'Hoses, guns or mobs won't put down this rebellion'

BLACK MUSLIMS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

don't like to come downtown," he said. "See this? [A black revolver glistened in the street light]. I'm always afraid I'll use it. That's why I'm headin' back uptown 'fore I get in trouble."

As I left, two white men hailed the cab. The driver slammed the door, locked it and gunned the motor. "Goin' home!" he shouted back at them.

"The dirty black bastard!" one of the men mumbled as the cab roared off toward Central Park.

Recently I sat in a Los Angeles courtroom at the trial of 14 Muslims charged with assault and interfering with an officer. They had been involved in an altercation with the police, during which one young Muslim, Ronald Stokes, was shot to death. (I had read the detailed account of the tragedy in the Muslims' newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*. SEVEN UNARMED NEGROES SHOT IN COLD BLOOD BY LOS ANGELES POLICE! the red headline blared. The story charged that the police had entered the Muslims' temple during the fighting.) The courtroom was crowded to capacity with Negroes, not all of them Muslims.

I watched Malcolm X seated in the front row, directly across from the all-white jury. His face was sphinxlike and his eyes never left Officer Donald Weese, the killer of Stokes, from the moment the policeman took the stand until he got off. During the preliminary hearings it had been established that Weese, though he knew the Muslims were unarmed, shot at least four other men besides Stokes and beat another one down with the butt of his gun. The following questions by Attorney Earl Broady and answers from Officer Weese are from the court records of the trial:

Question—Mr. Weese, when you fired at Stokes, did you intend to hit him?

Answer—Yes, I did.

Q—Did you intend to hit him and kill him?

A—Yes. The fact that I shot to stop and the fact that I shot to kill is one and the same, sir. I am not Hopalong Cassidy. I cannot distinguish between hitting an arm and so forth, sir. I aimed dead center and I hoped I hit.

Q—You are saying, sir, to shoot to stop and to shoot to kill is one and the same thing in your mind?

A—That is correct.

Q—Did you feel to protect yourself and your partner it was necessary to kill these men?

A—That is correct, sir.

Leaving the courthouse that evening, I recognized a white reporter who was covering the trial for one of the Los Angeles dailies.

"The Muslims are going to be convicted," he said. I asked him if he thought they were guilty as charged.

"The State has no case, none whatsoever, but they can't afford to lose this one. They've got to get those cops off or the Muslims can sue them for millions," he replied.

That evening I relayed the reporter's beliefs to Malcolm X, who said, "Oh, he told you the truth, brother. He was an honest devil, because that's what will happen—but things won't end there. Believe me."

A few days later I accompanied Malcolm X to Phoenix where Elijah Muhammad discussed the trial with more emotional intensity than I had seen him show before. "Every one of the Muslims," he said, "should have died before they allowed an aggressor to come into their mosque. That's the last retreat they have. They were fearless, but they didn't trust Allah completely. If they had, it would have been a different story. A true Muslim must trust completely in Allah."

Mr. Muhammad was weak from one of his periodic fasts, which had gone on for three days, and every so often spasmodic coughing forced him to leave the room. After each attack he returned to deride the "white devil." Although fatigue slowed his voice, he talked on, about the turmoil in Birmingham and other parts of the South. "There is one thing good about what is happening down there," he said. "The black man at last can see what the white man is really like, what he really feels about him. Birmingham bears witness to the fact that a white man is a devil and can't do right, what with water hoses stripping dresses from our women and our youth being chased and bitten by vicious dogs. At last the black man realizes he must fight for his rights if he is to attain them. The white man is more vicious than the dogs he sets upon us. He is never satisfied with a black man no matter what his position. You can lie down and let your back be his doormat, but soon he'll get tired of that and start kicking you. 'Turn over, nigger! You're layin' on the same side too long,' he'll say."

Before leaving Mr. Muhammad, I asked two questions I had been saving: First, what is salvation for the black man?

"We must accept Islam," he said crisply. "We are the initial people."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because it is something universal, wherein man submits himself completely to God—a black God."

What is your over-all purpose—your goal?

"Universal peace and brotherly love—two things the white man will never be able to accept."

It was nearing plane time. A white-suited chauffeur ushered us out toward Muhammad's limousine. I got in, and through the rear window I could see him and Malcolm X warmly embracing, their cheeks touching as they bade farewell.

Not all of Elijah Muhammad's aims and motives are clear to me. Much of his religious philosophy appears naive and thoroughly confusing. It is obvious from which stratum of Negro society he hopes to draw support for his program: the indigent, unprivileged blacks, those still seeking a messiah to lead them into a promised land of "freedom, justice and equality."

The Muslims insist that only within a separate state can their ultimate goal be achieved. They deride the "passive resistance" preached by Martin Luther King. Malcolm X once said of King's attitude, "There is no philosophy more befitting the white man's tactics for keeping his foot on the black man's neck. If you tell someone he resembles Hannibal or Gandhi long enough, he starts believing it—even begins to act like it. But there is a big difference in the passiveness of King and the passiveness of Gandhi. Gandhi was a big dark elephant sitting on a little white mouse. King is a little black mouse sitting on top of a big white elephant."

But with the passiveness of King and the extremism of Muhammad, the Negro rebellion has come alive. Fire hoses, police dogs, mobs or guns can't put it down. The Muslims, the N.A.A.C.P., the Urban League, Black Nationalist groups, the sit-inners, sit-downers, Freedom Riders and what-have-you are all compelled into a vortex of common protest. Black people who only a few months ago spoke with polite moderation are suddenly clamoring for freedom.

