



GR: Was that food ever stolen?

AH: Liberated. You know, in Chinatown they make these deliveries, just dropping stuff off in front of restaurants. It's just there.

GR: How many people were in the Red Guards?

AH: The high point was 200, right when we opened up in 1969. That's not an exaggeration, but that didn't last long. You can only take so much police repression before people stop coming around. We dwindled down to a hardcore base of around 50.

GR: What was the average member like?

AH: Early 20s. Our youngest member was like 13. We were American-born, but we were actually able to unite with immigrants and take up the struggle for immigrant rights. You hear one immigrant group think that they're better than a more recent immigrant group: they talk funny; they're dirty; they make the community more this, more that. It's really not right. So we then had some old-timers, too. Old pro-China people.

GR: Did you ever go out wearing Mao jackets and all that?

AH: Oh yeah. We'd wear army field jackets and berets. Sometimes we'd wear armbands during public demonstrations.

GR: How long was the Red Guard party together for?

AH: The phenomenon was very short-lived, 2 1/2 years. The main reason why it broke up was political police repression. We couldn't stay in that office if the landlord kept on quadrupling the rent. We couldn't walk down the streets without being put up against the wall, frisked, and asked for ID.

GR: They knew who was involved?

AH: Oh yeah. And our offices were being constantly raided. They didn't need a pretense. They were just looking for stuff.

GR: Did you ever have an arsenal full of guns?

AH: We were armed. In California it's legal to possess arms. Let's leave it at that.

GR: Did you ever have to use them?

AH: It wasn't quite a shoot-out, but one of our members had an armed stand-off with the police. The brother was on parole at the time, Tyrone Won, and they went after him. He wound up hijacking a plane to Cuba. He passed away in Cuba.

IN ASIA WITH THE PANTHERS

GR: What was the relationship between the Red Guards and Black Panthers?

AH: It was as close as it could be given the circumstances. The Panthers were absorbed in their own problems. The police waged an unrelenting onslaught against them. They had to spend so much time fighting off that attack.

GR: Where were you when the Panthers' split started?

AH: I was in China with Eldridge Cleaver. In 1970, I went on this trip to North Korea, North Vietnam, and China. How did it happen? Eldridge Cleaver, who at that time was based in Algiers, hooked up with North Koreans. At that time Kim Il Sung was still alive, the

