

# Eldridge Cleaver

THE ROLLING STONE INTERVIEW  
BY CURTICE TAYLOR

*Images of 1968: the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.; ghetto riots in Cleveland, Baltimore and Washington D.C.; a police riot in Chicago. Campus turmoil throughout the country; the trial of the Catonsville Nine; the bloodiest year of the Vietnam war; the ascendancy of Richard Nixon. The Poor People's Campaign march on Capitol Hill. Tommie Smith's Black Power salute at the Mexico City Olympics; the emergence of George Wallace as a serious presidential candidate.*

*It was also the year that the Black Panther party expanded from its one chapter in Oakland, California, to hundreds throughout the country, and the year one of its main figures, Eldridge Cleaver, was lecturing at colleges and universities, leading rallies against racism and oppression and running for president on the Peace and Freedom party ticket. He received 36,385 votes.*

*The author of "Soul on Ice" was also running head-on into the power structure as police continued their efforts to shatter the Panther leadership. Harassment ranged from petty traffic citations to the April 1968 police ambush of Panther headquarters, which left Treasurer Bobby Hutton dead and Cleaver wounded. A paroled ex-con, Cleaver knew that his time was almost up, and after nearly two years of freedom, he was ordered back to prison on the grounds of parole violation. He chose, instead, to engineer a suicidal confrontation with police at Oakland's Merritt College (now North Peninsula Community College), the birthplace of the Black Panther party. But cofounder Huey P. Newton ordered Cleaver underground, with the final destination to be Cuba.*

*Cleaver's split from Huey Newton and the Black Panther party came in the form of a telephone call from Algiers during a 1971 television talk show being aired live in San Francisco. Cleaver unexpectedly broke ranks at Newton, David Hilliard and an wounded host not listening in the studio. Newton then marched out ~~and the studio to the nearest pay phone.~~*

*called Algiers and expelled Cleaver. It was the beginning of the demise of the Panther "vanguard."*

*Today Huey Newton is working on a farm in Cuba, apparently in self-exile following charges by both police and members of the black community that he and the Panthers had tried to extort support and contributions by violence and perhaps even murder. Bobby Seale, cofounder of the party and no longer a member, is believed to be in Los Angeles pursuing an acting career. David Hilliard, Panther party administrator while Seale or Newton or both were in jail, was himself imprisoned on charges of "lesser involvement" in the 1968 shootout, and was informed by phone during his incarceration that he had been expelled from the party. Today, five months out of prison, he is broke and jobless.*

*Perhaps the best way to begin this interview is with a quote from Eldridge Cleaver regarding his current situation, while he waits to return to the States. Then read on; there are some surprises. "The less said about my 'asylum' the better. Let's just say that I am in France and that it is legal. Besides, my status vis-a-vis asylum is not the most important thing. What is important is that now I am not a member of any organization. You see, I am just a private person with no organizational demands. Just a citizen! I am a political refugee with no ties—which is a new feeling for me. I mean a weight has really been lifted. I have more time for things I want to do. You see, even before I got out of prison I was involved with an organization within the prison and that led very rapidly into the Black Panther party after getting out. Then I remained very involved until the split with the party. Now I have a completely different perspective. I see things in a much broader way because they're not structured by the need to advocate or defend an organizational attitude. I plan to be back in the United States by July 4th, 1976."*

*As a well-versed member of the American left, you must have had an image of Cuba before you went.*

*I had the image that revolution was alive and well in the Western Hemisphere. Contrary to what the Cuban government was actually doing at that time, in 1969, I still felt that Che was; that the Cubans were aiding liberation struggles and so Cuba became a natural focal point.*

*How did you work out the actual mechanics of going there?*

We had already sent a delegation to Cuba and I had personally talked to some UN delegates in New York who had issued an invitation for some of us to come to Cuba for the purpose of setting up a liberation office that would telegraph to the world the problems and struggles of black people in America. It was all agreed that myself or some other high-ranking party member would come down and start the initial phase of this operation. It was only a question of when. And after my parole had been revoked, and I was ordered back to jail, well, there seemed to be relatively few alternatives. Huey ordered me to go to Cuba.

*The last time I saw you in 1969 you were preparing for a kind of ultimate confrontation with the police in California.*

That's right. From the way I saw things in 1969 we were on a collision course anyway. I fully expected a military coup, but we got Nixon and Mitchell instead [laughter]. Anyway, I really didn't think that I was going to live long. I would be off if I went back to jail and ambushed if I went into hiding, so I got together with some friends who agreed to hold out at Merritt College. I thought that a bloody disaster like that would help to expose the racist core of the nation. I also thought that at that point—just after the University of California Regents had denied my right to speak on UC campuses—I had a lot of popular support that might be rallied if such a showdown came about.


*So Huey made the decision for you by ordering you to Cuba.*

Right. All the tension that had led me up to that sort of suicidal point just vanished. I hadn't wanted to die. I just thought that it was inevitable.

*So you left this bastion of the socialist revolution. How long did the euphoria last?*

I had a brotherly welcome with arms opened wide. I was taken to a very nice apartment in the center of Havana which I maintained until I left. An elderly lady, a party member, was assigned to cook and look after domestic things. On physical comforts I was going first class. All of my food and staples were brought to me. I had all the rum anyone could want, but you know that me and drink don't coexist very well. I even had my own security man, my shadow, my pig. His name was Silva. For the first weeks I read a lot and not much happened. They postponed meetings all the time but I thought that was cool—the Cubans had a nation to run and so I just cooled out. I was waiting for Kathleen, who was pregnant at the time.

I got my first taste of what lay in store after I had been there a month or so. I got word that Bobby Seale and some other brothers were going to Sweden to take part in a liberation conference which the Cubans were also attending, so I thought it would be a good idea for the brothers to come down after the meeting so we could get this thing going. I gave all this information to the Cuban delegation. When the man returned he gave me the reply along with some papers that I should not have seen. When I showed the papers to my pig, zap, he grabbed them and that was that. What he didn't know was that I knew some Spanish. The note instructed the delegate to tell Bobby that I did not think that it was appropriate for the brothers to visit me at that time.



That was, of course, untrue. I was getting very itchy to begin this thing. However, I let it slide, thinking that maybe they had their reasons.

*Okay, you've been there for maybe six weeks to two months and nothing happens, so what do you do to pass the time?*

Well, at night after my shadow went home, I'd wander around the streets, which was cool by the Cubans. I'd just stand around, you know, watching the women go by. One night I saw a black guy, an expelled party member I knew from prison, and he gave me the power sign and just kept walking. My security man had told me when I first arrived that the Cubans had not told the exiled hijackers that I was in Cuba and that they wanted to keep it that way, so out of loyalty I told my man Silva about the chance meeting. He said now that the word was out that I could meet with the hijacker. So I had my first meeting with an American and right away he gets down on the Cubans and told me that he wanted off the island. He told me about another brother who said that he knew me from prison. This guy had been there for over a year and was the first Afro-American to hijack a plane. Well, when I saw him I recognized him and he, too, started bad-mouthing the place. He knew the score very well because he had been there so long. He was married to a Cuban but still felt out of it. He told me there was a lot of racism still going down.

