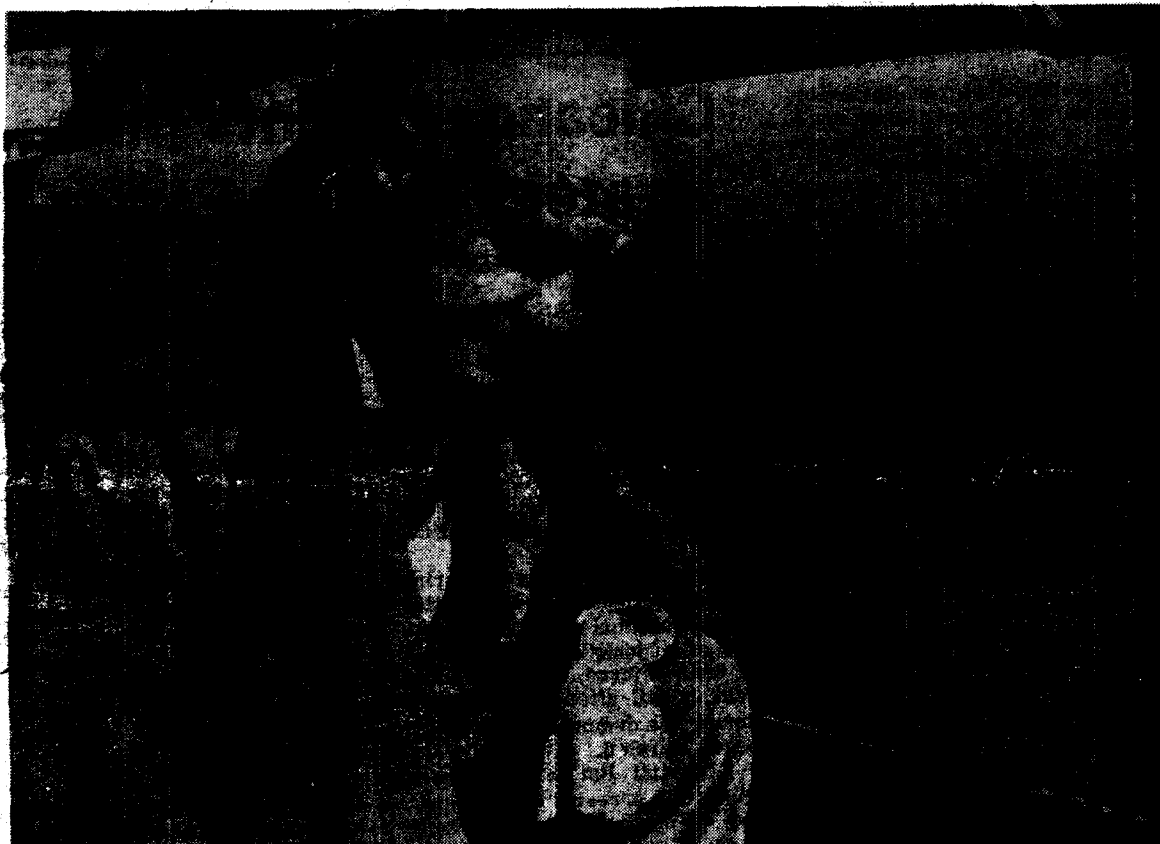


Genet, the Flower Thief, in L.A.



JEAN GENET

LAF P 3/27/70

Photo by Paul Eboffe

On tour for Panthers and Conspiracy

SUE MARSHALL

The French writer, Jean Genet, who has spent most of his sixty years in various prisons, arrived in Los Angeles Friday, March 20, to tell the people of the U.S. that Europe is outraged at the persecution of the Black Panther Party, the silence of the American press, and the fact of the American police state.

The press conference was not well attended, despite the fact that the main speaker was one of the most important writers of the 20th Century.