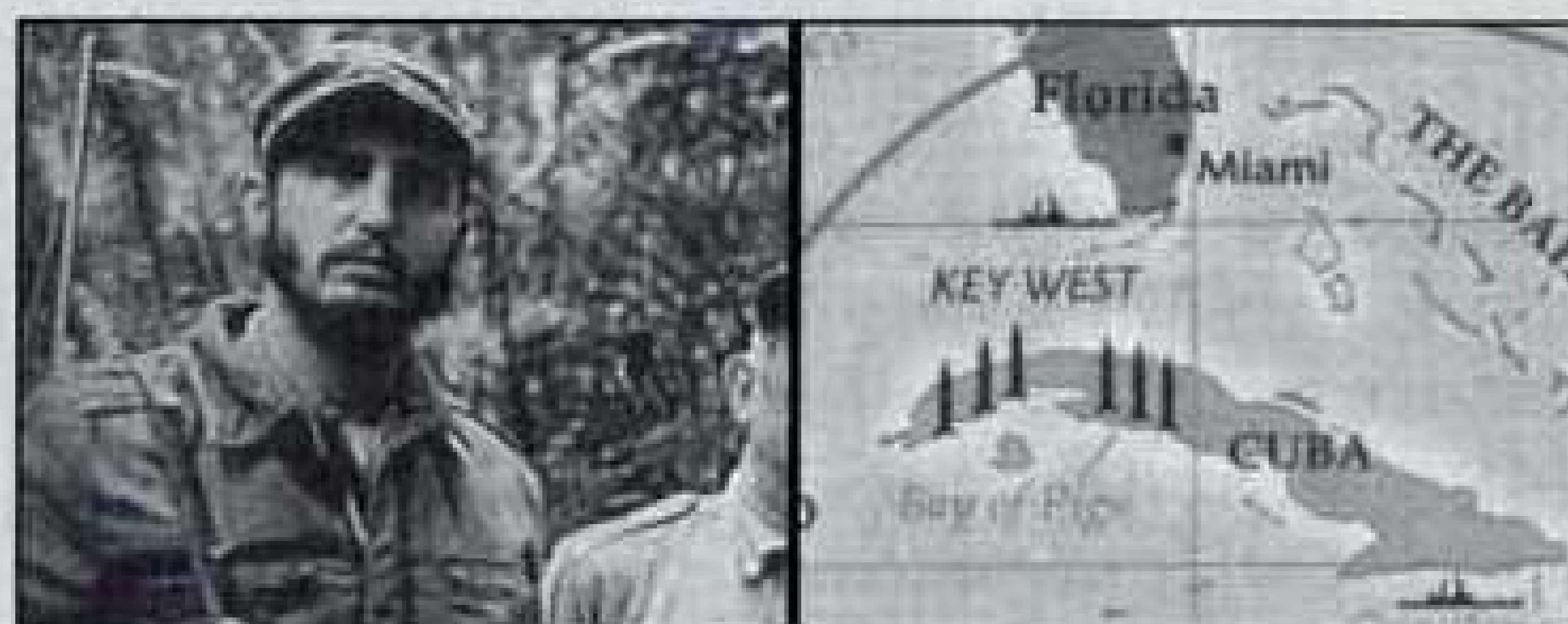
ONE-WAY TICKET TO CUBA

March, 1969: The Red Guard newspaper reports that "four pigs" bust Tyrone Won on "trumped-up charges" when he walks out of the Red Guard headquarters with a disassembled rifle. Out on parole in July, Tyrone has a distinctive tattoo removed from his left arm by a doctor in a back-alley operation. (A lot of doctors were supportive of the movement.) Then Tyrone, his girlfriend, and a Black Panther who is also on the run, drive to Texas where they possibly rob a bank before driving to Mexico and hijacking a plane to Cuba. This is the last we hear of the Panther.

August, 1970: Upon returning from his trip to North Vietnam with the Panthers, Red Guard Minister of Information Alex Hing receives a frantic phone call from Won's girlfriend informing him that Tyrone had hanged himself in his Cuban jail cell. In disbelief, Alex asks Eldridge Cleaver (who had lived in Cuba) to find out more. Eldridge writes a letter to Alex stating that Cuban authorities reported that Tyrone hanged himself and that Tyrone's girlfriend was engaged to a Cuban. When Alex tells the girlfriend's parents all the details, they give the Red Guards a care package full of clothes to send to her.

Sometime, 1978: Alex Hing is practicing martial arts in a park after work when he hears someone say, "Alex?" It's Tyrone's girlfriend. During the Carter administration, she and her son were among the Americans who were allowed to return from Cuba. They're waiting for her husband. She tells Alex that she learned to sew while in prison (all American hijackers were imprisoned because they could be CIA agents), went to school, and then joined a factory. She has two criticisms about Cuba: (1) She disapproves of the country's involvement in the Angolan war because it is not popular among the people and (2) it is too reliant on the USSR, which is social-Imperialist, and not truly socialist. Then she goes on to say that she is still socialist and revolutionary, but doesn't want to get in touch with her old friends because she has to get her life together and because she's afraid her phone is tapped. Alex goes back to the park in the weeks that follow, but never sees her again.

