulling a gun on fellow revolutionaries is quite another, and cannot be condoned in any way. Eldridge Cleaver's reported statement that Forman should have been shot because his strategic views make him "objectively counter-revolutionary" puts the whole affair in an even more grisly light. (2) The equally inexcusable pulling of a gun by the Panthers on the Peace and Freedom party leaders in New York to force those veteran bootlickers of the Panthers to withdraw their duly nominated candidate for the Senate, the pacifist David McReynolds, in order to leave the line blank and allow the Panthers to secretly support the black nationalist Herman Ferguson, who ran a predictably poor race for the Senate on the competing Freedom and Peace party ticket. (3) The outrageous and vicious attack on black revolutionary columnist Julius Lester by Kathleen Cleaver in the *Guardian* of May 3 for his tactical disagreement with the SDS resolution on the Panthers. This article, devoid of analysis and long on snarling invective, was in the worst tradition of Stalinist billingsgate, in those days often preparatory to a Stalinist purge.

All this means that we should, at the very least, withdraw our enthusiasm from the Panthers. In any event, it is the responsibility of whites to build the white movement, and to concentrate our time and energies therefore on white rather than black affairs.