*Wasn't it a matter of course for most hijackers to be put in a work camp right after they touched down in Cuba?*

Yeah, so the Cubans could watch them and see where they were coming from. A lot of people who hijacked planes in those days had some strange reasons for hijacking planes. A lot of it had nothing to do with politics or liberation. So none of these guys were put out by the fact that they were put in camps; they expected that. Now in the case of the first hijacker, who had been a Panther, when they found out he was cool and had been a member, they put him up in the Havana Libre hotel. Anyway, by this point I'm getting a little shaky.

*Did you meet any other Americans during this time, like some of the SDS people and the Venceremos brigade?*

Yes, I'll talk about them later. I did meet this American woman, her name was Kitty and she was really something else. I was standing in line one night to get ice cream, you always stand in line in Cuba, and I heard this English-speaking voice, a female voice with a Georgia accent. I noticed a blonde standing in line. One of the hijackers told me that she was really flipped out and that I should avoid her, so naturally I went over to her and started talking. I told her that I was Bobby Hutton just to keep things cool. She was very attractive in a Georgia sort of way and, man, I really needed some female companionship. Well, it didn't turn into much, you know, it remained all innocent. It seemed she was saving herself for someone else. It seemed that back when Fidel was still fighting in the mountains, Kitty would send him these letters saying, "I'm pulling for you, champ" and shit like that, and Fidel would miraculously get these letters, which I guess

were a real turn-ons for him. So after he came to power he had sent for her and made her a "special guest" of the people. She was older by this time and said she had already worked with the Kennedys on campaigns and things.

*A political grannie?*

I guess so. She had now been in Cuba a couple of years. She had two apartments, one at the Havana Libre and a private one where she lived with her pet rabbit. Every day Fidel would send her lettuce from his farm just for that rabbit.

So we became friends. We used to go for long walks in the evening and go back to her place. You see, she had all this good stuff to drink because she had a diplomatic card that she could use to buy all kinds of things unheard of on the island. She used to buy me cornflakes. Anyway, she was real useful to talk to because she knew so much about everybody from Fidel on down; all the ministers were chasing her, but as I said, she was saving herself.

*But there was still no movement on your organization. Weren't you getting a little worried, especially after you heard all this negative shit from the hijackers?*

Sure I was, and I started demanding interviews and asking questions. Now that I knew my way around I wasn't so isolated, you dig? It was at this time that they suggested that I go for a complete tour of the island. Go to the mountains where the revolution started and see the Cuban revolution up close. I would have preferred to stay and get down to business but they had a point and I hadn't really seen much of the place.

Right before I left, this strange thing happened with Kitty and the whole scene crystallized a lot about my position and how uptight the Cubans really were. One night we had gone for our usual walk and got back to her place near three in the morning. I was sipping one of those sweet drinks and she was just lying there on the bed with me talking to her when the phone rang. I could tell it was a man and that he wanted to come over. So she said, "Yes, but first I have to put on my clothes." She said that very distinctly and the thing is, man, she already had them on. I told her that I should split, and had I understood the implication of her implied nudity I would have, but she made it seem like she wanted me there, sort of for protection. I asked her who it was and she told me it was Comandante Pinato, who was the man directly responsible for my case, a man who I wanted to talk with but so far had only managed to shake his hand. I told her that she should have told him that I was there but it was too late. Her apartment had one of those buzzer systems to let people in but the thing had long since stopped working. They were waiting for parts—the whole country is waiting for parts—so I said she'd better tell him who's up there when she goes to open the door. She, of course, told him it was Bobby Hutton, which I thought would be cool by him. Well, when the man entered the room and saw me, he ran for the kitchen.

She asked if we wanted coffee from the kitchen. He said yes, and so did I. Well, he never did drink his coffee. He finally came out, saying to her in a very loud voice: "Yes, miss, I'll certainly take

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*Where was Kitty when you returned?*

I went to see her and she showed me these diaries that she had been keeping all the time that she was in Cuba. She showed me the first entry that she had made under the name of Bobby Hutton. Well, man, when I read that shit I said, "These things have got to be burned!" The stuff she had on Fidel was really too much. She told me that I should leave and that the Cubans had no intention of letting me work out my program. I think she was also pissed at Fidel because it was becoming obvious that he was not going to marry her.

*Let's get back to Raymond and all your hustle with the police.*

Somehow, under some ruse, Raymond had gotten to the Libre Hotel where I got the message to him to get his ass over to my pad which was sort of, like, neutral territory. Raymond arrived at my door at a full run with police chasing after him. I let him in and informed the police that they could not enter.

*Had you met with the ex-UN delegate yet?*

Yes, and he really blew my mind because I thought at last I could sit down with someone and get the shit clean. When I saw him, he was completely different from the person I had met in New York. There he had been cocky and self-assured; now he was nervous and more quiet. I pressed him about my program and he came back with this: that he had never really believed that we would actually accept their invitation and that they had made it as a kind of public relations gesture. The man was on the central committee—a very important position—so I guess he knew.

*Why didn't you just leave?*

I still thought there might be some hope and also I was so involved with all these hijackers. At that point I decided to start the program anyway, not to wait for any more people from the Panther party to arrive. So I started to recruit every Afro-American in Havana. So my pad became a sort of headquarters.

*Was this before or after Raymond Johnson arrived?*

About the same time, I told them that I would not give him up. My man Silva arrived with three guns to take Raymond by force. Well, my pig had forgotten that he had left the guns from our tour in my pad. He did that so he could, I suppose, have his own cache. (Every once in a while he and some men would show up, take the guns, go out, then bring them back. There is more fighting going on even in Havana than we ever hear about.) So anyway, my man had to leave. He told me that I would have to be reported. I added that was fine, but that he shouldn't forget to tell them about the toys he had at my pad. I guess you could say that my pad was under siege after that point.

*What plans did you make then?*

As long as we had the guns we felt like we had a little power. With my status as a special guest I figured that the Cubans would not off me, but I didn't think they felt that way about the hijackers back at my pad. The hijackers wanted me to

make a deal with the Cubans to guarantee safe conduct to Africa for all who could make arrangements for exile with other governments. At this point Kitty really came through—she informed a Reuters reporter that I was there so I had the protection that the press knew of my whereabouts and that I was in trouble. So we lived under siege for a while. We always left some brothers in the pad when we went out and we only traveled in groups.

*How soon before your departure was this?*

I left right after this, or I should say during this. One day an official came to talk to me. He told me that the government wanted me to go to Algiers to get some news coverage and also so that I could meet Kathleen, who was by then eight months pregnant. They told me that I would stay for a few weeks, then come back to work out the details of our program. Well, obviously they wanted the heat off and me out. The brothers and I agreed that if I didn't come back that I would use my connections in Africa to put pressure on the Cubans for the hijackers' safety and release. By this time the Reuters man was hip to what was happening, so that tended to cool things out. I did agree to give the Cubans the guns before I left and the brothers understood that too. So I left within 48 hours for Algiers to meet Kathleen.

*Was there a lot of press coverage when you got to Algiers?*

There was none at all. The Cubans did another one of their turnarounds. They told me that I was there to simply pick up Kathleen and that the Algerians had changed their minds. Instead, I was supposed to go to Amman, Jordan, to visit some Palestinian camps. I was supposed to go to some goddamn camp with a wife who was about to have a baby. By this point I didn't trust those slippery Cubans at all. Kathleen called friends in Paris who could communicate with the Algerians to see just what my status was. While in Algiers the Cubans told me that I should stay away from a black woman named Elaine Carter because she was CIA, so naturally the moment I was out of their sight I tracked her down. It turned out that she was organizing an international Pan African Conference in Algeria. She had made up a long list of Black artists to be invited from all over the world and she had included my name without a hope in hell that I would attend. Well, there I was and I had a reason to stay in Algiers. When the Cuban who had accompanied me from Havana arrived with the tickets for Amman, I told him that I was not going. He got all upset and said, "You don't trust us anymore," to which I answered, "You better believe it," and that was the last time I dealt with the Cubans.

