

Letters

Various Authors

1969

Brothers,

I was dismayed, but not overly surprised, upon reading William Spencer Leach's article ["The White Left—Serious or Not?" FE #70, January 9–22, 1969]. Brother Bill has made several good points and suggestions.

He is right in the need for "white revolutionaries" to work in factories (and in fields, I might add). He's also correct in his call for going into churches with the Word; some of the most important work can be done by going into "straight" gatherings.

But the overall attitude taken in the article showed a serious lack of perception. The brother has looked superficially at the white movement and judged it without closer examination of the problems inherent in it.

It cannot be denied that an important aspect of the dynamic black movement that has recently emerged is the attempt to create a sense of identity with, and pride in, blacks as a group.

This has been done by affirming "Black is Beautiful," afro hairstyles and African dress, black history courses, and the teaching of Swahili, to mention only a few parts of the movement.

This aspect of the black liberation struggle is the result of non-acceptance by white America even when blacks emulated that society's values and customs.

It is, more importantly, a final realization of the absolute corruption of that society's values and directions.

In the same way realization of the pervasive corruption of white America has caused youth, especially educated white youth, to seek an alternative.

That alternative has not immediately appeared as revolutionary struggle because white youth can too easily fall back into and be accepted by white America.

The alternative for white youth must, as a result of lack of direct pressure (or relative lack of pressure—there is the draft of course) and a certain corruption of cooperative instincts through years of "middle class," competitive living and upbringing, be preceded by a freeing of the mind and spirit.

This accounts for the widespread emphasis on drugs, sex, costumes, and music. It is a creation of a separate, alternative, culture which gives white "revolutionaries" a sense of cohesion and identity at the same time it is freeing them from years of ingrained constraint.

David Sole
Ann Arbor

To the Editor:

William Leach, in his article "The White Left—Serious Or Not?" (FE Jan. 9th) deals with a problem that faces all revolutionaries: How can we organize the working class to move against capitalism, abolish it, take state power, and institutionalize democracy, not for a minority of rich whites, but for the majority of working Americans?

He suggests to the Young Socialist Alliance that we do deep organizing among poor whites by living and associating with them. Mr. Leach specifically excludes anti-war work, demonstrations, and defense of victimized revolutionists as being activity not worthy of priority.

Experience has shown that when radicals have attempted to organize poor whites, like the SDS project in Chicago, they have ended up doing glorified social work, helping to solve some of the problems their constituents faced but not leading them to revolutionary conclusions. This does not mean that poor (working-class) whites are doomed to inaction forever, but the main things that are going to move them in a revolutionary direction are the contradictions inherent in capitalism, not organizing them around reformist social issues.

The ruling class can not retain its power and privilege unless the economic machine, which it is tied to, continues to expand and exploit. Over production is inherent to capitalism. It is only deficitly financed gigantic military budgets—the institutionalization of waste—which affords the system the safety valve it needs to drain off this surplus.

Military spending is—and here is the contradiction—inevitably inflationary. Real wages are cut back forcing the working class out of its twenty year slumber. Black workers, the most exploited section of the working class, the victims of centuries of racist oppression are not merely stirring—they are aroused.

Other sections of the working class will become aroused if the economic gains they had to struggle to achieve are cut away, but this is exactly what the American ruling class is going to have to do to finance the war, compete with its rivals in other industrialized countries, and cushion the growing monetary crisis. This is true because the relatively high wage of the American worker is based not only on struggle.

It has its roots in the superiority of U.S. technology to that of Europe and Japan, a superiority which is rapidly diminishing. When workers move into struggle it will then be the duty of revolutionaries to concertedly merge with them.

Today it is the exploited population of Vietnam who have made their fight the focal point of the world revolution—the front line of the battle between the oppressed and the oppressor—between socialism and capitalism.

Revolutionaries all over the world, but especially in the United States, are measured by their response to the Vietnam war. The Vietnam Courier, the organ of the NLF, pleads frequently for bigger American anti-war demonstrations. The Young Socialist Alliance has been, as William Leach knows, the backbone of the American anti-war movement.

This movement has brought out hundreds of thousands into the streets. It has exposed U.S. foreign policy and contributed to the radicalization of a whole generation. Moreover, it has broken the back of the witch hunt and generally shaken American politics loose from the overwhelming stagnancy of the 1950s.

On a world scale it has given impetus to the colonial revolution and rekindled anti-capitalist fervor in Western Europe and Japan. Foremost, of course, was the French revolt sparked by a demonstration of students at Nanterre in solidarity with the Tet Offensive. This spark eventually ignited ten million workers in a general strike the likes of which have never been seen before in world history. But for the absence of a mass revolutionary party, the revolt would have culminated in a Socialist France.