In a press conference with Masai Hewitt, Minister of Education for the Black Panther Party, at the office of Luke McKissack, attorney for the Panthers, Genet addressed these remarks to the press through his interpreter, Judy Oranger, of Ramparts Magazine:

"You have a false impression that Europeans are not interested in what happens in the U.S.A. Even the least coherent European is concerned about the perils the Black Panther Party is facing, and especially Bobby Seale.

"I cannot be careful in what I am

saying today.

"We know that Bobby Seale is facing the electric chair.

"Even Pompidou (Note: Genet doesn't like Pompidou) declared the day he was elected President of France that during his presidency no one condemned to death would be executed. In France and everywhere there is uneasiness because

Nixon doesn't seem capable of doing this.

"It is fashionable now to accuse the Black Panther Party of violence. We have to first agree with the definition of violence. Violence does not only consist in rebelling against a legal force. White life styles in America are violent. For the second time I am in America. For the second time America is in the act of being violent. It begins with the architecture. American architectural lines are violent to my sensibilities. My answer to that should be violence, bombs. The Black Panther Party doesn't use bombs. This is obvious to you.

"White Americans have been violent to blacks for over 200 years. How do you expect the Panthers to react? Violence begins on the blacks in America.

"Capital punishment proves that the judges have no power. It is easier to execute a man than to change him. Judges pronounce their stupidities; changing a man who's criminal is a different fashion; it is easier to kill. And it is easier to kill blacks than whites.

"It certainly seems that America has its blacks the same way Germany had its Jews. After all, the beginning of the gas chambers in Germany was just one Jew. First they killed one; then they killed 6 million. When you start by killing one person, you end up with six million dead."

Genet spoke of many aspects of the American political situation. He considers America's worst problem to be racism and stated that the reason he came to the United States for a second time (the first was for the Chicago Democratic Convention and subsequent demonstrations) is the fact that many Europeans also feel that there is a police conspiracy to exterminate the Black Panther Party.

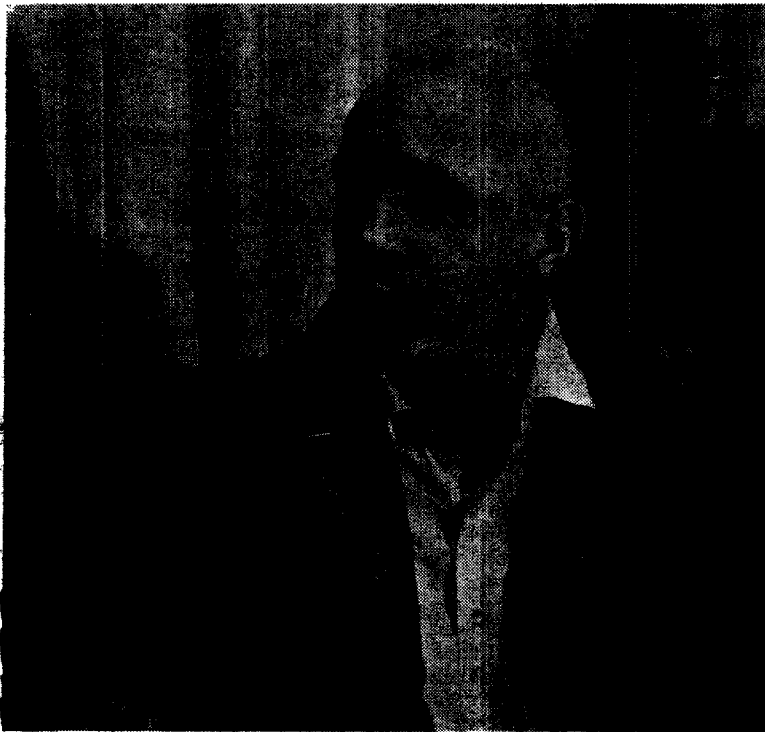
According to Genet, even the

most right-wing European news papers spoke out in complete condemnation of the police attacks on the Panthers in Los Angeles, Oakland and Chicago, and the killing of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark.

"When Bobby Seale was first extradited to Connecticut from San Francisco, Europeans started to organize demonstrations. The extradition was done in total secrecy; but we Europeans knew. We are very aware of the crimes you are perpetrating. Eleven countries held simultaneous demonstrations of support for Bobby Seale: France, Belgium, West Germany, Italy, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, England, and Algeria."

