

INTERVIEW WITH SCANDINAVIAN REP. OF BLACK PANTHER PARTY: CONNIE MATTHEWS

by Klaus Pedersen of "Land and Folk" (Communist Organ)

Panthers' most important weapons: Marxism, Food and Medicine

KLAUS: Connie, just some background on how the BPP started and what were the reasons for taking the directions they have now taken?

CONNIE: Very briefly: In 1966 Huey P. Newton our leader and Bobby Seale our Chairman, got together and decided that the existing organizations at that time had no ideology and were not taking into account the needs of the masses of the people. Having read Fanon and the works of Mao they were able to see the problem as a class struggle. The first concrete thing they did was to draw up a 10 point platform and program based on the needs of the people in the Black communities. Point No. 7 states "We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of Black people". And they decided that every Black person in the community could relate to this as at one time or another they had come into contact with the brutality of the pigs. And so point No. 7 was implemented first. Huey and Bobby then started to patrol the communities according to their constitutional rights and observe the officers of the law carrying out their duty. This way they were able to educate the people as to what their rights were when the pigs manhandled them. This in essence was the beginning of the BPP. At this time it was only on a regional basis. But soon after the episode at Sacramento when 30 Panthers went there to observe the law makers introducing new laws, they received national coverage, and the BPP became known across the nation. They then commenced to realize other points of the 10 point platform and program by introducing social projects into the communities. At present, they are feeding thousands of hungry children each morning before going to school. They have been able to set up Free Health Clinics and Revolutionary Schools. Approximately 40 chapters are scattered across the nation. A great deal of community work is being done when Panthers go into the communities and educate the people as to the true nature of this racist decadent society and who their true oppressor is. The people are taught that Black capitalism is only a guise and the only solution is socialism. At this point I would like to clarify one point, and that is that we do not disregard racism. We understand that capitalism breeds racism; one is the cause and the other is effect, and that in order to rid the world of oppression and racial tensions capitalism and imperialism must be destroyed.

KLAUS: There has been a great deal of confusion not only in Denmark but other places about what really is the goal of the BPP. But maybe we should just concentrate on the European public. Would you explain the effects of the confusion and why it has taken place and clarify some of the points that you think the Scandinavians have been misinformed on?

CONNIE: First of all I explained that the goals of the BPP are set out clearly in our 10 point platform and program and this has now

been translated into Swedish, Danish, French and German. One of the problems I believe, is that the BPP concentrates on doing its community work in the Black communities. And that Europeans find this hard to understand as they do not grasp fully the extent of racial lines in the United States. The BPP tells other ethnic groups who have the same ideology that they should work in their communities and educate their people to a level of understanding, whereby the true oppressor can be recognized and the ultimate aim is then a United Front. This point was not clarified to Europeans and with the aid of the establishment press people were willing to label the BPP as being a racist organization. It is necessary, and I am only too willing to repeat to European audiences, that the BPP

only betrayed the trust of the BPP but of the Black community as a whole, which we represent. The people had a lot of confidence in him and because of the madness he has perpetrated Black capitalism was able to get a hold in the Black communities. He was not the only Black leader responsible for this but we are now talking about him.

KLAUS: Where is Stokely now?

CONNIE: I believe he is in Guinea, in hiding.

KLAUS: Of course the struggle that Malcolm X initiated was a very harsh one and the price was life. Do you think that this fight between the Blacks is over and that the BPP with its ideology is accepted in the Black communities?

We must have faith in the people. They are the ones we are fighting for. The final decision will ultimately be in the hands of the people.

KLAUS: You spoke about Marxist-Leninism and Mao. Can one regard the BPP as a so-called Maoist Party?

CONNIE: We take the basic ideology of Marxist-Leninism. Mao writes in a more contemporary style which is easier to grasp. However, we are unable to be dogmatic in putting things into practice because as true Marxist-Leninist, we understand that the conditions we are subjected to govern our tactics.

ple and you had better believe it can and will happen unless we resist now.

KLAUS: As soon as Malcolm X understood the meaning of the word internationalism and classes, he became a threat, and was dangerous. What about you? You personally, do you think you are leading a very dangerous life?

