

Soon after the fatal shooting of two Black Panther leaders in last month's Chicago police raid, an immensely popular Negro entertainer—long a vocal foe of violence and extremism—privately donated \$5,000 to the Black Panther Party.

He specifically earmarked the contribution to the Panthers' much-ballyhooped breakfast-for-ghetto-children program. But it never got there. The check had no sooner been cashed than the money was sent directly to Black Panther national headquarters in Berkeley, Calif., which has a voracious appetite for cash to finance its weekly newspaper and incessant travels by party functionaries around the nation and the world.

The incident is unhappily typical of the new relationship between some liberals, black and white, and the Panthers. Since the Chicago police raid, liberals who question the police tactics in that raid have rushed in with money and kind words for the Panthers. They have been welcomed with open arms by Panther leaders, who do not share the racist contempt for white liberals that distinguishes most other black extremist organizations.

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But the basic deception inherent in the misappropriation of the \$5,000 contribution befouls this relationship between liberals and Panthers. The liberals choose to believe that the Panthers, while outrageously bellicose and obscene in their rhetoric, are really nothing more than a small, badly divided civil rights group under constant police harassment. In truth, they are far more: a well-disciplined and centrally directed party with potential for growth and—most alarming—with a criminal record much longer and stronger than any civil rights record.

The present Panther organization of some 30 chapters and from 1,000 to 1,500 members is down from the peak of a year ago at the Panthers' own choosing—to maintain a tighter discipline. For example, Stokely Carmichael (briefly "prime minister" of the Panthers) and his followers were purged for black racism deviating from Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. A tight central control, formerly maintained by "enforcers" who traveled the country now comes straight from national headquarters.

More than any other black revolutionary organization, the Panthers maintain close ties with overseas

Communist parties. Whether or not they have been the beneficiary of Communist contributions from abroad is a matter of debate, but there is at least suspicion of financial aid from countries that receive regular and unremitting praise in the weekly newspaper, "The Black Panther."

But if civil libertarians can overlook Panther ties with overseas Communist governments, it is hard to see how they can close their eyes to the extensive evidence of Panther criminal records. Nobody knows the full extent of Panther involvement in extortion, robbery, and burglary. The arrest of more than 350 Panthers on criminal charges in 1969 alone barely scratches the surface of suspected Panther participation in unsolved and undetected crime.

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Extortion from white merchants in the ghetto, much of it unreported to authorities, is a regular source of funding in Panther grand strategy. Moreover, there is hard information from former Panthers that bank robberies to obtain funds for the party—in the old Bolshevik tradition of "expropriation"—were planned and executed in 1968 and perhaps into early 1969 (although recently Panther leaders have discouraged such activity).

Nevertheless, so great is the Panther attraction for ghetto capers that known members of the Panthers keep appearing on police blotters for spontaneous non-political crimes. In 1969, for example, Panthers were arrested and charged in major armed robberies in Seattle (March 14), Los Angeles (May 15), Sacramento (July 5), and San Diego (Sept. 21) among many other offenses.

Centrally planned or not, such activity is implicitly condoned by Panther leader Bobby Seale in the peroration of "off the pigs" (translation: kill the cops), the widely-distributed Panther propaganda film:

"The whole black nation has to be put together as a black army, and we gonna walk on this nation, we are gonna walk on this racist power structure, and we gonna say to the whole damned government. 'Stick 'em up, . . . This is a holdup. We come for what's ours.'"

Yet even those liberals aware of this record tend to overlook Panther criminality because of what, since the Chicago police raid, they view as a genocidal conspiracy against the Panthers—the source of the new liberal-Panther alliance.

Red-and-Black Panthers

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