

"Although to some the struggle of a Black high school drop-out acting as his own attorney against the massive coercive power of this State may seem like a futile struggle, there is no doubt in my mind of the ultimate defeat of my oppressors. I am like the brave and resolute people in Vietnam who are also struggling against the common oppressor. As a matter of fact, I consider myself a Black Viet Cong. Black Power!"

— Martin Sostre



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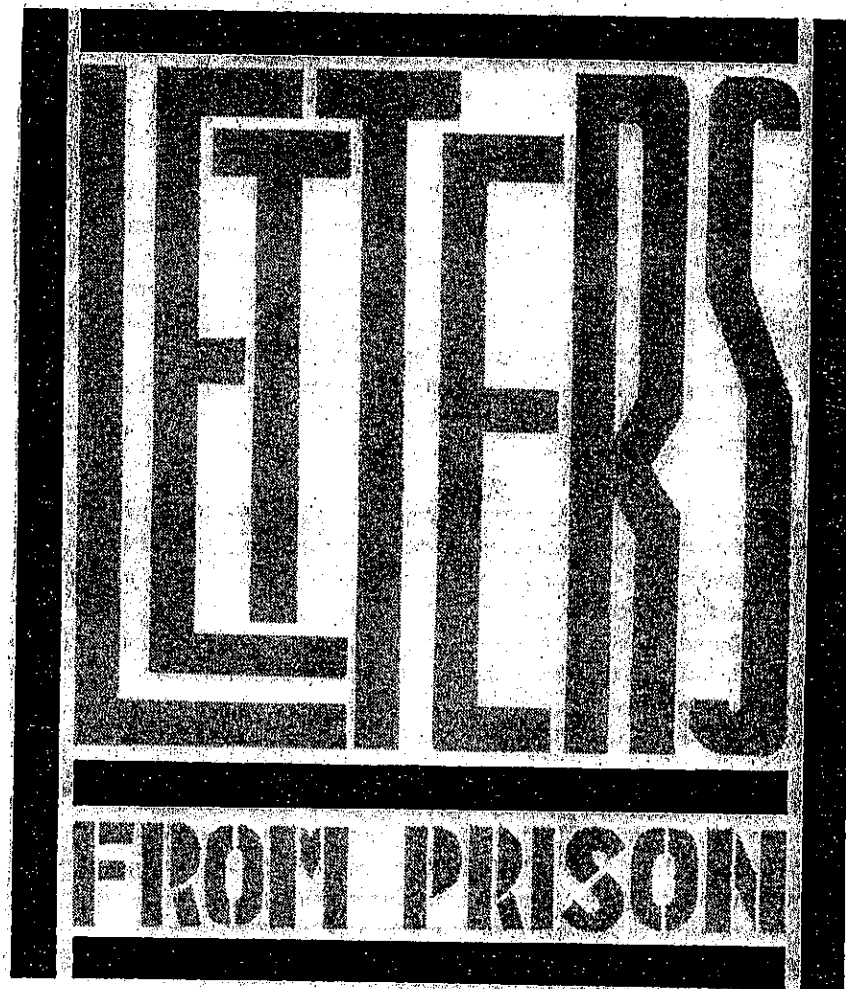
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MARTIN SOSTRE



Martin Sostre Defense Committee

Martin Sostre, Prison Revolutionary

By Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin

Even in this generation, many young activists know of George Jackson aka "Comrade George," Black Panther leader, revolutionary prison writer and organizer who was assassinated in August, 1971, in the California penitentiary, San Quentin.

Yet, in the late 1960's and early 1970's, Martin Sostre (1923-2015) was every bit as well known as a prison activist, revolutionary, and jailhouse lawyer, who almost single-handedly won democratic rights for prisoners to receive and read revolutionary literature, write books, worship alternative religious faiths, to not be held indefinitely in solitary confinement, and to obtain legal rights to have access to legal rights at disciplinary proceedings. He was the one responsible for prisoners being able to organize during the prison struggle 1967-1974. These lawsuits changed prison conditions nationwide.

He had served a sentence in Attica, New York, during the early 1960's and went through a political metamorphosis from a Black Muslim (NOI), Black nationalist, and later an Anarchist. In 1966, he got out of prison, came home to Buffalo, N.Y., and started the Afro-Asian Bookstore in the Black community. Sostre's bookstore became a center of radical thought and political education in that city. A Black "riot" against police brutality of a Black youth broke out at this time, and Sostre was blamed for this rebellion since many youth visited his bookstore.