-MW



CASTRO TIME

Why in the fuck would a hijacker want to go to Cuba? At the time in the late '60s and early '70s, Cuba became the hottest place to go. Perhaps the best reason for this is because it's only 85 miles from Florida, and the place is run by Fidel Castro, who's looked upon by some as a badass revolutionary. But a lot of the fools who hijacked planes and went to Cuba were into the fact that hijacking a plane to Cuba served as an embarrassment to the US. Prior to 1973, people didn't get their bags checked! So guns, knives, and bombs were easy to get on board. But once a hijacker got into Cuba, in many cases, he or she got screwed. Meeting them at the airport were security guards and police who would put these revolutionaries into jail for their crimes. The African Americans who hijacked their way into Cuba got fucked, as they were left to be nothing but low class citizens once they got out of jail. But the fools who were fugitives running to Cuba got more fucked since Castro didn't want fugitives in Cuba.

One publication mentions that there was a \$25,000 fee that a hijacker would have to pay, which was most likely wrong, but another mentions that Castro would collect \$2,500 to \$3,000 per plane load. For some reason, Castro would let the hijacked plane fly back to the US, but would make the passengers stay in Cuba. He would arrange to have them taken on a tour of Cuba, have them eat good food, give them Che Guevara propaganda. The US would have to pay the fine quickly or else their plane could possibly get impounded.

In 1980, Castro's Cuba opened its borders for outbound refugees. So tons of people got on boats and landed in Miami. But Castro did better, he let folks out of prisons and mental institutions and sent them out to the US, too. This led to shit like what you see in Scarface. Those that didn't want to stick around tried to hijack planes to go back home.

-EN

Before you hijack a plane, check out: *Terror in the Skies* (1987) by Captain Thomas M. Ashwood or *The Sky Pirates* (1971) by James A. Aron.

Below: Juan Gonzalez of the Young Lords talking at the Red Guard's headquarters (Photo by Nikko Arail)



economy of North Korea was fairly strong, and Koreans wanted to have more public relations. So they invited Eldridge to North Korea and he sent a small delegation there. The North Koreans really got behind the Black Panther Party. Basically, they said that the Black Panther Party was the revolutionary vanguard in the United States. They had the Panthers set up an embassy in North Korea.

GR: Did any other countries do that?

AH: Algeria did that. The Panthers had an office in Paris. Eldridge was in Cuba. At that time, there was this movement of what was called the "non-aligned countries" that was led by Cuba, North Vietnam, and North Korea. They were the leaders. Somehow, people felt that China was too big. So the Panthers ordered a subsequent delegation of American leftists to go to North Korea and they wanted a fairly broad cross-section of the American movements. An 11-member delegation went and David Hilliard asked me if the Red Guards wanted to be represented. So I went.

We went first to North Korea. One of the first things we did was sit around with the North Koreans to plan an itinerary. And they said to all of us in the delegation, "What would you like to see?" I said, "I want to visit the Chinese embassy." You know, I'm a Chinese American, we're the Red Guard. . . Well, everyone in the delegation, their mouths dropped. The image was that North Korea was kind of like a junior China, and they were very sensitive to that. So we weren't supposed to talk about China, but I'm a Chinese American, and I didn't care. So the North Koreans arranged for just me to go to the embassy. The limo comes in to pick me up, and Eldridge asks, "Where are you going?" I say, "The Chinese embassy." He says, "You're not going by yourself," and we all went to the Chinese embassy together, all 11 of us.

Also, while we were in North Korea, the North Vietnamese wanted to meet us. We also wanted to meet them. So they invited us to go to Hanoi because the war was still going on. We couldn't turn that down. So it became complicated because this was supposed to be a big PR thing for North Korea. Then we got invited to go to Hanoi and to China. So we spent three weeks in Korea, three weeks in Vietnam. Coming back through China we would have had an extended trip, but that was the time Huey got released from prison, and Eldridge had to deal with all this inter-party stuff. So our trip to China got cut off and we went to Algiers with Eldridge. That's exactly when the split happened.

