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Ex-Panther Terms Attacks On Police a 'Revenge' Plot

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The recent killings of policemen in Detroit and Chicago are the result of a "pattern of revenge" planned a year ago by the Black Panther Party, a 38-year-old Detroit man charged in House testimony yesterday.

Donald L. Berry, 38, who identified himself as a former Panther, told the House Internal Security Subcommittee that the alleged revenge killings were plotted at a National Conference to Combat Fascism that was held a year ago this week at Oakland, Calif., birthplace of the Panther Party.

"I believe," Berry told the hearing, which was attended by a lone House member, "they decided (in California) to do this because of the killing of Fred Hampton."

The meeting, however, which was attended by black and white radicals from across the country, pre-dated by nearly six months the killing on Dec. 4, 1969, of Hampton, chairman of the Illinois chapter of the party, and Mark Clark of Peoria in a raid on a West Side Chicago house.

Berry, a former prizefighter and Army military policeman, testified before Rep. L. Richardson Preyer, a freshman Democrat from North Carolina, that he joined the party at midsummer 1967 and remained a member and leader of the Detroit chapter until last spring.

David Hilliard, chief of staff of the Panther Party, reached in New York, said he had never heard of Berry before the news broke yesterday morning that Berry would testify before the House committee.

Hilliard also maintained that until early last year the party had no chapter in Detroit. "I don't know how he could have helped lead a chapter of our party in a city where we weren't operating at the time," Hilliard said in a telephone interview.

Berry said the killing last week of two policemen in Chicago's Northside Cabrini Housing Project and the sniper shooting of two Detroit policemen several weeks ago were in line with the Panther plan.

He characterized the Detroit organization as "sloppy" and operated by lazy people who

didn't want to work for their ideology or anything else.

He said that on a number of occasions he saw Panthers eating the food intended for children in the Panther breakfast program—a program he said was intended to feed children propaganda against the police.

Hunched over the heavy wooden witness table, an ornate tear-drop chandelier glowing above his black beret, Berry challenged the Panthers' contention that they are not a "racist" organization:

"They always speak against racism . . . but they want complete control of the black community, black policemen, black business, black lawyers and black judges. What is that if not separation?"

And he was also critical of the Panther demand for the freeing of black prisoners. "If you let some of them out," he said, "it wouldn't be safe to walk off your front porch."

Berry, a barrel-chested man of short stature who said he has won a number of amateur and professional fights, said he broke with the Panthers after Hilliard ordered the Detroit office closed. Hilliard said there was no such office during much of the time in question.