Contraflow received an open letter to ‘Workers Vanguard’ [the Spartanist League] in late November 1996 from a number of black autonomist / anarchist groups and individuals in the ‘USA.’ We hope this letter may help to clarify positions on the Nation of Islam in the UK too. The letter is too long to print in full but is available from us - extracts of the letter follow:

"... in your expose of the NOI’s Fruit of Islam bodyguarding of racist, fascist, David Irving, slapping our collective faces immediately with the realization that what should have been an informative, analytical piece detailing the events of Sept. 10, when David Irving spoke in Oakland under FBI security, was in actuality just another grossly intolerable example of certain segments of the white radical community attempting to strip Black people engaged in liberation struggle of our right to SELF DETERMINATION!

We fully recognize that white supremacist groups do not have the interests of Black people at heart as they burn our churches, rape our sisters, shoot our youth, and take positions of power in local/state/federal politics so as to control us legislatively, “Workers Vanguard.” It is also glaringly apparent that the NOI should definitely account for why its security forces would endanger our community and conflict with purportedly anti-racist organizers by appearing to ally themselves with known fascists and enemies of our people! But, through the course of your criticism of this activity, however, “Workers Vanguard” reveals the true position of your organization as it relates to Black people.

We don’t need your botched explanations as to why Farrakhan gets a “hearing” among our own people, “Workers Vanguard!” Nor do we need you to blame your apartheid ideology that all “black separatist” movements are comparable to the ruthlessly brutal and murderous KKK and Nazis!

This piece details activists of color our basic right to determine for “ourselves” what we, as oppressed Nations, will unite with and what politics we will embrace as we battle this system, and that genuinely principled white workers would “never” proclaim to dictate to those of “us” they claim to be in solidarity with “the fundamental truth of the race question.” What is the qualitative difference between these attitudes being expressed by “Workers Vanguard” and certain other white radicals, and the actions of your Christian missionary ancestors who taught Blacks to hate ourselves, embrace the conqueror’s culture, and accept our enslavement (from chattel to socioeconomic)? Greg Jackson of Black Autonomy International elaborates on this further:

“Your inability or unwillingness to accept the fact that our struggle is parallel to yours, but at the same time very specific, will [only] be finished successfully when we as a people, as working-class Blacks on the North American continent, decide that we have achieved full freedom (as defined by our history, our culture, our needs, our desires, our personal experiences, and our political idea(s))...” (Jackson, pg. 4, April 1996)

"The white left’s isolation and alienation was revealed even more profoundly in the criticisms of the Million Man March on Washington. In the end, the majority of the leftist critics wound up tainting the most backward elements of the Republican Party; some going as far as to echo the very same words of Senate majority leader Bob Dole, who commented on the day after the march that ‘you can’t separate the message from the messenger’...

“The Million Man March local organizing committees (I.o.c.)’s gave the various Black left factions a forum to present ideas and concepts to entire sections of our population who were not familiar with ‘Manicism,’ ‘anarchism,’ 'Kwame Nkrumah,' 'George Jackson,' 'The Ten-Point Program,' ‘class struggle,’ etc.

It also afforded us the opportunity to begin engaging some of the members of the local NOI chapter in class-based ideological struggle along with participating community people. Of course, it was impossible for the white left to know any of this; more proof of their profound isolation and alienation...” (Jackson, pg. 4, April 1996)

If we have political contradictions within our own communities, then we must deal with them for ourselves and by ourselves! In other words, don’t try to force your viewpoints, which are coming from your culture, ideology and experience, down “our” throats under the guise of reporting a news item! We WILL NOT accept this under ANY circumstances and “regardless” of the activities of the Nation of Islam, the paternalistic attitude displayed in this article, which erroneously lumps many of our political and cultural tendencies into some mixed up melting pot, is highly inappropriate and completely unwelcome!

... most importantly, WE “DEMAND” SELF DETERMINATION, and don’t you dare to tell us where “the road to black freedom” lies! We do not now or “ever” need you to tell us who our brothers and sisters in struggle are!

Understanding and, most importantly, “respecting” the demand for self-determination by Black people in revolutionary struggle could be a major ideological “leap” amongst all activists if they could only grasp the concept. At the very least, articles like this one help us to definitely see where people’s heads are at and where the “movement” in the U.S. is going.”

