

June 4, 1985

Dear comrades:

I just finished reading the June issue of Death to the Klan! I had to read it pretty fast, since a lot of women in here want to see it -- so it's now making the rounds. (This is a jail whose "library" has not one single book by or about Malcolm X).

There were a lot of things I liked about the paper. It packs a lot of important information very readably into a short space; there are very few publications available with news, information and articles by and about the New Afrikan/Black movement and struggles; and it tells a lot about current white supremacist organizing. It was really great to read the statements by and about the New York 8+, the Ohio 7 and Tim Blunk and Susan Rosenberg. I'm already looking forward to the next issue, to read about Black Nation Day and other NAPO activities.

The reason that I'm writing to you is to raise for discussion something that I found to be a serious and consistent political problem in the articles by the DTTK! staff, and particularly the editorial: a failure to support the struggle of Black people for self-determination -- the right of New Afrikan/Afro-American people to land and independence. As a result of this failure to support self-determination, I think the paper also suffers from a weakness in failing to wage a direct struggle against white supremacy.

These political problems are clearest in your editorial, because there, where you put forward your organization's politics most fully, you define the struggle as "against this racist system." Although you talk about "exposing the true nature of the U.S.," you never say what that is -- i.e., colonialism, the oppression of nations, and white supremacy. (The other reason this political position in the editorials is so stark is because it sits on the same page with the NAPO article, which does argue for self-determination as the strategy to defeat colonialism and white supremacy.)

Without this anti-imperialist basis, the politics of many of your articles about the klan and killer cops seem to me to rest largely on moral outrage at the magnitude of white supremacist violence and organizing, and at the complicity of the police with white supremacist organizations. While I'm not arguing against passion and outrage, I do think that in order to organize other white people to join in fighting white supremacy, you have to organize them to support the right of the New Afrikan struggle to self-determination, human rights and self-defense -- the struggle for power that leads and directs all effective efforts against white supremacy, the klan and killer cops. Politically, this is the source of our militancy much more than our moral outrage. (I'm also not at all sure I agree with the implication in your editorial that fascism is imminent -- but that's for some future discussion).

Because this is consistently missing from your articles, a reader of DTTK! could end up somewhat confused as to what JBAKC's strategy is to defeat white supremacy and racism. Reading the paper, you can become somewhat overwhelmed by the rise of white supremacy, and

"underwhelmed" about the potential for actually fighting it. (One small example: in the article about Chicago, the brief historical section completely omits the history of tremendous strength and militancy of both the Black community and revolutionary Black organizations in Chicago -- the BPP and the Black Curtain action of 1967, to name only two examples. Because of this, the article is one-sided -- what basis is there to expect any effective response or strategy to defeat white supremacy and racist attacks in Chicago? None, if the history of Black people in fighting for human rights and self-determination is ignored.)

Where more of an anti-imperialist strategy based in the fight for self-determination comes through is in the NAPO article by Chokwe Lumumba and, from Northamericans, the RGR communique and the statements from captured resistance fighters. Perhaps people would want to study the lines of the NAPO article and the communique, and compare those to the JBAKC editorial, to see if people agree that the lines are different; and that there is a strategic difference between supporting self-determination and fighting "this racist system." I want to emphasize (although I think it should be clear) that I am not talking here about armed struggle -- that's not the issue I think JBAKC should be about. I'm talking about support for land and independence for the New Afrikan/Afro-American Nation, which I do think JBAKC should be about.

As I said earlier, I think most of the articles from JBAKC avoid taking on the struggle against white supremacy -- which we all know from long experience is one of the toughest to do right. One very clear example, I think, is in your article about the Iron Fist. There, you attribute the lack of support for the Lebanese people to people in the U.S. being "lulled" by the ins and outs of diplomacy. I disagree -- I think white supremacy and zionism among white people as a whole and within the Northamerican progressive movements is a much more relevant reason for the lack of protest and solidarity, and must be confronted head-on and struggled against. Your article implies that a sizable body of anti-zionist sentiment exists, but that it has been "lulled" -- do you really think this is true? Also -- are you talking about white people or Third World people? (Just a minor side-note -- I think that one clear lesson of the January 20, 1981 anti-klan demo in D.C. was that the clearest fight against zionism is not contradictory to broad mass organizing.)

I hope that you will discuss these issues seriously, and write back to us soon. I think they qualify as what might be called "burning issues." Like others in the movement, I participated almost ten years ago in the opportunism and liquidation of support for self-determination that was known as the Hard Times Conference, and walked away from it believing very strongly that any rise of opportunism on the issue of support for the right of oppressed nations to self-determination will, unchecked, undermine and destroy the principles and revolutionary potential of our movement. I think JBAKC is one of the most important mass efforts our movement has tried to produce -- and I think it should support self-determination and fight white supremacy.

In solidarity,

Laura Whitehorn

Alan Berkman

cc: NAPO