*What happened to the hijackers you left in Cuba and what happened to Kitty?*

The Cubans let the brothers come to Africa—some of them joined me in Algiers—but they never sent Raymond Johnson. He is still in prison and it's been five years. They never did like him 'cause he wouldn't take shit from anyone; he is a real beautiful man. Well, I

guess Kitty finally split and I don't know where she is or who she's with.

*We never did talk about the white radicals you came across in Cuba; about your relationship with them, and more importantly, their relationship with the Cubans.*

Well, I'm madder at the Cubans for what they did to those radicals who came tripping through Cuba in the late Sixties. I hold the Cubans fully responsible for the crazy tangent that sent the Weathermen into their whole violent trip. These kids would come down there like I had—in awe over Fidel and Che and the Revolution. The Cubans would show them the island, maybe give them experience in the fields and then, like for dessert, they would have this crazy revolutionary dude address the group on the subject of how to carry out the revolution in America. Obviously the Cubans were powerless to do anything about the U.S. but these students weren't, and so the Cubans programmed them in a very cynical way.

The lecturer would tell them to have spontaneous outbreaks of disorder and violence to create a revolutionary atmosphere. You know, like drive down a few thruways and pour out thousands of tacks to tie up traffic, blow up electric stations and water supplies. Now, it is true that such tactics can be important in a struggle, but only when large numbers of the population support the liberation movement. As was the case in Cuba: Such actions helped encourage the people to join in opposition. But in the U.S., where the movement was so small and isolated, it was just a lot of crap.

*A friend of mine went down and they actually showed him how to make bombs.*

Sure, that was part of it. All this got me very upset because there was no program, no organization; it didn't fit into any scheme, you dig. When I told these kids that, they just didn't listen; they were still in the rosy glow. So finally I went to this guy, the one who had been telling them all this shit, and I got very angry and tried to tell him of the ramifications of his acts. I got nowhere. You see, all of these things were just empty gestures because later I learned that the Cubans had abandoned all aid to liberation movements and this stuff was just like PR, just like what they did to me to make it look as if they were involved. It was a smokescreen and people were catching on. In Venezuela this revolutionary named Bravo denounced Fidel from his mountain hideout; he called him a revisionist and a blocker and in

1969 that was like heresy, but it was true. Also, there was this whole macho element. A lot of women were coming to Cuba and some of them thought the best way to get injected with the revolutionary serum was by sleeping with a Cuban revolutionary. These guys all walked around with cigars sticking out of their beards and guns around their waists and they liked nothing better than meeting these women's fantasies. I really do blame them for sabotaging the radical left movement in America; they totally nullified the effectiveness of the Weathermen.

*So after Che had only been dead for two years, his influence had just become a revolutionary spy service. He just became a useful symbol for Fidel's cynical ends.*

Exactly. I'll give you an example. I was told this story by a man who was assigned to Che when he was in Africa. I think it was 1966 when Che went to the UN and then on to Algeria and Tanzania and then disappeared altogether. Well, he went to the Congo to meet Pierre Mulele, who was trying to pick up the pieces of Lumumba's forces. Che went to help make a supply line that would not be dependent on Tanzania or Zambia. He would hack a route from Congo Brazzaville while Mulele came in from the east to meet him. Che had his own cadre of Cubans with him who had accompanied him throughout the revolution. Well, just before the connection was to be made, Che got a message from Fidel, and zap, he was pulled out. The rebelling Africans consider that action to be the fundamental betrayal of the African liberation movements. They feel that it was part of a deal between the Americans and the Russians, and in turn the Russians to the Cubans. It was right after this that Che went into seclusion and started giving out these "self-criticisms" and all that shit. They were just trying to reprogram the man but it didn't work so they sent him to Bolivia as compensation.

*There are many people who think that Fidel actually helped the CIA find Che and therefore remove the thorn from Fidel's side.*

I don't doubt it for a minute.

*So the Cubans really wanted you out. You found yourself in Africa in the Pan African movement much like Stokely Carmichael. How were you welcomed by the Algerians?*

As I said, the Cubans had never bothered to tell the Algerians that I was even there, so it was up to us to make contact. We made contact through the NLF, using the Vietnamese as a channel.

*Why the NLF?*

You have to go back to 1969, before I left the U.S., when we were working out the whole idea of an international section of the party. At that time, the war in Vietnam was the hottest issue in the country; it was the focal point of our country's imperialist nature. We saw the Vietnamese as the spearhead of opposition against imperialism. There were differences of opinion about this in the party; some members wanted us to relate heavily to Africa, you know, a policy based on skin color, but that was rejected

because it wasn't political—it was racial and ethnic. So at that time we planned a sort of Asian strategy and the Vietnamese were very receptive to this. They were very aware of the importance of the American left; they knew all about us and we had a very good relationship from the outset. So that is why it was very natural for me to get in contact with the NLF when I arrived in Algiers.

*How did they assist you?*

They were incredible. I went to see the NLF representative who welcomed me very warmly. It just so happened that the representative was leaving Algiers for a more important post. He told me that he was meeting with President Houari Boumedienne that day and that he would ask the Algerians to extend to us all the rights normally given an important liberation front asking for recognition. Algeria was like a center for liberation movements around the world and the NLF was the most important, followed by the PLO. Then it got vaguer, with groups like FELIMO and smaller groups like the liberation movement in Chad. Later, when the NLF became the PRG, thus gaining full diplomatic status, they recommended that the Panther party take over their building while they moved to Embassy Road and that greatly helped our status. The Vietnamese were always the best informed and easiest to talk with of all the countries that I dealt with.

*Did you have any of the same problems with the Algerians that you had with the Cubans?*

Not at the beginning—toward the end, around the time of the split in the party, then, well, the whole situation began to repeat itself. I arrived there without any prior arrangements with the Algerians and yet they treated us as they would have any other liberation movement. I have nothing to reproach them about that. They were not that aware of the Black Panther party; only later when the American government made them turn around. We were given quasidiplomatic status which was about equal at that time, 1970, to the status of the American government itself.

*What was their view of the black liberation movement in America in general?*

I discovered that they had a very narrow view of the black movement in America. They knew the name of Martin Luther King, they knew the phrase "black power" and they knew the name of Stokely Carmichael. The latest word that they had was that Stokely was the thing and I heard a lot of criticism of him from them. So the first thing we had to do was to explain away Stokely because they didn't like where he was coming from. I found later, when I found out how other people related to the United States, that there was some valid criticism of Stokely's involvement and some valid positive things as well. Like, they criticized Stokely for things that they would have been critical of in any American. They would talk mainly about how arrogant he was. There are a lot of things that Americans do, even the way we move and carry our bodies, that they construe as being arrogant because they have a very constricted form of freedom. There's a lot of this culture

**Going back to Africa is an absurd idea... I mean, just picture 25 million blacks getting on a boat back to Africa.**

thing involved. They also criticized Stokely for some political things. You see, reactionaries use black power and negritude as an ideology to suppress people and Stokely played right into that and in so doing he got a lot of the revolutionary people angry at him. There are a lot of personal jealousies in Africa. When I first arrived in Africa, I saw this was focused on Stokely. I didn't understand it at that time but later when they started putting the same stuff on me, then I realized where it came from. Sometimes it appears to be just because you're in the limelight; like, why is this guy down on me—I never did anything bad by him, but then you begin to see that there is a kind of rivalry between black nationalists and black Americans.