To contact the writers of this open letter - email <nattyreb@IX.NETCOM.COM>

FOOTNOTE: Quotes from Bro. Greg Jackson were published by the staff of “Black Autonomy, A Newspaper of Anarchism and Black Revolution,” in the article entitled “Authoritarian Leftists: Kill the Cop in Your Head.”

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Supplementary Shorts

HORSEY RACIST COPS

Mr and Mrs Lindo were abused, assaulted and arrested by 13 Horsey cops for the well-known crime of being black and in a nice car. Charges of "breach of the peace" were thrown out, and the couple are campaigning to get rid of the racist cop that started it all. There have been a couple of pickets at Horsey Copshop and the fight is being supported by the local trades council and Unison branch. Contact Justice for the Lindos c/o 265 Seven Sisters Road, N4.

ENCOUNTER IN CHIAPAS

Following the international gathering (Encuentro) in Chiapas last summer, plans are afoot to organise the next one in Europe this year. The declaration from the last one is being circulated for discussion (in Hamburg comrades in Santa outflitt stopped passers-by to discuss it) and things are being tightened up to make discussion more concrete and develop real networks of struggle. HUMAN (Humanity Against Neoliberalism) has been set up as the British section of network forming, and have been working with the Liverpool Dockers London Support Group to develop struggles and strategies against casualisation. For more info and to get involved contact HUMAN c/o BM-CRL, London WC1N 3XQ or e-mail HUMAN@hotmail.co.uk.

SCUMBAG OF THE YEAR AWARD

for 1996 goes to John Vidal - eco-journalist for the Guardian. This hack showed his true colours through his patronising reporting of the solidarity actions for the Liverpool dockers - he has class analysis - it's just that he's for the ruling class! This is the man who pretended to be friendly to squatters, hoping we'd forget his article a few years ago complaining about squatters moving in nextdoor. Here's a mug shot - don't let him anywhere near our movement!

Contraflow Discussions
Sundays 3PM 121 Centre
121 Raillton Road SE24
(with vegan food)
2/2 Education ["We don't need none"]
2/3 Women with Class
6/6 Technology and Antitechnology
4/5 CLR James and Workers Autonomy
[pre reading at 36@ and 121]

"NO COPS IN OUR FRONT"

said a spokesperson for the Fare Dodgers Liberation Front recently. Many Met police had been busted giving their free transport passes to friends and relations - this led to the passes being taken away. The spokesperson said "why stop at taking away free transport to coppers out of uniform - it's when they're in uniform that they're most dangerous - Cops aren't welcome in the FDLF and they aren't welcome on the tubes either. Basta!"

TAKING IT ONE STEP FURTHER

Demonstrations against government spending cuts are generally boring affairs, but occasionally they can go a step further than boring demands for reform as this example from Melbourne, Australia shows. As part of a wave of strikes and demonstrations against welfare cuts, anti-land rights laws and other austerity measures introduced by the incoming conservative government, students decided to stage a demonstration at Parliament House. Such demonstrations have long been a part of student life in Melbourne since the outgoing Labour government had already begun a series of cuts in the 80s and were occasionally livened up by run-ins with the police and on one occasion an occupation of Parliament. This time round things were to be a little different.

Firstly this demo was distinguished by the fact that around half the protestors were high school students and largely working-class ones. Next was that after the ritual march past Parliament House (heavily guarded to prevent a repeat of the previous week's storming in Canberra) the students went on to occupy the lobby of BHP, Australia's biggest mining company and one that has much to gain from the new laws. Whilst in the lobby the protestors trashed its contents and also broke a number of windows. As this was going on others confronted the media.

Sadly most demonstrations both in Australia and elsewhere are marked by a fixation with getting 'good' media even though coverage is almost always negative and that the film is generally passed onto the police for their 'research' purposes. In this case though people had learnt from earlier demos where media footage had led to raids and arrests and so decided to interrupt the filming. Incensed by the students' refusal to be filmed some of the cameramen and journalists started lashing out, at which point they were forcibly evicted from the building after attempts to seize their film.

Following this the hacks were forced to cower from behind police who eventually cleared the building with a few token arrests ensuing. Perhaps people here in Britain could learn from this example and start giving journalists the treatment they deserve a little more often.

FINALLY A BIG THANKYOU

to the many people who responded to our last appeal for funds - about £400 arrived including donations from Sweden and Germany and outside London too. We're now able to bring you this exciting issue, but for the future we're still going to need cash coming in.