

'Struggle of Black People Was Developing'

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Williams Says Duty Called Him Back

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DETROIT, Sept. 14—Robert F. Williams, the North Carolina Negro leader who fled from the United States eight years ago in the face of a kidnaping charge, said he returned from a life of extreme comfort in China because "the struggle of black people was developing to such a point that I felt it my duty to come back."

Williams, who returned Friday to face extradition proceedings on the North Carolina charge, is living with relatives in Detroit while his legal problems are being resolved and while he decides on the direction of his public life.

Williams returns to the United States at a time of great unrest in the cities and on the campuses, and when there is a void in the ranks of nationally known leadership on the black left. Stokely Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver are abroad; Huey P. Newton is in jail and H. Rap Brown, under state and federal indictments, has been almost silent for more than a year.

Williams, therefore, not only walks into a vacuum, he comes armed with ideas and experiences gained in the



ROBERT F. WILLIAMS

... felt duty to return

one country to which black revolutionaries, irrespective of their other differences, look with respect—China.

"I was living so well in China that I started feeling guilty about black

people being killed while I had an automobile at my disposal and a chauffeur and I could go any place in the country I wanted to go and they never let me go without anything . . . It made me feel guilty about my own people and it became harder and harder to accept this. Also I had gained great insight into the struggle of men and countries."

It was his description of those insights that occupied a large portion of a two-hour interview that Williams provided here to The Washington Post and The New York Times. The meeting took place in a neat ranch house in an integrated suburb of Detroit. Members of Williams' family and close friends sat around the living room in a tight circle hanging on each word of the returned exile. Occasionally one would say, "Oh, yes, brother. Right, right."

Or they would laugh with great delight, as when Williams described how much better he feels the police in China treat citizens, compared with the United States.

"If a man commits an offense there, he hopes the police catch him before his neighbors do."

See WILLIAMS, A4, Col. 4

WILLIAMS, From A1

The laughter and delight at having Williams back among them also took a bitter turn, for when the former president of the Monroe, N.C., chapter of the NAACP left the United States, he was an object of hatred among the whites of his community. So there was laughter without humor when Williams was asked if the insights he gained in China would have been possible had he remained here. He said:

"If I had stayed here, I wouldn't be alive."

Eight years have not dulled the vividness of Williams' memory of his last months in the United States. His attempts to integrate the white swimming pool in Monroe brought down the wrath of the local whites.

He described the four attempts that he says were made on his life and he brought the room to a hush of awe, anger and respect. It was as though the incidents occurred yesterday as he told them.

"The mob was moving in. They had us surrounded. I told the boy behind me to hand me the rifle under the seat . . . there was already a bullet in the chamber and I didn't know it, so I worked the bolt and the bullet fell out and hit the ground. When those people saw that long bullet, they started backing up." Williams said of a day in 1961. There were several like that before the one on which he finally fled.

A Changed Man

Now, looking much as he had before he left, having aged little in the Cuba and China years, he sat in his Mao-styled suit and spoke of himself as a changed man, a man who has seen a different light through the window and wants to change society in ways he never would have conceived of without his China hiatus.

China is the bench mark of Robert Williams' career, the experience by which the past is measured and the future guessed at.

"If a man can rid himself of selfishness, this will abolish most of the evils of the world," he said. "But this is the most difficult fight of man, to be selfless."

He said that to him that means that the resources of the society are pooled, that people "take what they need and no more." He told of a factory in China where workers turned back wages that exceeded their needs. To him, that was the ultimate example of the selfless society at the common man's level.

Ads six, seven, eight, nine Williams—N And what seemed in the West to be upheaval in China several years ago made much more sense to him, Wil-

liams said, because it was part of the same struggle to create the selfless society, the selfless man.

"The transition they are struggling for is to reconstitute society and to remove all of the class distinctions from the society that can be removed, and to remove the idea of personal gain. That is why it is so difficult."

The Selfless Society

And although he would like to see such goals instilled in a struggle here, he also enters this disclaimer:

"I didn't come back to America with the idea of leading anybody. If the people want me, I will be at their service, but if I am to lead, it will have to be toward the goal of a selfless society . . . we have to instill in our people in the ghetto that they have to build a selfless society, a collective society."

He thinks the discontent in the cities and across the country make this "the best situation in the United States that we ever had, because there is so much unrest and discontentment. It is not bad, but good. The mere fact that people are dissatisfied is the first step toward social change. Now all you need to do is show them what needs to be done."

Taking gentle exception to the emotional appeals of some black nationalists, Williams said:

"I've learned that we have to be less emotional about this thing, that when you fight, you fight to win. You can never win on emotion, but on intellect, the will to win."

Working With Whites

And he also took a carefully charted road between the conflicting camps of black nationalists on the hot issue of working with whites.

"We will, where possible, work with them when they work in good faith and show good faith. We are not looking for enemies, we are looking for progress."

Frequently in the conversation, he espoused that kind of flexibility of viewpoint, promising to study his country more before taking harder stands. Besides, he said of himself:

"I am not interested in promoting ideologies or philosophies. I am interested in justice and in freedom . . . It is not a matter of socialism, or what they call socialism, or communism. I am not interested in what they call democracy . . . Those are names."

As an illustration, he said the Chinese leaders and people used to say to him:

Leaders Come and Go

"You are not a communist. Khrushchev is a communist. We can't get along with Khrushchev but we can get along with you."

Now the challenge for Williams will be getting along in the mercurial setting of black activism where leaders streak across the public horizon like meteorites and soon disappear.

In the time since Williams left the United States, several generations of activist leaders on the national black scene have come and gone; a score of organizations have been born and have died.

Among the younger of the groups to appear is the Republic of New Africa, which named Williams its president-in-exile when it was created more than two years ago.

The Republic is the inspiration of two brothers, Milton and Richard Henry. Milton Henry, an honors graduate of Yale Law School, is known to his friends and followers as Brother Galdi and Richard Henry is known as Brother Imari.

Milton Henry, the legal theoretician of the Republic of New Africa argues that after black people were freed from slavery, they were given no collective opportunity to express their will as to whether they wanted to be citizens of the United States, create their own country or return to Africa. Separate Nation Sought

The Henry brothers and their followers in the RNA believe a time is coming when blacks, if given a choice in such a plebiscite, would vote for separation into a nation of their own.

They consider the RNA now as a provisional government without a country and they have elected Robert Williams as the man to lead them forward.

Williams Uncertain

He is encouraged to take on the job, but still uncertain, as he is about what appear to him to be changes in this country since he left.

He said he is certain that "progress feeds desire. If a man is completely dehumanized, there is little chance of revolt, but when he starts to feel that he is a human being . . . you are most likely to get revolt . . ."

His own ideas of revolt have changed in that he is able to define the kind of society he wants to achieve, one based on the principles of sharing and commitment of one neighbor to another's fate. He wants to change men as well as systems.

"The thing that struck me so much when I was in China," Williams said, "was why Christians, who have been claiming all of the time since Christ that that is what they wanted to build, why now are they so hostile to the society that is advancing along that road?"

What did he decide about Christianity?

"I concluded it was a big hustle."