The city cops and white political establishment chafed at Sostre's organizing and political education, and decided to shut him down. They arrested him on July 14, 1967, along with a bookstore co-worker, and charged them with "sale of narcotics, riot, arson, and assault." These were totally frame-up charges, but he was sentenced to 41 years in prison. Recognizing this injustice, an international campaign was begun on his behalf by his supporters and fellow activists.

At one point, he became the best known political prisoner in the world, and his case became adopted by Amnesty International, the prisoner of conscience organization, in 1973. This was a first for U.S. political prisoners and put tremendous pressure on the state of New York and the U.S. government. Finally, his worldwide defense organization pressured the New York state governor to grant Sostre an executive clemency, and he was released in 1976.

(continued on page 72)

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin attributes his initial interest in anarchism to Sostre.

In 1974 Pacific Street Films debuted a documentary film on Sostre called *Frame-up! The Imprisonment of Martin Sostre*. It detailed Sostre's case with extensive interviews from prison.

Martin Sostre

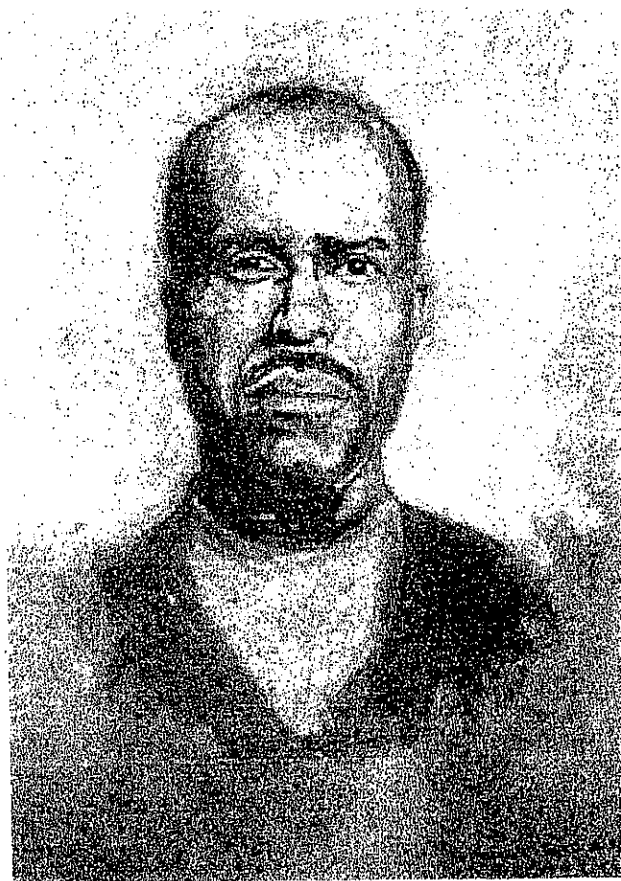


photo of Martin Sostre as a young man by Jerry Ross (painter)

In later life Sostre lived in Manhattan with his wife Lizabeth Sostre, his son Mark who tragically passed in his 20s and his other son Vincent. Sostre died in 2015.¹⁰¹

Eastern European immigrants, especially in the USA (1860's-1900's). Yet the stickler is that the Anarchist movement generally, had no ties or solidarity to the Black population in the USA, the UK, or the colonized people of color in the Third World. It was essentially a white European movement.

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Like Sostre had said, we must manufacture our own Anarchist of Color school of thought and revolutionary practice. Nobody can truly speak for us and fight in our name. Black Autonomy means independence of thought, culture and action. We are not racial separatists, but we must be sure that we are strong enough to insist on our politics, leadership, and respect within any broader universal movement. We have been sold out, left out, betrayed, and tricked too many times by internal racism inside majority white coalitions and movements. Black voices matter! That is why I wrote a small pamphlet in 1972, "Anarchism and the Black Revolution" while I was in prison in 1979.

Conclusion

Martin Sostre has been lost to history because the White Left and Anarchist radical tendencies have had no regard for him or his legacy. He literally opened the doors for radical prisoners, Anarchist tendencies of color and radical praxis, yet not one institution or movement today is named after him. This is an outrage which must be recognized or corrected now.

Groups of jailhouse lawyers should name themselves after the man who more than anyone, successfully fought for prisoners' democratic rights, was an activist who provided an example of a revolutionary political prisoner, and who prefigured the Black-led revolutionary prison movement, including the Attica rebellion and prison labor and activist movements of the 1970's-80's.