*I suppose you wanted to keep up as many contacts as possible with your Asian brothers; is that why you traveled so extensively in 1970?*

Yes, I wanted to see more of the world, see how other socialist countries worked. So far I had only been to Cuba and that had turned sour. I went to North Korea, North Vietnam and China.

*Let's take them one at a time. What about North Korea?*

Well, they are in a very strange position—the war has been over, yet a kind of struggle goes on. I did not relate to them as well as I did the North Vietnamese. However, I must say that sexually the North Korean women have it very much together because they don't confuse sex with politics. I mean, they are liberated without getting all hung up about the sexual act. You need very much as equals and it's not a big thing. China, I really don't want to go into; it would take too much time and I really don't have the perspective yet. It is all changing so fast. My visit there was so strange because, you see, I was there as Lin Piao's guest and right in the middle of the visit, poof, he was gone and Nixon was on his way. The whole thing turned around.

*Back in Algiers, what were some of the activities you were involved with and how did they relate to the American government officials who were there?*

Well, we were like a clearinghouse for information. The first months spent in Algiers were a time for planning and learning. A lot of people would come to us because we were an indigenous U.S. group and they wanted to know how we responded to specific events that were going on in the U.S. Depending on what country they were from, how friendly toward us they were, they would seek our advice, invite us to journalist conferences and there we would be with a plaque that read United States, Black Panther Party, and sometimes the U.S. government would be sitting across from us with the same status, and that was very strange. You see, you have to realize that we were in Africa and many people were more disposed to us than they were to the U.S. government and this used to embarrass the Americans so. You see, while we could be loose, the U.S. had to be very careful, very cautious and very gentle. Sometimes we would be invited to represent the U.S. and the U.S. delegation would be excluded, and sometimes the reverse would be true. It was always most interesting

## When you see Nixon shaking hands with Mao —it marks a turning point in history and a personal turning point for me.

when we showed up together. We turned out millions of words around events in the United States, we attended hundreds of meetings, lots of stuff like that. As time went by, the Algerians took us more and more seriously and the U.S. began exerting more and more pressure for them to off us.

*I suppose it's rather typical of the news media but we never got much of this back in the States. We saw you as isolated and going through the motions, never believing that you were in a very weird way actually affecting American foreign policy. The big story to come out of Algiers, of course, was your run-in with Tim Leary and most of the bad press went to you. Had you ever met Leary before?*

Yes, once on a plane from New York to San Francisco. It was very funny. When my bodyguards found out that Leary was on board, they wanted us to leave, not because they were afraid of him but that somebody might take hold of the situation and try to off two radical birds with one bomb. We talked and I thought he was a little strange but not impossible.

### *How did the whole thing come about?*

We had always felt somewhat isolated in the party and were therefore always interested in expanding our base to include radicals in the white community. I always thought that that was important. Now, I had hoped all along that some underground white leader would surface and join us. I hoped for someone like Bernardine Dohrn, who I could relate to on political terms, but she never turned up. So when someone came to Algiers representing Leary, I thought that maybe it was a good idea. Being a good organization man, I had to get Huey's approval, which he gave. So Leary arrived with his wife Rosemary in September of 1970. I had not been there that long myself, so it was very important that our new organization not be jeopardized. As part of the asylum process, he had to write a prospectus of what he wanted to accomplish and he wrote a lot about politics, but it was not very sophisticated. We agreed that he was in need of some political consciousness raising and he went along with that.

I gave him the whole thing, all the books piled high. He also agreed that he would not meet with the press until this process was completed. We issued a preliminary statement announcing an upcoming news conference with "Timothy Leary and Miss Dohrn." The Miss Dohrn was not Bernardine but her sister, Jennifer, who happened to be visiting, so we had engaged in a little media rip-off

there. The Algerians began getting requests for press entrances and so they agreed to the press conference. Frankly, most of the Algerians couldn't see the connection around the man they referred to as the Pope of Dope. Well, the whole thing was terribly timed. It so happened that in New York at the UN, the Algerians were leading a very important debate which we were not aware of. Later, the UN delegate told me that after one of his early speeches he went back to his hotel to wash himself on the tube and all he saw was the Pope of Dope at the Algiers airport. By this time the emissaries were being flooded with hundreds of requests for press visas. The Algerians became alarmed because this began to look like the biggest piece of Algerian news since the war with France. Word came from the UN that they wanted the conference offed. So, the next day the Algerians showed up with four airplane tickets to, of all places, Amman, Jordan, and they wanted Leary on the flight and out of the way. So Leary, Miss Dohrn and some others headed off for Amman with a stop in Beirut. Well damned if *Newsweek* didn't leak it. When they arrived in Beirut hundreds of reporters were waiting; they finally found Leary hiding in a stall in the men's room. He was blown away—this was even too much publicity for him. When he came back he—for a while, at least—let me call the shots. Things didn't get bad for about two months, not until December, when he was feeling a little more secure.

*What about the acid and all those people who used to follow him around like his court?*

That was all happening, but subtly at first. When I found out he had acid and was giving it out to people—you know, turning on reporters and students at the university—then I had to put my foot down. A lot of women from the university were coming to him for acid. You see, things are so difficult for women in a place like Algiers that conscious women, you know, are constantly looking outside the world for new things. So these women, I suppose, hoped in some vain way that acid might help them. Also, Tim would do things like drop acid and go out to the desert with his wife Rosemary. The two of them would be out there, lying naked on the sand, and some sheepherder would come by, flip, and tell the first cop what he saw. The cop then talked to the authorities, who identified Leary, and then it got to me because I had brought him there. So, you see, it always reflected on us. He never realized that. Well, somewhere along the line some kid comes to visit him and hidden in his stereo are 10,000 tabs of acid from his group, you know—they called themselves the Brotherhood, or something. That kid was very lucky that the Algerians don't check much for drugs coming into the country. I mean, if they found that shit they would have thrown away the key or offed the kid right on the spot.

Word started to spread about what Tim was up to and I got nervous so I sent this young woman to his pad to be, like, his housekeeper and to inform me what was going down. Well, sure enough if the dode isn't turning on the world. Tim always needs ego stroking and having people pursue him is very important.

I couldn't go on like that so I went to him and told him he had to stop all this shit and that I wanted all the acid. I wanted to keep it at my place, which was, like, diplomatic and free from search. He was very apologetic, very angelic; little-boy Tim. So I took the 10,000 tabs to my place, plus some other stuff. I'm sure he had plenty more because there were periods when he would take it every day. He had vials, blisters, pills, you name it. He'd say to me, "Just take this little hit," and he'd show me and put it on his tongue. "Just enough to get you flowing, just enough so when you write the word flows."

