

On White Radicalism

Black Action Movement

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Introduction

There can be no revolutionary practice without revolutionary theory.

The two articles which follow are an initiation and invitation to the REVOLUTIONARY FORUM IN KALAMAZOO.

The first, by the Kalamazoo BLACK ACTION MOVEMENT, is a critique of white radicals by black militants: the actions of white “radicals” are not revolutionary actions; they are not actions which emerge from revolutionary theory.

The second is a self-critique by the Committee on Higher Education (CHE), a gang with an analysis, a grouplet with a theory.

These are not the only parts of the Kalamazoo movement. Critiques, and self-critiques, of other groups will be published in future issues of Black & Red.

The purpose of the REVOLUTIONARY FORUM is not to publish the histories of radical groups; this is the purpose of bourgeois historians. The purpose of the FORUM is to analyze the limitations of past actions IN ORDER TO DEFINE THE PRESENT SITUATION, and to define the present situation IN ORDER TO MOVE BEYOND IT in such a way as “to create at long last a situation which goes beyond the point of no return.”

On White Radicalism

One act of rebellion does not assure the revolution, especially not an isolated personal act. Hopefully, the radicals who now “exist” in America understand the importance of this sentence. Yet, in looking around at the “New Left,” one often wonders if they do. One also wonders whether the self-appointed, self-annointed revolutionaries really understand the revolutionary dynamics that they have helped to set in motion.

In looking at the “culture cults” that have begun to assert themselves, the question arises as to their purpose, both explicit and implicit. That is, are they really revolutionary or, in fact, counter-revolutionary? It appears to me that most of the so-called radicals in America are simply being victimized by their own “cultural nihilism.” I say cultural nihilism because it appears that their force is, in essence, consigned to a slow death.

It is the business of the revolutionaries to set the stage for revolution. This means, among other things, hard, serious work. One of their most important tasks is to politicize the masses, not to further alienate them. Can today’s radicals truly say that they are doing the former? It appears that they are helping to isolate themselves, which makes the job of the Establishment that much easier.

To begin with, a revolutionary situation comes into existence “when a society is ill-at-ease with itself and when established values, legitimacy and authority are beginning to be seriously questioned.” It is then the business of the revolutionaries to confront this authority in a manner which is designed to gain support for their cause. The question now becomes, does a simple rejection of Western culture, values and ideas constitute a serious confrontation which will gain support? In itself, No! In many cases this simply will attract most of society’s deviants who are not interested in working for anyone. What is desperately needed is a program and a theoretical foundation.

The lack of a meaningful program is presently exemplified by the present confusion of issues, the stop-start quality of the movement and the lack of a realistic analysis concerning priorities.

Radical students are presently being victimized by these kinds of mistakes. It may be a function of many things, but a most obvious cause is a misunderstanding of the historical process (if they have one at all) and, related to this, no knowledge of the nature of American society. These lacks have combined to produce the Vietnam issue, the draft, the issue of making the university relevant to the needs of students and, of course, just lately, the issue of police brutality. All of these issues are outgrowths of the American system; symptoms, as it were, of a more fundamental fountainhead—Capitalism. This is not to say that none of them are important. It is only to point out that they have, as an origin, the American System, and it is to an understanding of this that radicals need to address themselves.

It now of course appears that all one would need is a basic understanding of Marxism and he would be well-equipped with the bare essentials. This, however, is not the case at all. It may very well be that Marxism gives one an analysis of this system, but it certainly does not end there. I believe that there are certain fundamental problems inherent in attempting to apply Marxism to the American scene—the most important being the obvious racism of the American people, e.g., white workers. This has proven to be an almost insurmountable obstacle, and has simply “bogged” radicals down while they were attempting to arrive at a solution. Racism is an integral aspect of the western world. Ignoring it or subordinating it to other issues does not diminish its effectiveness; it simply renders one less effective. The problem becomes one of analysis and theory.

This lack of analysis and theory has put many white radicals at a clear disadvantage: they are unable to liberate themselves, let alone the masses.

To state more clearly what I am getting at, let me be more explicit. Earlier I stated that racism is an integral part of the western world, that there have been and are victims and victimizers, and both have been dehumanized in their respective fashions. Given the pervasive nature of racism, all have in one way or another been victimized. This is important because there should be no illusions as to who needs “help.” White radicals must therefore purge themselves of the effects of racism if they are to be of any “help” to anyone. That is, they must deal directly with racism and not its effects. The war in Vietnam is an effect of a racist society, the draft is an effect of a racist nation, Universities are tools in the hands of racists; all of these are simply aspects of racism, nothing else. To deal with these issues with something else in mind is romanticism. But this, I think, characterizes a considerable number of those who call themselves radicals. They view revolution in a very romantic fashion. They do not seem to understand what is really at stake, that is, they like being labeled “radicals,” yet have formulated nothing which makes them deserve such a title.

Having posters of Mao, Che and Malcolm makes one nothing. Having read Fanon, Che, Marcuse and Debray only allows one aptly to quote authors on the surface. Revolution means, among other things, proselytizing the masses, increasing their revolutionary consciousness, which again means hard, hard work; it does not mean quoting what you have read but putting it to use. Revolution does not mean long hair or “dropping out”, for that can, in itself, simply become counter-revolutionary. Calling something a revolution which is non-programmatic and has no content is simply self-disillusionment, which can also become counter-revolutionary.

What white radicals are faced with is, first, a therapeutic process of introspection and then, secondly, a realistic analysis of what they are about. Only then can they begin to talk seriously

of revolution, and that is only a small beginning. America is a racist society for many reasons, one of which is to prevent an alliance between Black and white from becoming a reality. This has historically been the case. It is equally historically obvious that black revolutionaries cannot align themselves with racist liberal quasi-revolutionaries. Sellout has always been a problem and will continue to be, but unrealistic alliances only ask for it.

What, then, is necessary? Radicals must begin to ask very serious questions about themselves, their respective “movements,” this society, and only then can we seriously entertain the “notion” of Revolution.

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