

MALCOLM

X

by **MICHAEL BANDA**

'... it is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks. It is legal and lawful to own a shotgun or a rifle. We believe in obeying the law.'



MALCOLM X was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1925. He was one of 10 children. At an early age he came to know the lot of the poor Negro in capitalist-segregated America.

His father was bludgeoned to death by racists and run over by a street car in Lansing, Michigan.

His mother went mad as a result of this tragic blow and became a permanent inmate of a mental home.

Malcolm's comment on this was prophetic: 'I was only six years old at the time, but I had already learned that being a Negro in this country was a liability.'

In 1945 he was caught doing a burglary and got 8 to 10 years in the state prison in Boston.

After six years he was paroled and went to live with his brothers.

Mystical creed

There he came into contact with and was won over to the mystical reactionary creed of Elijah Muhammad.

To thousands of displaced and frustrated Negroes from the rural South trying to eke out an existence in the urban ghettos of the north, the petty-bourgeois creed of the Black Moslems, cunningly combining abject political passivity of the Negroes as a whole with the promise of individual violence, the apocalyptic doom of the white race and a separate state for the Negroes has a certain plausibility. Malcolm was not an exception.

In 1962 he featured in the infamous trial concerning the shooting of seven unarmed Black Moslems by the Los Angeles police. One was killed, one maimed and six injured. The police were exonerated.

This prompted Malcolm to

declare that 'Mississippi was anywhere south of the Canadian border'.

Malcolm became a trusted confidant of Elijah Muhammad. He was even chosen to negotiate an alliance with the racist Lincoln Rockwell's Nazi movement. Rockwell was an honoured guest at Black Moslem rallies.

The assassination of President Kennedy suddenly terminated the close relationship between Malcolm and Muhammad when Malcolm dismissed the President's murder as a 'case of chickens coming home to roost'.

Malcolm's break with Muhammad marked a new point in his life. It coincided with a tremendous upsurge in the Negro struggles for civil liberties and integration, an idea which he originally abhorred.

Independent action

In 1963-64 Negroes were beginning to proclaim openly the idea of independent political action.

Malcolm intuitively recognised the importance of this demand: 'The Negro will never be politically mature as long as he refers to himself as a Republican or Democrat,' he said.

However, Malcolm maintained an equivocal attitude to the setting up of political parties. His opinion on the Black Moslems has been more than confirmed by recent events:

'The only thing that held the movement together was the image of morality reflected by Mr. Muhammad. The Black Moslem movement will crumble because the organisation is held together by coercion by a Gestapo-type police force within its own ranks.'

It is interesting to note that the Socialist Workers Party—an uncritical supporter of Malcolm—never at any time dared to criticise this reactionary movement, its ideals or its organisational set-up.

After a trip to Mecca last year, Malcolm abandoned his racist ideas in favour of a more moderate, but just as utopian, black nationalism.

In the latter part of last year Malcolm moved further away from Muhammad when he set up a new organisation, 'the Organisation of Afro-American Unity.'

Malcolm began to urge his followers to turn to Africa and the African bourgeois nationalist leaders as a source of strength and dignity.

This was an evasion of the real problems facing the Negro workers and an illusion. While denouncing the Civil Rights Bill as a 'counterfeit cheque' he made no attempts to organise any coherent political opposition to the ruling parties.

Reliance on UN

About the 1964 elections, he did little or nothing. Instead, he began relying on the United Nations as a means for securing equality for the Negroes. This was a hopeless prospect.

He never broke completely with the ideology of Elijah Muhammad. In a statement printed in full by 'The Militant', the SWP newspaper, without comment on March 23, 1964, he said:

'I am and always will be a Muslim. My religion is Islam.'

I still believe that Mr. Muhammad's analysis of the problem is the most realistic, and that his solution is the best one. This means that I too believe the best solution is complete separation, with our people going back home, to our own African homeland.'

Although this statement was made before Malcolm X set up the Organisation of Afro-American Unity, he never repudiated it.

Despite all this, Malcolm was a paradoxical figure.