*Did all of this lead into your bust of Leary?*

Yeah, because as he got more relaxed and less concerned about politics, he just started taking more chances. Like, I would tell him he shouldn't talk to Eirene Forness from *Newsweek* because she gave a lot of information to the wrong sources. He then argued that I talked with her, so why couldn't he. He didn't or couldn't realize that on certain issues at certain times, she could be useful to us but we had to be careful; he was not being careful. It came to a head when Leary announced that he was going to be giving a sort of coming-out party to announce himself to the world. I thought after these few months that that would be cool, but that some leeks had to be made that this thing had to be of at least a slightly political nature. So I asked him to show me the list he had made up, the guest list. Well, zap, there were all these people: informants, secret police, shaky press people, who we knew all about and who we avoided. I went right back to him and told him the whole thing had to stop. Well, it had been a long time since he had the spotlight so he was really upset. He accused me of sabotage, of being paranoid. He called me a "paranoid nigger." Well, the party was the next day and it just couldn't happen. So I busted Tim Leary. I busted him because this was very risky and it involved all of us and all the work we had put in. There wasn't any time to officially cancel this thing so, like, he just never showed up. And good old Eirene wrote in *Newsweek*, "Leary Disappears," and they all ran to the Algerian authorities.

*What did the Algerians do?*

Well, they really jacked me up because the press was going crazy. This official wanted to know what was happening. At first I protected Tim but this guy was so angry and accusative the whole thing just got so stupid. I told him about the 10,000 tabs of acid, and the guy told me to come off it. So I got up, got in my car, picked up the acid and, poof, laid it on the man's desk and that was the end of that. The Algerians wanted Leary gone as badly as I did.

*I remember Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman running around New York with spray paint cans scrawling "Eldridge is a Pig. Free Tim Leary." I can't help but feel that it revealed the racist underpinnings of a lot of the white left.*

I'm not all that angry about it, you see. It was possible for someone to condemn me for what I did to Leary and be right, and also condemn Leary for what he is doing now and still be right. The fact that he went snitch does not ratio-

realize that someone took advantage of him.

*Do you feel that you took advantage of him?*

No, I don't. That's why I don't like to make a facile criticism of people like Jerry and Stew Albert—they might have had good intentions. Face it, they weren't doing all of that just to knock me. I don't think they really cared for Leary that much. It was a way for them to get back in the news, to pump up the situation. I mean, it did hurt some—they were saying that I was out of it, that I got all my news from *Voice of America*. I guess I was disappointed because it was like reaction without investigation.

*Well, wasn't that typical of that element in the left? I mean, that should have been their motto: "Reaction without Investigation."*

I guess so, but I don't want to be too critical because we were all guilty of that. I know the way that we used to swallow Grandma Ho and, you know, wish for a fresh copy of *Pravda* and just cream over each *Peking Review* that came out. We swallowed it without ever extending our critical sense. We were the most critical people in the world on some levels but we were blind to others. In defending Leary, these people were defending themselves because they were so wedded to the whole psychedelic freak show that a direct criticism of a counterculture sugar daddy like Tim Leary was an implicit critique of themselves, so they had to defend themselves by using me. You also have to remember that a lot of my friends, a lot of white people—you, no doubt—were very critical of my involvement with Leary.

*That's true and it looked as if we . . . they were right.*

Oh yeah, you were. They told me the man was just too fucked up but none of them had any idea that he would ultimately go and sing his own song to the grand jury because this goes beyond the limits of everyone's expectations. It was conceivable to me that Tim would get people into trouble—you know, busted—out of sheer stupidity, but that he would knowingly sing like that—it never dawned on me that he would care in like that.

*Why do you think he cared in?*

You have to remember that Leary is doing this without any feelings of guilt because in a certain way he hates, he feels frayed off by, people who were supposedly his converts but who allowed him to remain in prison. They took no action; no one broke him out, no one started defense committees, no movement happened. Tim is an old man and five years in prison is like a death sentence. So when he turns in these people he isn't singing on people he loves; no, he is singing against bastards who he would like to see in the same position. At one point he said that he had been ripped off by the new left, the old left, the sideways left; and he does see it like he was ripped off and, man, we all were.

*Okay, that ends that chapter. This Leary thing was unpleasant, stupid and not useful, but this did not derail your plan. What caused your four-year stay in Algiers to go bad?*

There were a number of things. One was the whole split with the party. And also there was a change in the Algerians' attitudes about us that was due to their flirting with Kissinger and the split with Huey just sort of set it up. There was not much Huey could do to me in Algiers except try as best as he could to discredit me. So through channels he sent a letter to President Boumedienne that I was no longer responsible to the party and that the international unit was dissolved.

*Boumedienne had met you. You had a reputation in the liberation circles that was good. Why should he listen to Huey?*

The Panthers were an organization. Huey was at the top and that was that. I was just like the home office and I could always be recalled.

*What about the support of other countries, of the Asian countries you had been so aligned with?*

There is a correlation with this. If the country was undergoing acute problems with the U.S., like the North Vietnamese, then they tended to side with me. But a country like Algeria, which was in the process of courting the U.S., went along with Huey because it was expedient. The North Vietnamese were very concerned about Huey's charges. They spoke to me about it on many occasions. They were completely supportive of me and Huey knew that. He tried to contact them through Canada and other sources, to undermine my status with them. By that time the Chinese were into a full embrace with Nixon so they used any excuse they could to drop us.

*So even before you left you were getting isolated hit by hit.*

Yes, I heard that every time the U.S. had private talks with the Algerians about relations, they would always bring us up as a condition for recognition. We were to be sacrificed because we were such an embarrassment to them. For a while the Algerians could play with us both. In the beginning it was more useful for them to be friendly to us because it evoked such a response from the U.S. and of course it helped them with their Third World image. But as time went on they realized, like all emerging countries do, that the power still rests with the imperialists, then they change and start to betray their previous commitments. Everyone can become an oppressor—the more power that is accumulated, the greater that risk becomes.

*We've been talking in very specific terms about Algeria. Can we broaden it*

**Leary said he had been ripped off by the new left, the old left, the sideways left; he does see it like he was ripped off and, man, we all were.**



Down in his home study, etc.

*and talk briefly about the Third World? It's such an amorphous phrase, such an illusive concept. How do you see it now, after your travels throughout Africa?*

It really has come sort of full circle. You start out with being very preoccupied with the events and happenings within your own country. Then we got linked up with the international thing. We started thinking in terms of the international ideology that encompasses so many people. There was the capitalist world, the socialist world, the Third World and there was the international struggle with everyone linked arm in arm, everyone supporting each other. But the situation has changed; it's no longer like that. I am not really sure that the whole thing existed in the first place. When I left the U.S. I went first to Cuba, then to Algeria, China, North Vietnam and North Korea. Face it, people are nationalists more than they are internationalists and they use internationalism in a very cynical way in order to further their own nationalist aspirations. And when I began to understand that, I became less of an internationalist in the critical sense. Now, if you relate to people internationally, that's a different question because it's a human question, not a political question.