It is necessary for revolutionaries to recognize situations in which sections of the working class can be set in motion against the system. The extension of the anti-war movement into the ranks of the U.S. Armed Forces, a working class grouping, is illustrative of this approach. As we said before, Black people are a section of the working class now in motion against the system. Black YSAers intervene in this struggle with revolutionary socialist ideas just as all YSAers take revolutionary ideas into the anti-war movement. The fight for Black self-determination—Black Control of the Black Community—and defense of the Vietnamese are inherently anti-capitalist.

It is in these arenas where the main bout is taking place. Mr. Leach suggests that we ignore these struggles. As an alternative he poses a vague conception of organizing poor whites. To shift our orientation to comply with his suggestion would be backing away from the real struggles. Likewise, although individual YSAers are active in their unions, a concentration on that activity at this juncture would be premature and therefore a relatively inefficient use of our resources.

Mr. Leach looks favorably on the YSA's form of organization as being serious in contrast to the infantilism and anarchy prevalent in other tendencies.

What he fails to understand is that the YSA's organizational principles (democracy in decision making, unity in carrying out those decisions) flow from its politics. Serious revolutionary politics by their very nature require serious concerted activity on the part of those who put those politics into action.

Peter Herreshoff, Michael Smith
Detroit Young Socialist Alliance

Dear Fifth Estate:

William Leach has defined the job of we white "lefties" or "liberals" or "subterraneans" with great lucidity. (FE issue Jan. 9-22) It is one of the most perceptive and motivating chunks of thought from a black writer since *Soul on Ice*.

Do what he says to do. He is so right that I do not even begrudge the *Inner City Voice* not sending me my issues.

To rob the *Fifth Estate* is a rotten, crummy, sophomoric trick. The bandits should have a campaign to raise the money they took. They should repay the money with interest.

Your friend,
Cella Alderson

Editors' Note: The *Inner City Voice* has not published since June 1968, but a new issue is about to be published. Also, our bandits expanded their life of crime and were arrested for armed robbery in Dearborn.

To the Editors:

After reading William Spencer Leach's article last issue about revolutionaries, I got so hiped up I had to write this letter.

I'm a white cat and I agree with Mr. Leach 100%. It seems like every young motherfucker is going around talking shit about some sort of revolution. But when you ask him to tell you the plan you find that he can't tell you shit.

If he has a plan the odds are that there aren't ten people (white) to be found that will follow through on his plan.

Everyone seems to have something to bitch about, but that's all they do. Cats all over are turning to drugs and shit, yelling revolution, cursing and doing all sorts of gross shit.

All this crap is just making the straight cats look and wonder (laugh?) as to what the fuck is coming off. The funny thing is that the straight dude thinks that all the noise means something.

The funnier thing is that the so-called white revolutionaries believe that they are accomplishing something.

I know it sounds cool as hell to talk about "Che" and all of the other cats that got something done, but goddamn man, why bullshit yourself about a revolution that is no nearer now than it was when Elvis was twisting his hips and it was "in" on the block to wear your hair in a chick's ass?

Hurray for the Black Panthers for working on getting their people together.

Jerry Shewskenko

Dearborn Hts.

Editors' Note: The following letter was smuggled out of the Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri stockade by two brothers currently being held as political prisoners. It was brought to us by a relative of one of the men who is from the Detroit area and was a *Fifth Estate* reader (our paper is barred from stockades by Army orders).

We wish the brothers strength in their ordeal and aspire to keep the faith they have placed in those of us on the outside.

We write this letter to you Brothers and Sisters to let you know that you're not alone and also to make us feel that we're not alone in our struggle against suppression.

Locked behind barbed wire, prisoners of war, we keep on smiling because we know there is much revolutionary work going on outside,

Everyone is doing their job to smash and take over the fascist government which overpowers us at this time.

Here, under lock and key, we are not as free to do as much work as we would like. Still and all we do our best to clear the minds of the young men coming from brain washing training and rehabilitation films.

We are ready to die for the revolution as any freedom loving person would do. We are ready to burn the nation down and build it up again to live in peace. We are ready to help any brother or sister who is in need of help.

We are serving time right now for out and out refusing to serve under a fascist government's army. What we're really trying to say is that we are ready for peace and freedom...NOW!

Brothers and Sisters, we plead with you, keep on pushing and soon the people will dance in the streets. All of our children will be able to play in the meadows without the fear and paranoia which exists in the present society. With everyone doing their own little bit we will overcome.

We would like to hear the news of what is happening on the outside but in the situation that we're in now we can not receive any printings which state truth and honesty:

These are all labeled under the classification of subversive.

So for the time being we'll manage to get along with our faith in you, Brothers and Sisters, to carry us through this temporary hassle.

Peace and Love

the Stockade Revolutionists

fifth Estate

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