Enigmatic in his attitude to institutions and unpredictable in his choice of weapons, he made many friends and created many enemies.

His uncompromising attitude towards Negro self-defence ('When our people are being bitten by dogs, they are within their rights to kill those dogs'), his forthright condemnation of police brutality all over the States and his readiness to co-operate with all civil rights groups in struggling for equality and integration earned him the undying hostility of his late friends in Muhammad's Mosques. He became the frequent target of Black Moslem goon squads.

Bloody battles

In June 1964 a bodyguard armed with rifles escorted him to the court house in New York because of a threat by Black Moslems to shoot him.

Before that, followers of Muhammad tried to threaten him in a tunnel near Logan airport but fled when his bodyguards pulled their guns.

This was typical of a series of bloody and recurring street battles between the two groups.

Finally, his enemies—and it is not difficult to guess who did it—killed him.

This must serve as an ominous warning to Negro militants and revolutionary socialists throughout North America—and in

'... the time has come for the American Negro to fight back in self-defence whenever and wherever he is being unjustly and unlawfully attacked.'



Britain.

The assassination of Malcolm X is wholly foul, barbarous and criminal and reflects the base hatred of the white ruling class and its black allies against the Negro workers and urban poor.

It represents the reflex action of a desperate ruling class to repress the most oppressed and exploited section of the American people, in order to preserve its wealth and power.

The fact that a Negro was the assassin makes no difference. Whoever did it it is impossible to remain silent about the role of the Black Moslems.

The Black Moslems represent paradoxically the vanguard of reaction in the Northern States; the black equivalent of the white Ku Klux Klan.

Enemies

Their policy of separatism is the obverse of the segregation policies of the Southern reactionaries.

There is nothing progressive about them. They are completely reactionary, indeed counter-revolutionary.

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Cromer's advice recalls

1931 crisis

By **JOHN CRAWFORD**

THE storm aroused by Lord Cromer's advice to Callaghan to cut government expenditure shows the deep divisions within the ruling class. There are uncertainties about how best to attack the workers as the crisis facing British capitalism intensifies.

The 'lefts', like Foot, who call for Cromer's resignation as Governor of the Bank of England, are evading their responsibility for the disaster looming over the labour movement as a result of Wilson's policies.

The Third Earl of Cromer can speak on financial matters with some authority. He represents the powerful banking house of Baring Brothers.

His grandfather was the leader of the group of financiers who grabbed control of Egypt 90 years ago. When military conquest had secured the smooth flow of profit from the Nile to the City of London, Cromer was made Viceroy.

Representative

But the present Earl does not only speak as a British banker. He also conveys the wishes of the international financial powers to the Labour leaders.

When the crisis hit sterling in November, Cromer organised the 3,000 million dollar support for the pound from his friends in Zurich, Paris and New York.

Now, he reminds Wilson that these gentlemen are not philanthropists. They were placated by the decision to delay the rise in pensions.

Labour vote did not fall so much).

The new government imposed the cuts demanded by the bankers. The misery and humiliation of the Means Test for the dole rolled over the lives of millions of workers.

It took 14 years for the Labour Party to recover from this betrayal. Now, after another 20, the spirit of MacDonald is once again abroad.

The Wilson government faces its financial crisis with as little intention of fighting capitalism as MacDonald. Now, as in 1931, the banks demand attacks on working-class conditions.

In 1965, the movement is on the brink of another disaster as the leaders drift towards effective coalition with the employing class.

Whatever their differences, Wilson, Callaghan and Brown are just as prepared to placate the financiers and monopolists at the expense of workers as MacDonald.

Decisive differences

But there is a decisive difference between the situation today and in 1931. Five years behind MacDonald lay the smashing of the General Strike, when he joined the Tories and Liberals.

Any resistance to his betrayal which might have been possible was nullified by the lunatic leftism of the Communist Party and the confused opportunism of the Independent Labour Party leaders.

In 1965, the trade unions are powerfully organised, despite the treachery of their leaders. A confident, undefeated generation of workers confronts the MacDonalds of today.

The Socialist Labour League must organise that power and arm it with the lessons of Labour's history.

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