*So, in other words, you think that a lot of the talk of a Third World, the united struggle, etc., is just another phrase.*

Yes, it's an empty phrase. It's not a homogenous Third World. Now they're beginning to talk about a fourth world in order to differentiate the poorer Third World countries from, say, the richer Arab countries [laughter]. I mean, they're right—there are incredible differ-

ences. They do have different needs and priorities. It just helps to further point out the many differences between the needs of the various countries involved. Now, those aren't strong reasons for being down on Pan Africanism. When Malcolm X was in the Nation of Islam he was still in the separatist thing and vaguely Pan African, but when he made his decisive break from all of that, he transposed that whole relationship and spoke instead about a whole cultural and spiritual relationship between America and Africa. The Afro-American thing really should be like Italian Americans or any other cultural group; that identity is important but you shouldn't get hung up in a back-to-Africa thing because, really, going back to Africa is an absurd idea, particularly because the people in Africa just wouldn't allow it. I mean, you're not part of their tribe or culture, not any more. You'd just be a problem because besides your color you don't have much in common—just some vague and very distant ancestry. I mean, they'd accept a certain number of immigrants and help them fit in but nobody's talking about a mass influx of American blacks. I mean, it's just stupid to picture 25 million blacks getting on a boat back to Africa. Besides, American blacks aren't up for it either. You see, I'm trying to get back to the U.S. myself because that's my home.

*It seems that one by one the things that you believed in—the ideologies, the individuals—all seemed to be failures. Cuba was not what it had appeared, the Algerians played with you and it seems that a lot of the socialist were just sort of retaining you, using you as a PR image with the people's struggle. How do you feel about all that and was there one particular point when the whole thing just turned to shit?*

Yes, I was being disappointed and constantly exasperated. The final shock came the day I saw Richard Nixon shaking hands with Chairman Mao. When you see Nixon and all that he stands for shaking hands with Mao and all that he supposedly stood for—well, it marks a turning point in history and a personal turning point for me. It completely exploded the political spectrum that has dominated the world since 1850—since the First International—when Marx defined the nature of the capitalist system, provided an ideological framework for the restructuring of society and, most importantly, gave people an alternative to capitalism. Well, it had gone through a lot of changes. The Russians could even become revisionists and betray that ideology but as long as you had Mao proclaiming the people's struggle, an alternative still existed. But after that visit and Chou En-lai's apparent dominance in China, it's all just gone. We need another International, we need some new fatherhead to define and to analyze the nature of the world today as it exists now. There is a new left-to-right spectrum that no longer can have the socialists at one end and the capitalists at the other. There are progressive forces separate from that ever-growing power club but they mainly exist out of power, as provocateurs jabbing at the powers behind the helms. Because, you see, the socialists have betrayed the liberation movements, they have dropped out of the struggle. As far as I am concerned, they are wallowing in it up to the hub of their hammers and sickles.

*What we have really been talking about all this week is ending the Sixties, tying up all those ends and putting it into the perspective we never seemed to get around to. It was a time to react and experience, not to reflect.*

I disagree with that. It was a time to reflect, it's just that we never did it. We don't have to reflect so much now as to reanalyze a lot of the shit we believed in at that time. We have to look very hard at what we did and listen to the criticism that people laid against us. We have to be prepared to do some turnarounds. For example, after all my travels and seeing the socialists' world up very close, really seeing how the Soviet Union and China function, well, I now think that the U.S. should be second to none militarily, that we have to strengthen, not demise, our military, and that really causes a lot of people's mouths to drop open.

*My mouth is gaping.*

I really think that things are lining up for a big showdown sometime between all of these islands of power: the socialists, the United States and most of North America, Europe, China, Western Europe. The Arabs are trying to form a center. And, finally, you have that unknown quantity, all of those elements which could be centers but they're all being fucked over by the big guys. I think in terms of these centers having showdowns and I think it is very important that the United States be militarily strong. I think it is a point on which all contradictions between left- and right-wing factions in the U.S. can be aligned. Because of the Vietnam war the American left took a shotgun blast at the mili-

tary and in that case we were right. The war was hideous, immoral; the worst thing this country has ever undertaken. What we need now, however, is a Vietnam post-mortem where we can put down our defenses and look at the whole thing. Sure there was a time when I was freaked about Vietnam, when I wouldn't even talk to a soldier; they were all pigs. I'm still furious about Vietnam but I'm more concerned about the destiny of the United States, about the future, about making it work better, so I have to, as you say, move into the Seventies. It's the responsibility of the left to initiate this, to start to analyze the situation with regards to the whole world. To continue to have these onslaughts against the military without looking at other interests... well, you're just going to get kicked in the ass. And I'm tired of getting kicked in the ass.

*How does what you're saying differ from John Foster Dulles?*

We have tremendous guilt, positive guilt about all the evils the United States has done to the world. Wherever there seem to be forces of fascism and repression, the U.S. always seems to side with them. That has to change, of course. Because, you see, I think in sort of evolutionary terms—that the United States is really the most highly evolved nation in the world. I use the rights of the people as barometer for that. Again, change—a lot more change—has to occur. The people need more rights. But these days socialism is always shown representing the future. However, experience has shown socialists/communists strap onto people the most oppressive regimes in the history of the world. Regimes that are dictatorships, dictatorships in the name of the proletariat, not by the proletariat. And these regimes are very hard to get rid of because they give people something everyone longs for and that's economic security, if you will, economic democracy, which is so lacking in the United States. But political democracy, which I think is the more important of the two, doesn't exist in communist countries. It is, in fact, looked on as subversive.

*Can the two exist together? Can they be brought more into line?*

In the Soviet Union, the people have almost no way of bringing their will to bear. Solzhenitsyn and Medvedev have shown us that. It is the main reason why the Soviet Union is in so much trouble. In the United States we still need more political democracy, so we can't lower that factor. We need to have more say in economic matters. Our will must be brought to bear on that. I think that the United States has more of a chance at working the balance out. I think that most Americans know that and that is why Americans have always been so anticommunist, why they have always been so antitotalitarian and why they made the shift from hating fascists to hating communists so swiftly in the Forties. The left has really blown itself because we always felt compelled to embrace the opposite extreme. Why should we have allowed Nixon to wrap himself up in the American flag? We should have taken it away from that motherfucker. But instead we grabbed the Viet Cong flag and there went any hope of large support from the American people.

*I can agree on that. Let's get on to the military itself. I consider them madmen.*

*They're not madmen!*

*Come on, Eldridge, it's my turn to be insistent and pragmatic. I consider them to be as evil as the Soviets. They are very, very strong. The CIA, when it was formed in the Forties, was made up of liberals, men who really believed in a positive form of internationalism, but damned if they didn't all turn into paranoid commie-under-the-rug types.*

*But there were commies under the rug.*

*Jesus, Eldridge, you know they were never a threat to the U.S., except maybe during the early Thirties.*

I think you are wrong. If the war had not come along to save the American economy, I think that they might have had a chance. And I'm glad that FDR blocked them. I really am.

*Okay, so am I. Most of the American communists I know are totally out to lunch, we are agreed on that. Let me finish my CIA analogy. I think that the military mind so dominated the CIA that what we have now is, well, a can of worms that is so facilitate I can't see any hope for them.*

You're right but I can't blame the military so much because they just went on by themselves. The left turned its back on them. It should have fought more. I think that the left really has to look at the political forces at work in the United States and has to work out an understanding, has to reanalyze its position. I, for one, intend to develop a new relationship with the U.S. military. I'm on a honeymoon with them myself. I love 'em [much laughter].

*What about the military mind, what about a reorganization of the military? Is that what you are getting at?*

Yes. If the left had not backed out on the military, written it off so completely, it might not have gotten so extreme. It is going to take a major purge of the officers, rewriting of the manuals and a lot of changes. It's no easy process. Military people are very patriotic people and that's not a bad trait. I'm turning into a patriot. These people are professional people and they have a certain political line that has been dominated by the right wing. These people are Americans, they should be treated that way. If we are going to really talk about progressive change in America, then we have to talk about moving on the military, not excluding it. Because without that support,

brother, there ain't goin' to be no revolution.

