

# Report from Algiers

Kathy Mulherin

1969

(via Dock of the Bay/UPS)

- Eldridge Cleaver is coming home within the year—maybe;
- Kathleen Cleaver gave birth to a baby boy named after black Cuban revolutionary Antonio Maceo;
- The Black Panther Party is setting up centers of information and propaganda distribution in Paris and other European and African centers;
- There may be a “summit meeting” of revolutionary groups in the relatively near future, in which “The Black Panther Party will play a key role;”
- The Chicago Headquarters of the Panther Party was attacked by police who claim they were shot at by armed Panthers. National Chairman Bobby Seale said at a recent press conference that the Chicago Panthers did not provoke attack, that since the Chicago headquarters were entirely covered with plywood it would have been impossible to shoot from the office anyway.

He did say however that Chicago Panthers did “defend themselves against attack from the pigs and that is the policy of the Party—if someone attacks us, we gonna shoot to defend ourselves.”

That’s the latest news from Panther Headquarters in Oakland. David Hilliard, Party Chief of Staff, has just returned from Algiers where he and Minister of Culture Emory Douglas represented National Headquarters at the 12-day Pan-African Cultural Festival.

Hilliard, cool, neat, slim in a tan shirt, trousers, and a big Mao button, held a press conference to report on his trip and to bring word of Cleaver’s willingness to return to the United States, stand trial and go to jail, if convicted.

If American authorities can guarantee that he will be permitted to remain free until he goes to trial, Cleaver will come back and submit to “due process.”

Hilliard said that the Party is planning a massive series of demonstrations to inform the American people of Cleaver’s offer and to generate support for a prompt trial.

Hilliard also said that Kathleen’s baby has been named Antonio Maceo, after a black Cuban hero. Kathleen and the baby are expected to remain abroad with Eldridge and return with him.

In an interview, Hilliard talked about the Pan-African Cultural Festival: “We didn’t go over there to dance or sing songs—we went there to build alliances with revolutionary people.”

There were, he said, many people there more interested in cultural nationalism, and some of them were clearly racist: “but we didn’t have time for the racists.”

Evidently, there is considerable confusion abroad about the real nature of the Panther Party, because Hilliard said he encountered people who thought the panther Party was racist. (Masai and Bobby Seale had encountered the same confusion on a tour of the Scandinavian countries recently).

“The first night we were there, we showed the movie ‘Off the Pigs’ at our center and Algerian President Boumedienne got up and asked why there were no whites in it. So we explained about our alliances with white revolutionary groups, and the next day we showed some movies to illustrate that—like we showed a movie about our alliance with the Young Patriots (a white street gang in Chicago). The Algerian students—they are really revolutionary—after they found that out, they hung around our center all the time.

“But we don’t want to go to no more cultural conferences, I’ll tell you that. We’d like to have a summit meeting of revolutionary people. I think the Black Panther Party will play a key role in deciding whether there will be a conference like that.”

Hilliard thought perhaps some of the confusion about the international and class orientation of the Party might have been created by Stokely Carmichael, who has heavily emphasized cultural nationalism and race in his conversations with European and African leftists.

During the conference, Carmichael announced that his attacks on the Panther Party were badly timed, and were not calculated to aid the McClellan committee in its investigation of the Party. Asked what Stokely did have in mind, Hilliard shrugged and replied: “I don’t know—I think he’s crazy.”

The misinformation about the Party and the intense interest in their activities by revolutionary groups has persuaded the Panthers to set up informational centers around the world. One has already been established in Paris, and others will appear in various parts of Europe and Africa.

Eldridge is now directing the Afro-American Cultural Center in Algiers. All contributions of books, posters, newspapers reflecting the struggle for liberation in America will be gratefully received. Address packages to Afro-American Cultural Center, Rue Mourad Didouche, Algiers, Algeria.

# **fifth Estate**

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1969

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/86-august-21-september-3-1969/report-from-algiers>  
Fifth Estate #86, August 21-September 3, 1969

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