

EDITORIAL

The Cry For Power

Black, White, And "Polish"

In recent months, the cry of "black power!" has been heard resounding in the land. As usual, both Conservatives and Liberals have reacted violently and on the wrong side, each for their different and characteristic reasons. The Conservatives, in their mindless racism, can only react in paranoid visions of nameless "Reds" and of black violence against person and property. The more sophisticated Liberals have reacted, again typically, no more nobly and with considerably more hypocrisy. For decades, white Liberals have preened themselves as the Lords and Ladies Bountiful of the civil rights movement, uplifting their fallen brethren, financing all their causes, gently but firmly governing the Negroes in the civil rights movement and humanely pushing them around, "for their own good" of course. Now, at last, Negroes are beginning to tell the white Liberals, firmly and more or less politely, that Negroes are now prepared to stand on their own feet; that they don't need the gentle but steely bonds of dependence upon their white benefactors. Let the whites organize themselves, say the new advocates of black power; it is up to us to organize ourselves and to run our own lives.

White liberals are often thought of as well-meaning but misguided; but how well-meaning can we consider a group that reacts to this manly desire for independence with such undisguised fear and horror? The true humanitarian rejoices when the people he helps feel ready to assert their independence and to strike out

on their own; for isn't this independence essential to being truly human? But instead of such rejoicing, the white liberals have reacted, almost to a man, with snivelling ("How can they reject us now?") and deep hostility ("How dare they be so ungrateful?"). Let us face it; the white liberals have been despotic rulers over their Negro allies. It is true that they have not ruled by coercion; but they have ruled through their financial power, and its consequent setting up of severe dependency on the part of the Negroes. In the familiar way of the worst of parents, the white liberals have ruled through dependence, money, and "love". The spurning by Negroes of parasitic white liberals has come none too soon.

There is more of significance in the sharp turn by militant Negroes from the goal of integration to that of black power. Integration was, in essence, a statist and coercive movement, for it meant forcing Negroes into areas where they could only be met with increasing hostility. Black power asks: why should I force myself into a lunch counter peopled by characters who hate me? Are they worthy to sit with me at the same counter? Black power's emphasis is not on compulsory integration but on getting the white oppressors off the backs of the Negro population. Not only is this a more profound and fundamental goal, it is also one which libertarians should be able to support wholeheartedly.

The black power concept perceives that the Negroes are, and always have been, a colonized people, in effect a colonized nation within American borders. Hence, the cry for black power is essentially a cry of black nationalism, an acknowledgment that what Negroes need most is to get the boot of the white majority off their necks. In concrete, it means a call for the end of rule over Negro areas by white police, over Negro children by white public school teachers and administrators, over the Negro poor by white welfare workers.

Many libertarians have tended to oppose any form of nationalism on the grounds that they cannot support any nation-State. But it is critically important to realize that "nationalism" cannot be lumped together in one mass. There are two contrasting types of nationalism; a desire to liberate an oppressed nation from the chains imposed by another nation (a movement for "national liberation"); as against a desire to aggress against other nations and impose one's own national domination upon them (a movement for "imperialism"). Thus, in the centuries-long struggle of the Irish people against English

rule, the Irish movement was a movement for national liberation, the English conquest an example of English imperialism. One is a libertarian form of nationalism, the other an invasive, profoundly anti-libertarian form. A Negro nationalist movement in present-day America is a movement for national liberation; any white insistence on thwarting such a movement is an example of white imperialism. Such are the qualitative differences within the concept of nationalism.

One prominent argument to deprecate black nationalism, which has been used by every white liberal up to and including President Johnson, is that the whole movement is pure folly, since Negroes only constitute 10% of the total U. S. population. How then could such a movement possibly succeed? But this argument overlooks the crucial fact that Negroes are concentrated heavily within certain territorial areas, and that within those areas they constitute a majority. Negroes constitute a majority in much of the Black Belt of the South, and in concentrated and growing areas of the major cities of the North and West. Black nationalism could therefore conceivably be achieved for those areas. Indeed, the development by SNCC of the increasingly successful "Freedom Organization" third party in the Black Belt of Alabama, and the growing demands by the Negroes of Harlem to control their own public schools, are both part of an increasing Negro awareness that black power is feasible, in black areas. It would be almost as ludicrous to argue that Welsh nationalism could never hope to succeed because the Welsh are outnumbered by the English over the entire United Kingdom; obviously the riposte is that the Welsh enjoy superior numbers in Wales itself.

If we are to agree to the concept of "black power", then neither should we simply and brusquely dismiss as frenzied racist mobs those white rioters in the South Side of Chicago who have called desperately for "white power". A New York Times reporter of these Chicago riots noted that, in one neighborhood, the people were shouting for "Polish power", and the reporter lacked the imagination to go over and try to find out why, on the South Side of Chicago in the year 1966, there should suddenly arise the cry of "Polish power". Obviously what all this means is that the white masses of this country are beginning to wake up to the fact that despite our vaunted democracy they have no power either, that they too do not have the power to run their own lives, whether it be the Polish ethnic groups on Chicago's South Side or the white masses generally throughout the country. The black masses, realizing that they have no power, attribute that power to the

"white power structure"; the white masses, resentfully realizing that they have no power, angrily attribute the trappings of rule to the Negroes or to the NAACP or to the Rev. Martin Luther King. But actually, both groups are right; neither has power over their lives; and that power belongs to a ruling oligarchy, an Establishment that is powerful, wealthy and also largely white (although a few Negroes have been co-opted into the ruling elite). Both the black and the white masses, increasingly aware of their own powerlessness, must eventually learn to identify their common oppressor and hence their common enemy: the ruling Establishment. When they learn to do so, then at last there will be a sound and sober groundwork for unity among black and white; not a misty groundwork in a mutual "love" that will not arrive short of a new Garden of Eden, but unity in a common pursuit of justice against the group that rules them both--and rules us all.