*Okay, so you are saying that the military mind is somewhat malleable as far as political ideologies go.*

Sure. Just like other people. We have to work on the younger members, they have to be thinking differently after Vietnam. What if there had been some favorable support for some of the dissenting military officers to stay in the military during the war? We encouraged them to drop out. Well, it can change. That's all I am saying. We just can't ignore them anymore. I think sometimes that some of the stuff that the right was saying about us was true. They said we were traitors selling the U.S. down the river, moving toward the communists. And you see, communists aren't plotting just to wipe out the right in America; they're talking about doing in the whole thing. And I can't subscribe to that. I want the U.S. to be vastly improved, not be done in. We have to maintain a vigilance against people who want to destroy the U.S.

*But what about the internal forces, the people who are harnessing the U.S. for themselves, for their own ends? The cynical military-industrial boys, what about them? Aren't they a threat?*

Yes, of course. We have to be vigilant on that level too and, so far, the progressive forces have been moving in on those people very effectively. I'm talking about new areas, the ones we have overlooked or been afraid of in the past, and the military is one of them. Also, we have let the big powers control our world view. That too has been a matter of left versus right and we have not looked at that very closely. I mean, instead of moving toward détente with the Soviet Union I think we should be resolutely opposed to the present regime. I want to see the American military establishment's power supporting people who are being fucked over in the world.

*Does that mean we get into a whole balance of power thing again? That we give Israel billions of dollars in weapons because the Soviets are giving an equal share to the Arabs? Doesn't that bring us closer to an inevitable confrontation?*

Well, on that particular subject, I've been closely identified with the Palestinian people because I think they have some long overdue justice coming their way. But I don't endorse driving the Jews into the sea. You see what I mean? It is a matter of balance, a new balance that comes from reexamination. We have to begin to separate the true interests of the people from the imaginations of the imperialists and politicians; that's the problem, especially with a different political direction in the U.S. which includes a new military role, a strong one. You see, it will still take new controls of the political mechanisms.

*Since you have brought it up, let's talk about U.S. relationships with the Soviet Union and China.*

Like I said, I think it would be treasonable to make concessions with the Soviet Union. I agree with Scoop Jackson on that. Only he just [Continued on 60]

**I'm on a honeymoon with the U.S. military. I love 'em. Military people are very patriotic and that's not a bad trait.**

# Cleaver

(Continued from 48)

used the Jews like all politicians use issues; he didn't take it far enough. Because the Soviet Union is very shaky at this point and we should not be trying to hold them up, and that is just what we are doing with détente. The stuff we are saying, that Kissinger is saying, about not interfering with the internal affairs of the Soviet Union, well, that sounds like Chamberlain during Hitler's run all over again. If we are truly the force for democracy in the world, then we have an obligation to help in the disintegration of the totalitarian Soviet regime. They have to go just like Nixon did; they are the same. Who of the world leaders were most upset at Nixon's passing? The totalitarian leaders. Now, that is a very frightening switch. Unfortunately Nixon's ghost lives in Kissinger but I think that if people like Jackson keep up that pressure, the American people will side with them.

*Doesn't our relationship, our new détente, really have to do with those new markets that our country is so in need of? We have a complete turnaround; the forces of conservatism—the business—want to sleep with the Russians simply because of the rubles; they could really give a shit about freedom. And here we are trying leave the fuckers alone, let them sink, they no longer have anything to do with liberation.*

That's just it. It all really is changing and we have to see that. We have to, as always, stay ahead of the fuckers. It's vigilance again. I think with pressure being applied by the Chinese and a new pressure being applied by the U.S., the Soviets might crumble. It's changing and I've been very provocative with all this military stuff.

*That is definitely the word.*

Well, everyone seems asleep or just confused and by being provocative maybe some action can take place, some movement. They got down on me when I criticized Henry, when I criticized Leary and when I got down on Fidel and finally Mao. But what I'm trying to show is that everything has changed; it is the Seventies. The whole thing changed the day Nixon shook hands with Mao. It all became cynical politics. The new situation, what's going on now, scares me. And I'm afraid I'm missing the boat. I'm afraid the left is going to miss the boat. We're going to miss it because of our blindness, because of the past. It's here now and we have to get on the boat. It's just a

question of where we're going. We can't wait, understand, before we start thinking about moving on these questions.

*I'd like to go back to the Sixties and talk about that period, about radicals. I always felt that white revolutionaries of that period always had a choice; we could always get off the train and just blend back in, while you and the Panthers really had no choice. I always thought you would have preferred to be a writer or philosopher over being a gun-toting radical waiting for the inevitable end.*

There was a gulf, there is no question of that. Like when I was planning the Merritt College standoff right before I went to Cuba, all of the people inside the college with me were brothers, were black. I went to some white radical friends and asked them for help, and they said sure, they would gladly bring in medicine and food if things got rough.

*Like the Red Cross with coffee and doughnuts?*

Right, I mean, I had something different in my mind, like them attacking the enemy from the rear, but they just could not get into that. I understand that now but it really blew me away at the time. It's often very hard for me to understand people because when I talk to them on an individual basis I don't get the feeling that this is someone who, when a crucial point in the struggle comes, will turn back on it. You see, I sometimes forget that when you're in a peaceful period, when you're discussing options, then agreement's the easiest thing in the world. But when you start pushing toward a confrontation, then people too often begin to reassess that commitment. They should have realized all along that the problem demands somewhat drastic action. How far to go. People will always do the minimum until finally they are pushed over the line. No one wants to die, no one wants to put their body on the line, but when things get so bad that death is a legitimate alternative to deplorable situations, then it is an easy decision. That period seems to be over now.

*I think that a lot of the commitment shown by blacks in the late Sixties, when they first started to enter the power structure, has abated. It seems like the melting pot is really working overtime on black Americans.*

It's not so much that it's working overtime as finally regurgitating something that was indigestible. The whole idea behind the melting pot is that you go in and you cook until you become American done. So it's

only natural that people who have been cooking as long as blacks came out very well done. It looked pretty much the same when the Italian or Irish came trucking in, it just took longer. Well, man, you've got that case in New Jersey where the Puerto Ricans are rioting against the black government there. They are throwing the same charges blacks used to throw at whites. It's really a good example of how the system functions and how the human parts are really interchangeable. It's the system speaking very clearly.

*If you went back, you certainly would address yourself to the class differences more than the racial ones, but still, wouldn't blacks be the major group who would be willing to listen and take heed of what a person in your position would advocate? Would you try to reach the people who have become assimilated?*

No. Why bother? Besides, I have nothing but contempt for those people who allowed themselves to be bought out. You see, that buying out process was a very clever tactic in the defusing of the different black movements. You figure that the government calculated that for them to really fix up the many inadequacies that black people are forced to live with—whether it's political power or housing—would cost them billions of dollars. By starting a program of black capitalism where corporations and the government saluted the black community with a million in this city and a million there, they figured that this saved them a lot of money and at the same time this money could buy out the very people who might, because of their power and position, lead blacks. This way they just get defused, you see what I mean? Now it's common knowledge that all of that money never trickled down to the people it was supposedly intended for. The government knew that but that wasn't the reason for the investment of the money in the first place. Now change has taken place and the system does work differently and somewhat better vis-a-vis blacks. And one of the ways the power structure made these changes seem greater than they actually were was by bringing the members of the black bourgeoisie into the power structure and giving them lower levels of political power, and it's the whole melting pot thing digesting the indigestible black element.

