

Black Writers at McGill

Congress develops articulate ideology

Eeeny, meeny, miny moe

catch a whitey by the throat

if he hollers

cut it.

MONTREAL (CUP) — Black rhetoric, so popular because it's vicious and so vicious because it's popular, threatened to sweep the Black Writers' Congress at McGill into the dank, mysterious regions of Lethe.

But amid the shouting, exclusion and pro forma attacks at whitey, began to grow an articulate, coherent position of black strength.

The conference developed as the newly emergent black consciousness has developed. At the beginning was the black consolidation: Black caucuses, blanket condemnation of whites ("every white man, objectively speaking, is my oppressor" — Dr. Walter Rodney). White credentials were checked closely, black not at all. The press was relegated to an overhanging balcony, and not permitted to use television cameras or tape recorders.

Rodney spoke of oppression and undefined revolution. Whites must kill other whites to win the respect of blacks.

Michael X, a black muslim from Britain, called white whites in the audience "pigs" and said their very presence inhibited his thought and delivery.

Ted Jones, an American poet, read his powerful poetry, a savage, tormented cry of oppression.

Rocky Jones, a black SNCC worker in Halifax, said he was tired of speaking to whites and told blacks to form a common bond to fight white racism.

James was the only thoughtful and restrained speaker of the early sessions. He told of bourgeois control of information, a control that revolution would break. This control of information, he said, is the major obstacle to the development of a better world. James, a revolutionary historian and a long advocate of black power, uses African history as a guideline for a new Marxist revolution.

After three days of press coverage and white audience tension, the conference almost fell into the black uber alles pit. The media tried to be restrained but failed. Blacks were resentful of the treatment and tightened up.

Then, in quick succession, came Harry Edwards, James Forman and Stokely Carmichael. The three took the consciousness and tried to guide it on a new path. The path to disciplined revolution rather than reflexive destruction.

Edwards, a sociology professor at San Jose State and leader of the black athletes' Olympic boycott, said blacks were confronted with a system "that turns out Hitlers. . .and they're not all white."

He attacked forms of protest designed to single out individuals when it was an entire system that must be overturned. He defined the black man's enemy as the perpetrator of the system and stressed the need for education about this "genocidal system."

The sociologist said the system turns out Hitlers in much the same way it turns out "Chevrolets, Jaguars and hydrogen bombs."

SNCC's James Forman took the process a bit further.

Forman based his discussion on Franz Fanon, "a black Che Guevara", who isolated lack of a revolutionary socialist ideology, rather than colonial control, as the greatest danger facing Africa.

Forman hit out at black bourgeois leaders in Africa and said legitimate independence must be won by long violent struggle against the oppressor state and not negotiated by bourgeois spokesmen who represent the opportunistic minority.

He denounced the dilution of black power to black capitalism and ended by reading the revolutionary manifesto adopted last June by SNCC. The manifesto deals with Fanon's pan-Africanism.

Carmichael sensed the mood of the sessions and bowed briefly to that mood. At times, he was the old Stokely. The Stokely that delivers the blow to whites that every black man wants to deliver but doesn't quite succeed in doing. There were the usual lines about taking power, grabbing guns and fiery destruction. The rhetoric is the credential. Everybody before had simply shouted their credentials. Carmichael just flashed his and went to work.

He first differentiated between exploitation, non-racist oppression and colonization (racist oppression). Second, he explained all blacks are Africans whether or not they live in Africa and must deliberately turn to that culture and use it as a unifying tool.

Third, colonization makes the victim hate himself and ape his masters — a divisive process. "We

cannot let white people interpret our struggle for us," he said.

When all this is realized the process of education begins, the stage most dangerous for the oppressor. The oppressor will then react in a three stage sequence; he will at first be nice, then employ agents provocateurs, and lastly send in the troops. "The three Ms" says Carmichael, are "missionary, money and marines."

The process of cleansing themselves of self-hatred sometimes leads to violence against the oppressor but this violence "must be directed."

"We must begin to develop undying love for ourselves — we must develop an ideology to fight racism and capitalism.

It wasn't Carmichael's analysis that was important. Whether it be right or wrong or just another stage in his search, the impact was enormous. Suddenly, blacks in the audience, perhaps a little bored by the continual bitch, rose to cheer an ideology, a framework for action.

The conference had been neatly tied up.

It started with consolidation: it ended with a call for action, a movement on disciplined lines. It became the black revolution in microcosm, a lab demonstration of what has happened in the United States over the period of years.

Whites in the audience relaxed, they felt they were no longer dealing with something they couldn't understand, a vicious racist revolution they couldn't join because of their skin color. A thing they were afraid of because they were powerless to cope with whiteness and blackness.

Radicals relaxed because here was another revolution they could understand and join. Maybe.

Other whites relaxed because the bogeyman of racism, maybe even communism. That at least they have been dealing with all their lives.

But they don't realize how much more dangerous it has become.

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