The leaders have lost control; instead of leading the black people they are being pulled along after them, like leaves caught up in the wake of a speeding car. Even Martin Luther King is seeing his nonviolence movement hopelessly swept into a long-fomenting universal revolt. As the Negro pushes on, the resistance of the Deep South will surely stiffen. Violence and chaos are inevitable. Anyone who can't sense it is either naive or afraid to face the uncomfortable fact. Racial strife is possible all over this land. Have we so very quickly forgotten the Harlem, Chicago, Tulsa and Detroit riots in the earlier days of our troubled generation?

"Even here in the North the 'enemy' is plentiful!" screams Malcolm X.

He is right. Because for all the civil rights laws and the absence of Jim Crow signs in the North, the black man is still living the last-hired, first-fired, ghetto existence of a second-class citizen. His children are idling into delinquency and crime; in too many places they attend schools as inferior and as neatly segregated as any in the deepest South. The revolt in Englewood, N.J. against segregated schools there is just as important to the cause as the revolt in Birmingham or Nashville. Truly, there has been no time like this in the U.S. since the Civil War.

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MUHAMMAD'S FAMILY. Elijah Muhammad is still the focus of power, though asthma compels him to live in Arizona. With him here are aides: his wife Clara, sons Elijah Jr. (*far left*) and Herbert (*far right*), his son-in-law Raymond Sharrieff (*second from left*). Grandson Hasan Sharrieff, 20 (*second from right*), is already being given administrative assignments.

'They are not my keeper—but I am their brother'

Most of us are wondering about the "new" Negro—and how he got this way. But he isn't new, and he didn't get this way overnight. He has been stirring for a long time, while his country tucked the Emancipation Proclamation under her head for a pillow and went to sleep. The historic Supreme Court decision of 1954 disturbed her repose, but that was all. Now she has been jolted awake by a black militancy that will surely test her democratic conscience.

I remember once standing in a Paris bar with Todd Webb, a white man, trying to convince a Russian student that Todd and I were truly friends, that we had been so even in America. The Russian only laughed at both of us. "Ha! I read about America, you know. You are together here, but in America you stand far apart. Don't think you fool me."

And how pathetically torn I was trying to defend America against the criticisms of Europeans when papers all over the world carried the story of the lynching of the Negro boy, Emmett Till!

I also recall the time in Washington, D.C. when John Vachon, another white friend, and I walked into a Negro restaurant late one cold night. We were famished, but the owner became abusive and ordered us both out. I tried to get him to sell my friend some ribs. "Not even to take out," he said bitterly. "I'll go *his* people one better."

The times cry out for bold, principled leadership of a kind that has never really been attempted in this country before. After Attorney General Robert Kennedy ran headon into the fanatical opposition of Alabama's Governor George Wallace on the desegregation issue, the President's brother was quoted as saying, "It's like a foreign country. There's no communication. What do you do?"

You keep trying, Mr. Kennedy. You keep going back for more, again and again, until you begin to realize what it is like for a black man to "go slow," to "take it easy" while under the bootheel of a racist like "Bull" Connor. Go down there sometime when the fire hoses are on full blast, when the dogs are snarling and tearing black flesh, when women, men and children are on their knees singing, crying and praying for deliverance from the agony of this brutal land. Then go back and tell the President that if it is greatness he seeks, this indeed is his chance for it.

I have had faith in America for as long as I can remember. But I have also been angry—even bitter. It is now time for America to justify this belief I have in her, to show me I have not believed in vain. I want my children and their children to keep this faith flowing through their veins. But in all honesty I cannot ask of them love for a country incapable of returning their love.

As for the Muslims, I dislike the fact that they exist, but I also feel this way about the N.A.A.C.P., CORE, the Urban League, B'nai B'rith, the Sons and Daughters of Erin or any such group. I deplore the conditions that necessitate their existence. If and when all such organizations feel they can safely fold their tents, I believe the Muslims will begin folding theirs.

Nobody can speed this day any quicker than the White American. He should remember that the main reason for the racial strife throughout the South and parts of the North is the Negro's black skin. The Negro can't change his color; the white man must change his attitude toward that black skin. And the Negro can't go around believing that every white man who does not invite him home to dinner is his enemy.

And I, for one, don't intend to join the Muslims. I sympathize with much of what they say, but I also disagree with much of what they say.

I wouldn't follow Elijah Muhammad or Malcolm X into a Black State—even if they achieve such a complete separation. I've worked too hard for a place in this present society. Furthermore, such a hostile frontier would only bristle even more with hatred and potential violence. Nor will I condemn all whites for the violent acts of their brothers against the Negro people. Not just yet, anyway.

Nevertheless, to the Muslims I acknowledge that the circumstance of common struggle has willed us brothers. I know that if unholy violence should erupt—and I pray it won't—this same circumstance will place me, reluctantly, beside them. Although I won't allow them to be my keeper, I am, inherently, their brother.

Late one evening not long ago Malcolm X and I were driving into New York City from Brooklyn. We were talked out, and I drowsed as he fought the headlight glare of oncoming traffic. Unexpectedly he said, "We sent a little white college girl out of the restaurant in tears today." I listened uneasily, bracing myself for another diatribe against a presumptuous, if well-meaning, "devil."

But Malcolm, speaking with a gentleness he rarely exhibits when discussing whites, hastened to assure me that it was nothing any Muslim had said against her. "She had come in to see if there wasn't something she and her college friends could do to help Muslims and the whites get together," he explained.

"That's nice," I said, pushing up in my seat. "What did you say?"

I am positive he was unaware of the trace of melancholy in his voice as he answered, "I told her that there was no chance—not the ghost of a chance. She started crying, then she turned and went out."

DISTRUST. A Muslim guard frisks a white reporter before letting him into a convention. At religious services F.O.I. searches everybody entering, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.