I became an Anarchist, a jailhouse lawyer, and a prison activist during the 1970's because of Martin Sostre. In fact, it was a result of observing Martin's international defense committee and seeing how he was able to put pressure on the government, that encouraged me to create the "Free Lorenzo" movement, which resulted in my own freedom in 1984 from two life sentences. I owe him a tremendous personal debt. I spoke to him less than a month in a prison cell, but it changed my life. He had a similar impact on many others who never met him, but benefited from him standing up for their rights.

We don't have him here today in the flesh, but we can at least honor his memory and never let it die!

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"I was born and raised in Harlem and I know the methods of the streets: the orators of 126th and 7th in front of the African Memorial Bookshop (upon which my bookshop in Buffalo was patterned) and those of 116th and 7th; the picketing, agitation, uprisings and gang fights. I am a high school drop-out having completed two years of high school - Textile High School on 18th Street in New York City.

"Like Brother Malcolm X, I tried to educate myself in prison. I became a Muslim in Attica Prison because its Black Nationalist tenets appealed to me; it was similar to the Black Nationalism I had picked up in Harlem as a kid listening to the speakers in front of the Black Bookshop on 125th Street and reading about Marcus Garvey. However, when I got out of prison and saw that the Muslim movement was not the revolutionary Black Nationalism that our youth was following and that the Muslim movement was so alienated from the Black masses, I gave it up.

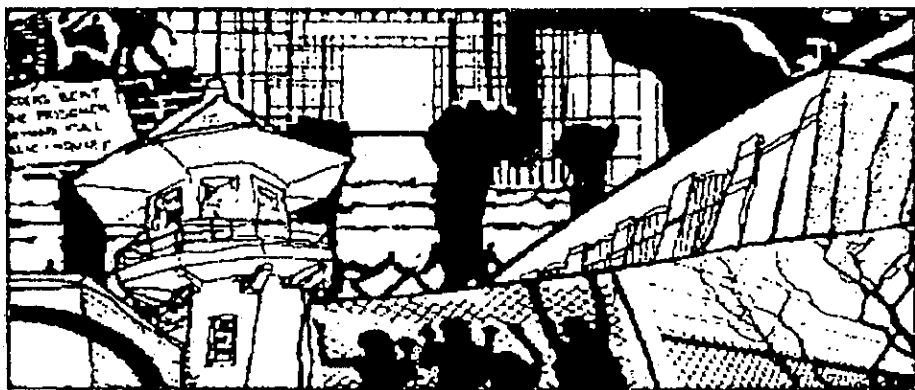
"While in Attica Prison, I became a student of law - constitutional, international and New York State Law." (Martin fails to mention here any of the fruits of his study of law but a particularly important one recommends itself. While he was still a prisoner in Attica, it was Martin who waged the legal struggle which resulted in a court ruling allowing Muslim religious services inside the prison. Ed.)

Letters From Prison

in cooperation with the Martin Sostre Defense Committee, P.O. Box 382, Ellicott Station, Buffalo, New York 14205 4

a compilation of Martin Sostre's correspondence from Erie County Jail, Buffalo, New York and Green Haven Prison, Stormville, New York

prepared by the Philosophical Society, State University of New York at Buffalo, P.O. Box 45, Norton Union, 3435 Main Street, Buffalo, New York 14214



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Labor Donated

about it. Almost every day that I saw him, we would go over my case, and he would give me legal advice. Somewhere along the line, we started talking about revolutionary politics generally, and he bounced a new word on me: "Anarchist Socialism." I had no idea what he was talking about at the time. I had just come from Cuba, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, which called themselves "socialist republics," so I thought I knew all about it. I was wrong. He explained to me about "self-governing socialism," which he described as free of state bureaucracy, any kind of party or leader dictatorship. Almost every day he regaled me about "direct democracy," "communitarianism," "radical autonomy," "general assemblies," and other stuff I knew nothing about. So I just listened for hours as he schooled me. 73

The initial ideas for Black autonomy, within the overall Anarchist movement, came from these sessions. As a Black Puerto Rican, Sostre felt alienated from his community, and since much of the analysis about Black oppression and Socialism was by white radicals, he had originally gravitated into Black nationalism. It was only later during his time in prison that he gravitated into Anarchist Socialism. He told me endlessly that Socialism and Anarchism were for all people, not just Europeans and well-to-do intellectuals. It was universal. At first, I had serious doubts about all this, as it seemed just more white radical student ideology. They were not sympathetic to the Black struggle, and they were not working class or poor. Sostre's ideas, however, were that Anarchists of color must build their "wing" of the Anarchist movement. He didn't call it Black Autonomy, but that is what it was.