Genet first got together with the Panthers when he met members of the Party in Chicago and in Canada. He says that it was "very natural" for them to get together, since their goals are so much alike.

"Panthers are going crazy over the threat on their lives," commented Genet. Massai Hewett added:



"The Panthers are involved in a struggle for human decency and brotherhood and a quest for peace; but the media hasn't helped."

Genet had many things to say about the impotence of the American press. Ironically, as soon as he stated that the press in this country is "silent," George Putnam's leg men from Channel 11 turned off cameras and tape recorders and went back to humming "Strangers in the Night."

"Of course your press is silent, cowardly and bought off," remarked Genet. "Everyone in Europe reacted very strongly, but the American press did not tell when Bobby Seale was extradited to Connecticut. Your press is ly-

ing, only lies."

"The press here is neutral and ready to die. That's what you have in common with Spain, Portugal, and Greece; you don't speak out about the Panthers."

I asked Jean Genet if he thought this country was in a condition that demanded revolution. He did not like my use of the word.

"You are young, Mademoiselle, and you do not know what you say," he told me. His words brought a realization that in spite of all the SDS rhetoric Movement people invariably absorb, "Revolution" means more in other countries than nightsticks and tear gas which greet would-be revolutionaries on campuses here.

As Genet spoke, he seemed to be doing so with great effort, as if he knew the feeling of facing imprisonment for speaking out against the

government. Although his subsequent discussion of revolutionary tactics and alternative life styles was what I would call "revolutionary," he shied away from the word. It probably has connotations with which we in this country are still unfamiliar.

"Revolutionary life styles perhaps allow whites to get away from the ideas and hate they learned from their parents," the writer stated. When asked whether he felt that revolution would build up among the affluent intellectuals, he replied:

"Whites are not hungry, but they can change people. Of the great revolutionary leaders of history, Lenin was an aristocrat; Karl

Marx was middle-class; Castro was a lawyer; Che Guevara was a doctor; and Mao Tse tung was the son of a rich farmer."

"Do you think people of affluence cause revolution?" someone asked.

"No," said Genet. People who make a revolution are the ones driven to political consciousness by whatever circumstances. Nixon, Rockefeller and the mayor of this city are all rich, but they don't have any kind of political consciousness. They are all very minor politicians."

Judging the American scene from the viewpoint of his French culture, Genet sees that the only minority in the U.S. which has suffered active persecution for many, many years is the blacks. For this reason, he has chosen to speak to as many students in the U.S. as he can reach; to "bring them closer to the Black Panther Party."

"I want to explain to everyone that the Black Panther Party is not a myth, but men who represent ideas," said Genet. "I want to be writing. I want to write a book in exultation of the Panthers and in condemnation of you. We in Europe think that Hoffman's putting his lawyers in jail is odd. I am surprised he did not put Daley and the Chicago police in prison too. He has the power."

"(The way the Chicago trial has turned out) is everyone is free but Bobby Seale. Do you think it's by accident? Hoffman showed by that trial that it was to condemn one black man—the rest are free."

"The police are very powerful in America; you know that. You are very, very afraid," he told Paul Eberle, the *Freep's* managing editor. "Your questions reveal that you are very afraid. I know I'm in a country that is entirely dominated by police."

"You are on the eve of the downfall of the United States," proclaimed the Frenchman. He said that rather than a military failure, it will be a liberation movement from within.

"All liberation movement use different methods. Take, for example, the British Empire. In 1945, England thought itself very powerful. In less than 6 years, the British Empire was reduced to just the British Isle. Gandhi developed his non-violent techniques in a couple of years. Jomo Kenyatta used violence, and Nassar used a different kind of violence."

Following the conference, Genet rode to lunch with us. We showed him an advertising pamphlet labeled "Sexual Intercourse." He chuckled over the pictures, although he couldn't read the text.



Photos by Paul Eberle