We were in North Korea when the whole shootout at the Marin County Courthouse happened. So Eldridge had to get back to the Panther headquarters in Algiers. When the rest of us got back to the

US, the party was in shambles. At the same time the Red Guards had suffered from a lot of political repression, so we dissolved. Basically, we merged with other Asian-American leftists, and became a part of another organization. When the Red Guards dissolved, we actually merged with the IWK, which became a national organization with chapters in New York and San Francisco. A lot of ex-students went into the working class. We sought out working class jobs where we could organize and work in unions. That's how I became involved in unions.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the kind of repudiation of Communism, Marxism, and Leninism, a lot of us have had to rethink our politics. Basically, that's where I'm at now: retrenching, trying to make my contributions where I can. So I'm involved with the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, involved in unions and organizing. That's what I do, plus I teach Tai Chi.

GR: Most people who take classes like that seem to be non-Asian.

AH: Yeah. Mainly it's because Asians are falling into their own stereotype. I think a lot of youth now are basically computer nerds, and not really into studying the traditional stuff. Whereas people in Western society are getting fed up with Western values and are beginning to explore this big growth industry in alternative, or what they call "Oriental," medicine. So a lot of people are taking martial arts, Tai Chi, acupuncture, transcendental meditation, yoga, all that stuff. If you go to any of those events, you'll find very few Asians.

CULTURAL RENDERING

GR: What were you into when you were growing up?

AH: I think that some of these traditional Asian variety acts are amazing: contortionists, jugglers, magicians. But I loved Bob Dylan. I like Bob because his lyrics are so right-on. No one has a command of English and images quite like he does. He had a profound effect on my consciousness. And Bruce Lee, of course.

GR: What about Bruce Lee?

AH: When he was alive, I was very critical of him because he played Kato. Being an ultra-leftist, I felt, "Oh, here's Bruce Lee playing the servile role and fighting for this white guy. We've got to get off of

From the Red Guard Community News, Vol. 1, No. 2, April 9, 1969

Recommended Reading List:

1. Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*
2. *Malcolm X Speaks*
3. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
4. Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*
5. Felix Greene, *Vietnam Vietnam*
6. Regis de Bray, *Revolution in the Revolution?*
7. Che Guevara, *Guerilla Warfare*
8. *Diary of Che Guevara*
9. Che Guevara, *Reminiscos of the Cuban Revolution*
10. *Che Guevara Speaks*
11. *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*
12. Giap, *People's War, People's Army*
13. Myrdal, *Report on a Chinese Village*
14. *Selected Military Writings of Mao Zedong*
15. *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*
16. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Communist Manifesto*
17. Vladimir Lenin, *The State*
18. C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*



that." It wasn't until he passed away until I began to appreciate his contributions. He played a major role in having a more positive view of Asians out there. To be that good of a martial artist, you've got to put in a lot of work. Maybe it's easier to say let's break out of that and do something easier! If we had a home-grown Jet Li from the US, we'd all be flocking. We wouldn't put that down.

MAKING HISTORY

GR: Do you miss the days of liberating food and standing up to pigs?

AH: I wouldn't do that now and I don't miss it. But I still believe in most of that stuff. Either you're part of making history, or you're not. I think we made a lot of history.

GR: How can people make history now?

AH: I think it's impossible to liberate others without first liberating yourself. People have to be open to different ways of thinking. I'm supportive of everything that moves things forward. If you look at the yin and the yang, there's theory and there's action. There's a time for theory and there's a time for practice. I think we're in a mode now for ideas. More of a retreat.

As Mao showed in the Long March, sometimes a retreat can be turned into an advance. There's no stigma attached to retreating. It's a natural process. People are beginning to understand what was not-so-correct about the past, and to take some of the good things and try to go out and have more practice and add their own generation's stamp to some of our experiences.

I think people should be revolutionary. People should break out of the old mode of things and not accept things as they are. Unfortunately, it takes a system to fall apart in front of your face before people start to look for alternatives.

GR: What type of framework did you envision?

AH: We were going to reclaim our heritage. We were going to break every stereotype that they put in our way, and we were going to show them that we are here to stay and they'd better come to some reconciliation with us. That's the attitude that I still have and I don't let anybody mess with me. I'm still surviving. I still plan to fight and still believe that I'm fighting. We'll see what happens.

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