I did not even consider myself at the time as an Anarchist, and did not fully understand what he told me. But I had seen first-hand "Soviet Socialism" and was not impressed. It was elitist, authoritarian, and oppressive. I could say the same thing about "Marxist-Leninist Maoism", which helped to destroy the the 1960's New Left, and the radical wing of the Black Power Movement, with cult of personality, middle class snobbery, manipulation, and opportunism.

Even before meeting Martin Sostre, I was definitely already looking for something new, and willing to consider Anarchism. But only years later, serving life in prison, is when I really started into Anarchist political education, as Sostre suggested. I started reading Anarchist books and papers, and started corresponding with Anarchist figures and groups all over the world.

These discussions with Martin Sostre were invaluable in broadening my thinking about a radical political alternative. I also found out about many "unknown revolutions" in Africa, Russia, China, Spain and other parts of the world, as well as early Anarchist labor/radical tendencies among

Historical Importance of Martin Sostre

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Sostre's political consciousness and legal activism opened the door for prisoners to have legal and human rights and the ability to organize at a time of civil rights, Black Power, the New Left, and the Vietnam anti-war movements. At one stage, 1970-1976, the prison movement became the central protest movement in America, especially after the August political assassination of George Jackson, and the September, 1971 Attica rebellion. The protest at Attica was put down with a bloody massacre by prison and political officials, but it opened the eyes of millions all over the world to American state violence and racism. A mass prison support movement arose almost overnight, which demanded human rights for prisoners. There is no doubt that the prior demands of Martin Sostre, in his writings and prisoner's rights lawsuits, who had been imprisoned at Attica some years previous, played a role ideologically. Sostre's struggle inside as a political prisoner was clearly bound up with what became the Attica Rebellion.

Contrary to prison officials' accounts which now claim that the so-called Attica prison "riot" had taken place because of a "gang of criminals" who took guards hostage for no good reason, the truth is New York State officials refused to listen to Sostre or even the federal courts which over the years had ordered an end to brutality, racism, and mistreatment of the men inside. The prisoners took matters into their own hands, demanding human rights and an end to racist abuse with the 1971 rebellion, which shook America and the entire world.

Martin Sostre and Me

I met Martin Sostre at the Federal Detention Center in New York City in August/September, 1969. I had just been brought back to the USA from Berlin, Germany, for hijacking a plane to Cuba earlier that year. He had sued prison officials and been transferred to federal prison to await a hearing. I didn't know who he was at the time, but someone said he was an "activist prisoner" and that I should talk to him.

A scowling, powerfully built Black man, he looked like a teacher, which in many ways he was, just a revolutionary teacher. So, I went up and introduced myself, and we started talking about prison generally, but he was interested in my case and how the CIA had captured me, and we started talking about that. He was concerned that I could be sentenced to death by an all-white Southern jury.

He knew it was a political case, and so we talked about what I could do

INTRODUCTION

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This year's edition of the Journal of the Philosophical Society of the State University of New York at Buffalo is devoted to the unfortunately little-known struggle of Martin G. Sostre, Black bookstore proprietor and political activist, who was viciously framed by federal, state and local racist law officials during the Black rebellion of June - July 1967 in Buffalo's East Side ghetto.

Through a compilation of the many letters sent by Martin from jail to members of the Martin Sostre Defense Committee, friends, and family, the editorial staff of the Journal has been able to reconstruct the essential story of what happened during those days of rebellion, the subsequent months of legal struggle to free Martin and also, to give a picture of Martin's political acumen, his analyses of the profound social and political issue of our time.

Martin Sostre operated the Afro-Asian Bookstore on Jefferson Avenue in the heart of the ghetto. Jefferson is the main drag where the many white-owned shops and stores loot the Black population day and night as they go up and down the Avenue, fresh from being super-exploited in Buffalo's steel mills, sweat shops, and suburban homes of the rich. It was among these unfortunate and oppressed "little" people that Martin Sostre became known as a leader and militant spokesman for Black Emancipation.

I first met Martin sometime in 1966 when I went to his bookstore with a friend. Both of us were active in the Philosophical Society and in Youth Against War and Fascism on campus. At this time, the Philosophical Society was conducting a seminar at the campus on the philosophy of People's China and we wanted to purchase some books related to this subject. Martin's bookshop was the only place in town where you could get books on this and other "controversial" subjects that were written by other than hostile commentators. After visiting the store on many subsequent occasions -- and after Martin came to understand that we ourselves were seriously involved in the struggle, especially in street demonstrations against the war in Vietnam and in support of Black liberation -- we became good friends with Martin.