CONNIE: The American establishment is very clever. They know that as long as they have a bunch of niggers running around talking about they want to kill all Whites and that they hate all Whites, they are no threat. When you get someone like Malcolm or a group like the BPP who say - Let's get together and get to the root of the problem. There are white people and other people of color who are just as oppressed as we are. There is no point in just hating people because of the color of their skins - then, of course, we are dangerous. Black people were not brought from Africa to work on cotton plantations and sugar plantations because they were free labor and were used to advance capitalism. The establishment then realizes that those dumb niggers are not so dumb anymore. In finding where the problem is you are on the road to finding the solution. Black capitalism and federal grants, which we reject, have been created as a smoke screen. For me personally I understand what I have to do and like anyone else I do not want to die but if that is the only way this oppression can stop by my helping to enlighten the people outside of the United States as to the true nature of that decadent society then I say Fight On! Many lives that were more valuable than mine have been lost.



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is speaking about a world proletarian revolution and recognize themselves as part of this. It is a question of the oppressor against the oppressed regardless of race, color or creed. One of our major drawbacks has been, of course, the frequent visits of our former Prime Minister Stokely Carmichael to Europe and he has been instrumental in misleading people as to our class stand.

KLAUS: One of the problems you have had to face is that the spokesmen you have sent abroad have been very few and they have not really assisted in clarifying your stand.

CONNIE: Yes. And I return to the problem of Stokely and the problem of not having been able to send spokesmen abroad. You have to understand that ever since we have started our leaders have either been in or out of jail on trumped-up charges or are continually being harassed by the authorities. We realized the importance of international contacts very clearly and that was one of the main reasons why Stokely was appointed to do what I am now doing and that was to enlighten other people as to the true nature of our struggle. Stokely has, of course, turned out to be a running dog and a lackey. He not

only betrayed the trust of the BPP but of the Black community as a whole, which we represent. The people had a lot of confidence in him and because of the madness he has perpetrated Black capitalism was able to get a hold in the Black communities. He was not the only Black leader responsible for this but we are now talking about him.

KLAUS: The impression given in the establishment press has been one that the Panthers are a militant, armed people causing disorder and it seems that the establishment has been successful in leading people to believe this.

CONNIE: I think you have to understand that "violence" is a way of living with Americans. America was built on violence - the genocide of 50 million Indians. They have romanticized this and called it "Cowboys and Indians". It is obvious that the only way to combat this violence that the establishment uses against the oppressed people is to use violence. The only way to get rid of the gun is to take up the gun. For most Europeans it is difficult to understand as the pigs do not resort to guns. For a long time Black Americans remained non-violent but Martin Luther King was murdered. We want peace and if there was any way of reaching a solution to the problem peacefully we would do it that way, but this is impossible. Look at Vietnam. It will be quite easy to send 30 million Blacks to the gas chamber or whatever other advanced form of technology they have of murdering people.

KLAUS: In conclusion tell us something about your experience in Denmark and what we can do to continue what you have started here.

CONNIE: Most Danes are inclined to view the struggle of oppressed peoples in a romantic way. They feel detached. That it is happening somewhere else. I have repeatedly told the Danes that they are covertly endorsing America's actions by belonging to Nato, the world pig force, by allowing American investments to take a stronghold in Denmark and they are on the verge of being a neo-colonialist state. The best card package you can send to us is to resist imperialism in your country, get out of Nato, get back your autonomy and force your government into taking a stand against US imperialism. Do not continue to tell me you only have 4 1/2 million people. We have to stop thinking in terms of countries. U.S. imperialism has now gone to the moon and where next? My parting message is that there are a few conscious Danes who realize the urgency of the situation. Continue to educate your people to the true nature of what is happening and let them understand the full meaning of All Power to the People.

DUE TO THE OPEN ATTEMPT TO SABOTAGE THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY FINANCE BY THE FASCIST RICHARD NIXON REGIME, WE HAVE FOUND IT NECESSARY TO SHORTEN THE LENGTH OF THE BLACK PANTHER NEWS SERVICE THIS WEEK. THIS IS CLEARLY AN ATTEMPT TO SUPPRESS THE INFORMATION AND THE POLITICS OF THE PARTY THAT THE PEOPLE SO DESPERATELY NEED TO CARRY ON THE STRUGGLE. WE HOPE FOR A CONSISTENT 20 PAGE PAPER IN THE FUTURE.