In the past, you could see when all levels of power were controlled by the Anglo-Saxon elements. When the Irish came in 1848 they had little power.

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To keep order in the Irish area, a few Irish cops were hired to keep their folks in line. More and more of them came onto the force until they really were no longer a minority. Then they got promotions until most police chiefs were Irish, which led to a power base which helped the Irish wrest more control away from the power structure. Then Italians went through a similar process. With the decision to pull blacks into the system the same process began to happen but with more confusion. People who were cut from leaders of the black cause, like the minorities leaders before them, began to take the positions offered to them. In Vietnam, for example, more and more blacks went up the ladder till some became majors, sometimes even generals, and then they were made heads of local police departments. Well now, back in the street we were demanding community control of our police and they met this outcry with the appointment of black cops and a few officers. So we got black cops and mayors and congressmen and this served to tranquilize people, or at least confuse people, because they had to wait to see if it was going to work. I think now there are people who were stoned nationalists and Pan Africanists who are being forced to look at these changes and think the process through until they begin to see that it is basically a class issue, not solely a racial one. They have to reject unity on the basis of color because if they don't, they're holding hands with the enemy. Take, for example, the mayor of Los Angeles, who is black. Very rarely do people talk about the fact that Tom Bradley was a police lieutenant in the L.A.P.D. and that he came up the ladder when the department was run by Chief (William) Parker, who is a known butcherer of black and minority peoples. The man was an outspoken racist. Now, any black man who becomes successful in a department like that has had to go through changes that can't help but separate him from his people. Just because he changes his policeman's uniform for a civilian suit is no indication of black power or of success for the cause. It's actually the continuation of the American power structure, which is able to assume any color: white, black, Italian or whatever fulfills the need of the moment. Maybe we have to go through all of this just to understand the process so that we can ultimately reject it.

*People like Mayor Bradley were always fence-sitters anyway, but what about people like Bobby and Huey and the more*

*radical elements in an organization like SNCC? Isn't it discouraging when you see the changes in them?*

Oh yes, when people who used to be willing to put their lives on the line go over, that's very distressing. When Huey became religious and began relating to black capitalism and rejected armed struggle—I mean, nothing is easier to reject than armed struggle [laughter]. The thrust of it is that he got involved in associations with Black bourgeoisie and that whole bourgeoisie circus. The only difference is that Huey had pull with the people who had been involved with the party in the past, and there were many and they had trust in him. It's very, very depressing to me because that series of events leading up to the new line destroyed a generation of radical leadership. I don't think the people that really were involved in the party will in the long run find themselves content in these new organizations.

*What about congressmen like Ron Dellums of California?*

Ron Dellums is a sort of special case. He was in the Bay Area and he knew the whole history of the Panthers and he knew the falsity of the charges and he knew the political problems involved. I asked Ron Dellums to help me in terms of helping me get back into the States without going back to prison and he sent a message telling me that he didn't want to get involved in the conflicts between me and Huey. Well, that's not really the reason because I know that he really preferred to work with Huey. Because Ron is a politician and he knew how to give Huey advice and get him money and work the system, and real understanding took place. It's only when you really move on these issues toward confrontation that people start to turn.

*In a very strong way Watergate has united the American electorate, but unfortunately not around a new approach or new ideologies, but through cynicism. I don't buy the line that Americans are apathetic but just weary. I think they have one cynical eye left open and that one is watching the economy. The government is so worried that, I'm told, Los Angeles has started to train tactical police forces to deal with food riots. What do you think it is more over the next two years?*

Well, as I said, I'm the guy who predicted a military coup in 1969 so I don't know how good I am at second-guessing. However, there are some his-

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tical connections that can be made with the Depression years. It is very obvious that the government is very frightened about the economy. Why else would they be playing all these semantic games with recession versus inflation when the real word is depression? In the Thirties, when the economy went, the left cheered because they saw it as the fulfillment of Marx's prophecy: the final collapse of the capitalist system. Of course it didn't happen that way. The thing was propped up by FDR, the New Deal and most importantly by the war, which got the economy rolling. That led right into the Korean War and the Cold War boom. Couple this with the world's appetite for American goods and the economy which was then very strong. Vietnam pumped tens of billions of dollars into the system. So this all gave a distorted view of growth. Unfortunately, with the coming of age of other producers like Japan and Germany, we were no longer the sole producers. Add the oil mess which hits the kingpin, the auto industry, and we are in deep trouble; we are near a depression. Maybe the Thirties leftists were correct because all this did was artificially stimulate things and put off the inevitable, which seems to be coming. The ultimate paradox in all of this is that without the recent support of the communist nations, without those new markets, this might have happened sooner. Now they're being drawn into the whole mess.

*Where would Cadillac and Pan Am be today without the Arabs? Now that they have found oil in Alaska, I expect that G.E. will finally start selling refrigerators to the Eskimos. So what is going to happen when this gets worse?*

Well, there are two ways to go, depending on the leadership, and both of the approaches are similar. You can go the way of Mussolini and Hitler and set up a tightly controlled state economy where the money still remains in the hands of the wealthy, still in the royal coffers. This is the approach which is most appetizing to people like Rockefeller. Now, if this is employed and the people who still have jobs get fat again, you won't hear a word out of them; they will become hard hats again. But if that doesn't work, then maybe some liberals will come with the left solution, which would be a state-run economy with the wealth more evenly distributed. The solutions are similar; it's just the ultimate destination of the money that differs.

*Who would bring this about?*

It is not going to be Allen Ginsberg or Mark Rudd or me, but most likely some liberal senator with the right credentials and program.

*How would he arrive at that program? Surely even the Democratic party couldn't come up with such a far-out solution.*

I'm not so sure about that. When they realize what is happening, when their constituency starts demanding, they might come up with such a program. You see, the pressure is going to be coming from more people, not just the disenfranchised people of the Sixties but women and the unemployed. Remember how the truck drivers became violent almost at once and how the government settled with them so quickly? That is going to be the new radical leadership.

*Perhaps, but can the two parties go along with this?*

Not as they exist now. You see, the Republican party is a discredited party. All that Ford wants to do is limp to 1976. But if the Democrats win big, as I think they will in 1976, then things might happen. You see, change won't come about in the Democratic party while they are out of power. They must be united to win. But once they are in, you know, it's going to be like with LBJ and the war. He got all the flack from his people. Now what might happen is that the left faction of both parties might split off and form a new coalition, a new force, that will address itself to the needs of the people. This is what I would like to see happen.

*What is the role of the left in all of this?*

People in the left, in America anyway, are primarily motivated by an intellectual understanding of the situation. These are people who have seen and studied the irrationality of the system for a very long while but it is still an intellectual process. Now no one ever said that the left was the movement, except maybe the left itself. The left is just like a gadfly in the system and that is actually what it should be. These people who understand the roots of the problems are important because they explain to the majority of the people things that they never put together before. So when an upheaval comes, there is a role for the left and most of them have always known that. It is hopefully at this point that they can come down off the mountain and really deal with the people.