He always enjoyed discussing current events, the international situation, Black and Asian history, literature and political philosophy. We thought highly of Sostre as an intellectual and it was clear that he was also an activist of unusual alertness and political perception. Martin's favorite subject was the bookshop and the Afro Freedom Fighter, a mimeographed ghetto community newspaper which would uncompromisingly "tell it like it is," that he had conceived of and was about to bring into existence. The store, though economically a burden, was gradually becoming known to the more oppressed Black youth of the community. They were often in the store, talking to Martin or reading a book or just browsing. Martin cared very much about the youth. He wanted to provide them with a perspective and a program, to teach them to think, learn, inquire into and question everything.

However, teaching the young to think for themselves has never been popular among those who want to keep things the same -- and Buffalo's Martin Sostre was not to escape the wrath of those who rule.

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What you are about to read through the media of his correspondence is the story of a Black political prisoner's inspiring struggle against the extreme brutality and cunning machinations of the oppressor: the entire racist, big-business ruling clique of this highly segregated northern industrial city. It is a story of the frame-up technique of which so little is told by the official and unofficial apologists of American society but which -- more and more -- stands out as perhaps the most ruthless and subtle device of the oppressor. It is the story of betrayal -- of the cynical and opportunist sell-out by middle-class white liberals and pseudo-radicals and by "local Toms" as Sostre calls them. It is the story of witch-hunt and political-intellectual persecution by reactionary officials who, fearing the dissemination of controversial books and pamphlets that discussed, among other things, the emancipation of the poor and oppressed of the world, suppressed the answer to poisonous racial fictions spewed by the business-controlled mass media with KKK style, police state and fascist tactics. In essence, then, this is the story of state power itself which -- in the hands of racist, white politicians and their big-business bosses -- means "pig-cop" brutality, frame-ups, legal lynchings, kangaroo-style court prosecutions, judicial intimidation and even mind-destroying drugs to the long oppressed Black masses.

My subsequent involvement as chairman of Martin's Defense Committee has given me a priceless education about the system of ruthless repression which exists in the U. S. In particular, it has opened my eyes more fully to the racist judicial system which I have seen to be nothing more than the machinery of state repression controlled completely by the ruling interests and used to get rid of those who oppose their lecherous greed and thievery. I urge all those who still harbor some naive faith in the goodness of America's courts, cops, mass-media, liberal establishment, etc., to seriously study the letters contained herein. The wraps of liberal bourgeois democracy, herein removed by an angry Black man who has suffered 45 years under this "free" society, cover a racist, militarist -- that is to say, fascist monstrosity.

Of special interest is the discussion of the psychiatric hearing. The brilliant exposure of the subjective, reactionary nature of American psychiatry as manifested by the psychiatrists who labeled Martin a "paranoid personality" is a bold answer by this high school "drop-out" to those philistine skeptics who deny the capability of the oppressed to rule the social order themselves.

The Martin Sostre Defense Committee wants to share the manifold object lessons of the case with all partisans of the oppressed everywhere. The financial situation, however, dictates that the first printing of this edition of the Journal will have to be a limited one. We hope that you will utilize the experience contained in Martin's words and that you will show it to friends and comrades-in-arms who may benefit from the experiences of Martin Sostre and

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The occasion of the second printing of Letters From Prison, less than a year after the first, provides an opportunity for a short summing-up of the intervening developments in the struggle. Martin is still in solitary confinement as of this writing. He has been there since June 25, 1968. He has not been allowed to write or speak to anyone except his appeal attorney, Joan Franklin and attorneys from the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. Press coverage in both the bourgeois and liberation newspapers has increased during the past year. On February 7, 1969, Governor Nelson Rockefeller made one of his infrequent visits to Buffalo for a staged "Town Meeting." He was totally unprepared for the demands for freedom for Martin which "greeted" him throughout the stormy session.

On February 22, a large demonstration was held outside Nelson Rockefeller's offices in New York City demanding freedom for Martin.

The Afro-Asian Bookstore-in-Exile, manned by student activists at the University of Buffalo, has, since its inception in April 1968, continued Martin's work of distributing liberation literature. On April 15, the Student Polity, official student government at the University of Buffalo, passed a resolution expressing solidarity with Martin Sostre and demanding permanent material facilities for his bookstore on the campus.

In general, interest in the case has been on the upswing for over a year. At a May Day rally in Buffalo, "Free Martin Sostre - Free Huey Newton" banners were proudly carried. Communications have been received from all over the U.S. and several foreign countries. This new printing and the coming publication of another MSDC pamphlet, Martin Sostre in Court, will -- we hope -- further accelerate the interest and support for this brave liberation fighter.

