

Wife, Mother and Revolutionary

By Karen Lewis

ALGIERS—Above Kathleen Cleaver's red hair, cut in a huge Afro style, was a picture of a Black Panther Party member framed against a red star.

The living room walls of the Cleavers' apartment on the outskirts of Algiers are covered with similar posters and photos.

There is a poster of Huey Newton (focus of a "Free Huey" campaign) sitting in

a large wicker chair. There's one of a black with a large Afro haircut with the words "Afro-American solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the world." And there are several photos of Bobby Seale, recently sentenced for contempt of court in Chicago, and other Black Panthers.

The recent focus of Kathleen Cleaver's life, however, has been revolutionary only in name.

For a little behind and to

the left of the chair in which she sat, her first child, a son, slept in a low crib. Maceo Cleaver was born last July 28, in Algiers, after she joined her husband Eldridge Cleaver here.

A tall, slim, fair-skinned woman, Kathleen Cleaver was dressed in a gray-green skirt with a long-sleeved brown sweater. The sweater zipped up the front and she had pushed the sleeves up because the room was warm.

See CLEAVER, D3, Col. 1

CLEAVER, From D1

A gas space heater not far from her chair put out enough heat to belie its small size. She lit a cigarette and threw the match in a pottery jar before she explained the baby's name.

"Eldridge named him Maceo. I had planned to name him 'Malcolm Alprentice Dubois' whether he was a boy or a girl. Malcolm for Malcolm X, Dubois for W. E. B. Dubois, and Alprentice after a close friend of Eldridge's who was murdered by the cops in California," she said.

"Maceo was an Afro-Cuban revolutionary, a contemporary of Ioussaint L'Ouverture," she explained.

"He was doing in Cuba what L'Ouverture was doing in Haiti," she said. "He was

a descendant of slaves and knew what freedom was all about.

"So when the other revolutionaries wanted to sign a peace treaty with Spain, he refused. He was with the people. They called him 'The Bronze Titan.' And they fought on. But he died during the revolution and never saw freedom."

Over Maceo's crib dangled a Black Panther button along with other toys. It seemed appropriate for a child with a revolutionary's name.

When I asked whether the baby being named after a Cuban revolutionary had some significance for his father, she shrugged her shoulders.

She answered several questions this way. For, al-

though at ease and ready to talk about social problems, political ideologies or the "secondary role of women in capitalistic societies," she was cautious when talking about her husband and their life in Algiers.

When I asked her if being a mother changed her ideas about revolution or her role

in it, she said "My place is in the revolution. Having a child only makes you think before you act."

About women's place in "the revolution," she replied "quickly," I don't like to make a distinction. No one ever asks what a man's place in the revolution.

"In wartime conditions, women do the jobs of men. But when the war is over, women are expected to return to their secondary positions.

"If women can function in men's roles during war, they can function there all the time. And this viewpoint, women occupying a secondary place in society, is shown to be as fallacious as we always knew it was.

"Everything women do is viewed as secondary in capitalistic society. But in a socialistic society, the labor force needs everybody and therefore women are not looked on as secondary citizens."

Then she added, "Even having a baby is viewed as secondary because men can't do it," said the 24-year-old mother.

She picked up Maceo, now awake, and put him in a walker. And immediately the baby began to teeter about the warm room.

The room was warm in

color as well as heat. Several multicolored rugs of different patterns covered the floor. A large copper tray with a warm arabesque design reflected the light from the gas heater. There was a black sofa with a few black-and-red assorted occasional chairs. There were several books and magazines around the room.

The baby was now occupied with rocking back and forth to the music of an Otis Redding album on the record player. This delighted his mother, who laughed heartily.

Maceo Cleaver stopped, startled by the laughter, then leaned forward and sucked on one of the plastic beads attached to a bar on his walker.

"What kind of society do you want for him?" I asked.

"A perfect one," she said. "There's no point in imagining any other kind, is there?"

The lights went out. She picked up the baby and cuddled him to her as she settled back into the chair. "Circuits overloaded," she said.

The poster with the red star wasn't visible in the darkness. The light from the gas burner silhouetted Kathleen Cleaver and her son: mother focused on child.



Kathleen Cleaver