

Repression Escalates on Panthers

Fifth Estate Collective

1969

NEW YORK—As part of a nationwide conspiracy to smash the Black Panther Party, 21 New York Panther members were arrested on charges of conspiracy April 2 in a 5 a.m. roundup.

According to New York District Attorney Frank Hogan, the arrests thwarted a Black Panther plot to blow up various parts of the city on the following day, including Macy's, Alexander's, Korvette's, Bloomingdale's and Abercrombie & Fitch. The indictment also accused the Panthers of having plotted to sabotage a section of New Haven Railroad track.

As a final perverse gesture, the Panthers were allegedly going to dynamite the Bronx Botanical Gardens.

Both the New York *Daily News* and the New York *Post* took advantage of the indictment to speculate on the source of the Panthers' "plentiful funds."

According to the *Daily News*, the paradigm of journalistic virtue, the funds "are believed to come mainly from Red Cuba."

But according to the *Post*, the money is actually from Communist China and only funneled to the Panthers through the Cuban Mission to the United Nations.

In spite of all this income from suspect sources, 15 Panther members are still in jail (6 others are being sought). Those in jail are unable to meet the ransom, totaling \$2,100,000, which was set by the court for the 21.

If there is any conspiracy associated with the indictment of the 21, it is a conspiracy of the Justice Department, the New York prosecutor's office, the police, and other city pig forces.

There have been over 60 charges against the New York Panthers in the last ten months, but not a single conviction has been obtained. No matter how absurd the charge, New York courts have set impossibly high bails, which keep Panthers in jail for months at a time.

Contributions to the Black Panther Legal Defense Fund can be sent to Box 1224, Brooklyn, New York, 11202.

In other anti-Panther actions, 78 Chicago police officers assisted by federal agents seized three Chicago Panthers and an innocent bystander on charges of conspiring to obtain automatic weapons.

Police undercover agents had sought out the Panthers and solicited them to buy several submachine guns.

When Merrill Harvey and Michael White, two Panthers, went to check the offer out, they found themselves standing in the middle of the 3300 block of South Stewart, illuminated by floodlights from each end of the block and surrounded by 78 courageous pigs.

Their stalwart leader, Capt. Thomas J. Lyons, head of the Intelligence Division, supervised the entire operation while flying above the scene in a helicopter.

At approximately the same time, police officers scooped up Panther Field Secretary Nathaniel Junior several miles away at a railroad station. Junior was charged with guarding money in a rented locker, supposedly for the purchase of the guns.

Arrested along with Junior was a bystander, William McClinton, Jr., who had made the mistake of standing near Junior and of being black.

Ransom for Harvey and Junior was set at \$75,000. McClinton's bail was at \$65,000 each and ransom on White initially set at \$10,000, but he was later released on his own recognizance.

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In an Illinois county circuit court, Panther Chairman Fred Hampton was found guilty of stealing \$71 worth of ice cream. Hampton was released on \$2,000 bond pending an appeal.

Police charged that Hampton attacked the driver of an ice cream truck while children took the ice cream. Hampton faces 1 to 20 years in prison if the conviction is upheld.

Reacting to the ice cream charge, Hampton said, "I may be a pretty big mother, but I can't eat no 400 ice cream bars."

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Illinois Panther Defense Minister Bobby Rush was arrested April 2 in the suburban town of Robbins, following a shooting between local Robbins youths.

Rush, who was in no way connected with the Robbins shooting incident, had been visiting a friend. He was arrested when he stepped into the village hall and police station, looking for a pay phone.

Rush was charged with unlawful use of a weapon and released on \$10,000 bond.



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