-- 5 May 1969

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED -- NOW!

- I enclose \$ _____ for Defense Committee work in behalf of Martin Sostre and his co-defendant, Mrs. Geraldine Robinson.
- I pledge \$ _____ on or before _____.
- I enclose \$ _____ for _____ copies of BOSTON GLOBE reprint by Wm. Worthy (see pg.6) (10¢ each; 12 for \$1.00; 50 for \$3.50; 100 for \$6.00)
- I enclose \$ _____ for _____ copies of "LETTERS FROM PRISON" (an insight into Martin Sostre the man through his highly articulate 76-page journal) at \$1.00 per copy, plus 25¢ for mailing.

(please print)

NAME (Mr., Mrs., Miss) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

MARTIN SOSTRE DEFENSE COMMITTEE
P.O. Box 382, Ellicott Station
Buffalo, New York 14205

Gerald J. Gross, Chairman Mrs. Jeanette Merrill, Secretary

* THIS ORGANIZATION NO LONGER EXISTS



THE CRUSADER

NEWSLETTER

ROBERT F. WILLIAMS, Publisher -- IN EXILE --

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AN APPEAL: SUPPORT FRAME-UP VICTIMS

Fascist forces in the U.S.A. are now endeavoring to create a national state of hysteria. Consequently, many Afro-American militants who refuse to sell out and who cannot be intimidated are being framed and imprisoned. A vicious campaign is being waged to destroy effective and potential ghetto leaders. Chief among these are: Max Stanford, Huey Newton, Rap Brown, Leroi Jones, Martin Sostre and Herman Ferguson. Many others are framed in Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Newark, Detroit, Cleveland, in the South and on the West Coast. As a matter of collective security all anti-fascist forces and partisans of justice must stir themselves and give financial and active support to these victims of fascist kangarooism and tyranny. Oppose the court mob with massive resistance!



After Rob Williams' hitch in the U.S. Marines, he organized the first armed self-defense guard of modern times in Monroe, N.C. He fought in and out of the courts for the right of Afro-Americans to be free.

Hounded from his own country and barred from European countries because of U.S. government pressure, he now resides in People's China. He has announced his determination to return to the U.S. for a showdown with his enemies.

He is the author of "Negroes With Guns" and the recently published pamphlet, "Listen, Brother!"

his Committee.

This has been a touchstone case from the very beginning. As mentioned above, the betrayal of Martin by the white middle-class liberals and pseudo-radicals and by the establishment mis-leaders of the Black community is extremely significant. Members of the Defense Committee have, from time to time, been confronted by the unofficial agents of the oppressor in the guise of self-styled "radicals" who have sought to dissuade us from our efforts to give revolutionary aid and support to Martin. We have met the cynical rumor-mongers everywhere so eager to unofficially serve the oppressor who viciously shoots down the Black people and poor whites who seek to better their miserable lot -- who slaughters the poor of the world by the millions when they dare defy his authority.

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Our position has always been the unconditional defense of any Black man, woman or child being lynched by the racist mob -- even though that mob be the very same men who own and rule this country. We uphold every man's right to a fair trial by his own people -- his peers -- and expose and condemn the racist mob. Further, we uphold the basic right of the oppressed Black people to rebel against inhuman conditions. We know that no one man can cause a rebellion -- as Martin was originally charged -- not even as brilliant and dynamic a leader as Martin Sostre. In blaming individuals like Martin, the ruling racists are only seeking to cover their own crimes of looting the very lives of America's Black people. To the liberals, pseudo-radicals and pseudo-socialists these elementary principles of human decency must forever remain a book "with seven seals."

On the other hand, to those who have contributed to the Defense Fund and who have supported the many meetings, fund-raising affairs, street demonstrations, etc., and who continue their partisan support for Martin through the thick and thin of it all -- victory shall be ours! It is our conviction that the oppressor can only be defeated if people are willing to pull together and sacrifice for one another. This is the true meaning of solidarity -- and this is what you have so meaningfully shown. Let us continue to work together and fight for the liberation of all the oppressed of the world!

DEFEND BLACK LIBERATION WITH DEEDS!

NO MORE FRAME-UPS! FREE MARTIN SOSTRE NOW!

