

## ON BURNELL MACK, JACKSON STATE AND THE STANFORD NATION

During the past week, there has been much said and written about why the reaction to the murder of six black men in Georgia and two more in Mississippi has not been nearly as strong as the reaction to the murder of four white people in Ohio a week earlier. The disparity between the reactions to the black murders on the one hand and to the white murders on the other has been correctly attributed to simple, old-fashioned racism - the stubborn residual feeling in the guts of even the most "liberal" white Americans that somehow the loss of a black life is just not as outrageous as the loss of a white life. There was another fact about the Jackson and Augusta murders, however, which made it easier for the white liberals' consciences to remain comfortably asleep. This is the fact that the murders occurred in the South, which American liberals have traditionally regarded as an unreconstructed breakaway state. To the liberals, the states of the old Confederacy comprise Another Country, in which the natives indulge in all sorts of barbarous customs which, although deplorable, have essentially no more to do with the real USA than do the practices of some head-hunting, cannibalistic tribe in the Amazon Jungle.

It is apparent how valuable this attitude is to the liberals in their desperate struggle to avoid having to take a long, hard look at racism as an American phenomenon; that is, at their very own racism. Nevertheless, it is difficult to understand how it has been possible for them to maintain this fiction in the face of the events of the past five years or so, since the "civil rights" movement moved north. Are they not aware that the most massive slaughters of black people in this nation's history have taken place, not in Montgomery, Birmingham or Atlanta, but in Watts, Newark and Detroit? Have they not read The Algiers Motel Incident, in which a white author with no official connection to the movement at all proves, dispassionately and without a trace of rhetoric, that the statement "Detroit is as bad as Mississippi" is literally true? Most importantly, do the liberals know nothing about the recent history of the Black Panther Party? The nightriding mob that murdered Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in Chicago last December wore blue uniforms rather than white sheets, but were otherwise indistinguishable from their Dixie allies. In fact, the Chicago klansmen may have taught the southerners a thing or two. As Nicholas Von Hoffman said in the Chronicle last Friday, referring to the Augusta - Jackson murders, "The police in two southern cities have emulated the northern police; they've gotten the word the lid is off, and it's okay to shoot Black people like they do up in Illinois." Dixie and Amerika may in fact be two nations, but it is obvious that they have more in common than the English language and the Interstate Highway System.

There are some white people living in what used to be the "United" States, however, who would not consider themselves to be citizens either of Dixie or of Amerika. Perhaps they have a right to regard unrestrained, brutal racism as the exotic custom of certain foreign territories. But last December, only a few days after the Chicago police assassinated Hampton and Clark, a black youth was murdered at Altamont by a few dozen Hells Angels while a quarter-million of the legions of the super-liberated looked on. Less than six months after its birth, the Woodstock Nation joined Dixie, Amerika, South Africa and Rhodesia in the proud ranks of countries where lynching is allowed.

Stanford, too, is a nation. It declared itself an independent, sovereign state by an overwhelming vote at a mass meeting held on May 6, 1970. If Dixie, Amerika and the Woodstock Nation are all mutually indistinguishable with regard to racism, how about the newly-created Stanford Nation? Although it can still proudly claim that it has never, in all its proud three-week history, experienced a lynching, the picture is not bright. Black immigration is restricted to a small trickle, and no very serious, concrete proposals to change this situation in the near future (i.e. September) have been made. The Stanford police show no signs of giving up their old habit of hassling black kids of high school age who cross the border on the weekends. In fact, an increase in this behaviour can probably be expected with the coming of summer. Moreover, a couple of incidents which occurred during the last few months of Stanford's colonial history

indicate that the more overt, brutal forms of racism formerly associated with Dixie are not completely foreign to the new nation. First, early in the year, swastikas were painted on the door of a room occupied by two black co-eds, and when a black freshman proposed that the matter be looked into, an attempt was made to set his door on fire. The less said about the reaction of Stanford's white population the better: they faithfully followed the example set by their Woodstockean brothers at Altamont the month before. The second incident was the most serious of all. On the night of April 29th, just one week prior to Stanford's declaration of independence, Bijay Sharma, an Indian student with a dark complexion, and Burnell Mack, an Afro-American student, were arrested and brutally beaten by the police. Charges against Bijay have been dropped but Burnell still faces trial for assault with intent to commit great bodily harm and resisting arrest. There are several important points to be remembered about this incident. First, the only difference between what happened in Jackson and what happened at Stanford is that Bijay and Burnell did not die of their wounds. This was not due to any lack of effort on the part of the police, however. Both Bijay and Burnell were hospitalized, and witnesses say police continued to kick and club Burnell for a considerable time after he was unconscious. Second, Burnell and Bijay were arrested and beaten solely because their skins are dark. Even the police are no longer claiming that Bijay did anything to justify arresting him, and over a dozen witnesses are ready to swear that Burnell threw nothing and resisted only plainclothes police who had attacked him without identifying themselves. Moreover, there were plenty of genuine rock-throwers around at the time. It seems strange that they were not arrested, until one remembers that they were white. The third and most important thing to remember about these arrests is that the police were able to make them with no interference whatsoever from the citizens of the Stanford nation. Once again, the pattern set at Altamont held true. Even now, there is little indication that any positive action will be taken by the Stanford community as a whole to prevent Burnell from being jailed. It is unfortunate that he wasn't arrested and beaten a month earlier, but as it is we have finals to think about. Besides, we've already had our strike, we've shot our wad, and everybody knows that the Stanford nation is capable of getting it up politically only once a year, at most.

The ultimate irony of this whole situation is that the BSU and its leaders have been subjected during the past two months to countless self-righteous jibes from Stanford liberals and radicals over their "position" on the strike and the Off-ROTC movement. What this amounts to in effect is that we of the Stanford nation are asking the Black nation for diplomatic recognition, after having clearly demonstrated that we cannot or will not insure the safety of its citizens within our borders. And then we proceed to feel surprised and indignant when the reply to our request is unenthusiastic. It is probably impossible to defeat the Dixie-Amerika axis without a firm alliance of the Black Nation, the Woodstock Nation and the Student Nation, but we must realize how far we have to go, how much we have to do before there is enough trust among us to make that alliance a reality. As a beginning in the long task of building that trust, the very least we of the Stanford nation can do is to free Burnell Mack. We have already stood by and allowed him to be arrested and beaten. For us now to stand by and allow him to be imprisoned as well is unthinkable.

THE STANFORD COMMUNITY AGAINST WAR AND FACISM