Gerald Gross

Gerald Gross, Chairman

Martin Sostre Defense Committee

- Martin Sostre And The Fight Against Solitary Confinement
MAY 16, 2016 BY GARRETT
FELBER <http://www.aaihs.org/martin-sostre-and-the-fight-against-solitary-confinement/>

DEDICATION

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The Philosophical Society is deeply honored and most proud to dedicate its Journal of 1968 to Martin Sostre, revolutionary Black Nationalist liberation fighter and victim of a racist frame-up in Buffalo, New York.

Although not a "professional philosopher of the official academies," i. e., the American Universities, Martin Sostre is a philosopher in the truest sense of the word. In fact, he is a philosopher in the only sense that has ever had any vital significance -- as a professional revolutionary.

Like Socrates of Athens, who taught the youth to inquire into the "how and why of things," Sostre showed the Black youth of the Buffalo ghetto how to question and analyze the world and "tell it like it is."



Unlike Socrates, however, Martin cast his lot, not with the young aristocrats of the slaveowning class, but with the oppressed Black people of America and the poor of the world. He has followed in the footsteps of Malcolm X and stands beside Robert F. Williams and other Black militants struggling for the complete emancipation of all modern-day slaves and serfs.

And, at this very moment, while the academicians, hermetically sealed in the sterile and lifeless chambers where they pursue their reactionary studies, snicker to themselves at the idea of elevating Martin Sostre above Socrates, the oppressed all over the world are rising up in a total affirmation of the position which Martin Sostre and other revolutionary thinkers of this era espouse. Let them snicker! It is the oppressed and those who have cast their lot with the oppressed -- not the privileged and those hired apologists who willingly defend the privileged -- who shall move history forward and be honored by the future generations of man.

-- Editorial Staff
Philosophical Society

**SOUTHERN
JUSTICE
NORTHERN
STYLE**

-- "We must fight in the assemblies; we must fight in the streets. We must make war on all fronts."

-- "We can no longer afford to peacefully co-exist with racist judicial tyranny and kangarooism based on an insensate class and racial caste system."

-- "America's racist courts have assumed the despotic posture of institutionalized lynch mobs enjoying the sanctimonious solicitude of the state's ritualistic buffoonery." 69

-- "Next to naked violence and unmitigated terror, racist America's bigoted court system is the cardinal scourge of the powerless Black and white masses. The constitutional myth about 'trial by one's peers' is a cardinal sacrilege against the sacredness of truth."

Rob Williams

-- "And we have heard stories where they have lynched Black people, and right while they were lynching that Black man, you could see them getting their kicks, the thrill, while they do it."

Malcolm X

**Martin's Struggle Against
'the Law'
in Buffalo, Mississippi**

\$1,000 Is Raised to Aid Negro Leader Jailed in \$25,000 Bail

Philadelphia Tribune

BUFFALO — A defense committee which has already raised over \$1000 has been formed to aid Martin Sostre, militant Negro leader who has begun his seventh month in jail.

Sostre, in jail because he could not raise \$25,000 bail, was arrested last June on what he called "a phony narcotics and assault charge."

When he was arrested, he told reporters, "My real 'crime' in the eyes of Buffalo's racist rulers is that I made my Afro-Asian Bookstore an information center, and an inspiration to the ghetto's rebellious youth."

Felicetta Tells HCUA Extreme Left Groups Led Sostre Protest

Buffalo Evening News Bureau

WASHINGTON, June 21—An extreme leftist group played a prominent role in the campaign to arouse support for a black nationalist agitator who was being tried in Buffalo as a narcotics seller, Buffalo Police Commissioner Frank N. Felicetta told the House Committee on Un-American Activities Thursday.

Commissioner Felicetta testified that the arrest and trial of Martin Sostre last year was followed by daily picketing of the courtroom and jail and by distribution of leaflets in his behalf by persons connected with the Buffalo Youth Against War & Fascism (YAWF).

Grand Jury Will Get Riot Case

Police to Skip City Court

Charges of arson and inciting a riot against a man who was arrested Friday night and labeled a leading figure in last month's East Side disorders will be taken directly to the grand jury.

Asst. Det. Chief Michael A. Amico told The Courier-Express Monday those charges against the suspect — Martin Sostre, 44, of 1412 Jefferson Ave., proprietor of the Afro-Asian Book Store at that address—are being presented directly to avoid "parading our witnesses" through City Court for a preliminary hearing.

The detective said he was concerned for the safety of police informants in the case, adding that their lives had been threatened.

JULY 20, 1967

Leaflets Say Sostre Victim of Frame-Up

Judge Denies Sostre Motion For Trial in Another Court

County Judge Frederick M. Marshall refused today to disqualify himself from presiding over the narcotics-sale trials of Martin Sostre, operator of the African-Asian Bookstore, 1412 Jefferson Ave.

The request was made by Sostre, who has insisted on defending himself before the court. "I wish to request that you disqualify yourself . . . you are nothing but a racial bigot in judicial robes," the defendant told Judge Marshall today.

Sostre said the fact that "not one other person in Erie County Jail has \$25,000 bail . . . proves that you are using me as a scapegoat."

Referring to the bail, Sostre told the court "I wouldn't leave Buffalo. Buffalo is my home. I want to be here when Detroit comes to Buffalo."

BULLETIN

Martin Sostre sentenced to 31-41 years. Hurried to Attica within hour of sentencing. Atty. Clarence Maloney retained for appeal and case of Mr. Sostre's co-defendant Mrs. Geraldine Robinson. Martin Sostre Defense Committee, P. O. Box 382 Ellicott Station, N. Y., 14205 - Funds needed immediately. Story next week.

report from jail



to my

revolutionary friends

Report From Jail to My Revolutionary Friends

First let me thank you for your moral and financial support without which we -- Geraldine Robinson and I -- could not survive this frame-up by the enemy. Since paper is very scarce and space is therefore limited, I will dispense with some of the details of the frame-up which you are already familiar with.

Several weeks ago the enemy oppressors -- who viewed with alarm the growing number of youths hanging out in the Afro-Asian Bookshop and their suddenly increased interest in Black nationalist and socialist literature (which I gave free or on credit to those who lacked the money to purchase it) evidently decided that the increased youth activity around the Bookshop posed a large enough threat to require immediate action; and so they made their Gestapo-like raid on the Bookshop, beat me up, pushed Geraldine around, framed us with a sale of narcotics, wrecked the Bookshop and stole everything of value.

While in Erie County Jail under \$50,000 bail, and charged with arson and starting the recent "riot" here in Buffalo, in addition to the above said narcotics charge, I had an unexpected visitor with a strange message. This visitor was an Uncle Tom lawyer-politician who was aspiring to become one of the accommodating Negro leaders. He informed me that there was talk in the Black community of another "riot" during the weekend (this visitor came on July 27th, Thursday) and the power structure had sent him to request that I send this Uncle Tom to the main "leaders" so that Uncle Tom could find out from them their demands or grievances and present them to the power structure. In this way, he said, bloodshed could be avoided because the city officials had informed him that next time they would show the "rioters" no mercy; that his sole interest was to avoid bloodshed and loss of property by interposing himself between "our people and the power structure" to see if the issue could be negotiated peacefully. I replied that assuming the untenable hypothesis that I would send him to the "gang leaders", they would not let him act as their spokesman because he was not one of us at the grass-roots; we did not trust him. I reminded him that until recently (when he lost his County job) he had been most zealous in prosecuting our people on behalf of the oppressor and that he had sent to prison some of the same youths that he now sought to represent. Moreover, I continued, to divulge the names and addresses of ghetto militants, if one knew them, would only insure their arrest by police officials. Undaunted by what he probably considered my stubbornness in view of his repeated protestations of sincerity and honesty, he then suggested a meeting in court on the following day

1. ^ HUAC There were three, according to Police Commissioner Frank Felicetta
2. ^ Frame Up, at 10:30. The first was at 1412 and a half Jefferson Ave. A second was at 289 High

Subcommittee Hearing last August and the press, the psychiatric examination, the interference with my mail, and the severing of the indictment originally placed against Geraldine and me, etc. are, of necessity, defensive acts (contrived to protect the original frame-up) resting on a rotten foundation. It is easy to see, therefore, why their defensive acts became untenable at the slightest challenge; the greater the challenge, the more hasty and ill-contrived defenses must the frightened oppressor put up to shore up his crumbling position and protect the original frame-up from exposure; but since every defense he puts up is based on the rotten foundation, each defense makes him more vulnerable than before and hastens his eventual exposure and defeat.

The U. S. faces a parallel dilemma in Vietnam. It is being defeated by midget Vietnam because its very reason for being in Vietnam in the first place is unjustifiable. Therefore, regardless of what the U. S. does in Vietnam, it cannot defend its presence there either militarily or politically -- as events are proving. Each new shipment of U. S. troops to Vietnam provides a new target for the V. C. to ambush; every U. S. base or stronghold is convertible into a trap like Khe Sanh; every lie told to the American people -- such as our winning the war, and the bogus attack on U. S. warships in Tonkin Gulf -- is exposed. Only by challenging and opposing their lies and acts in the streets, courtroom and battlefield will we defeat the fascist oppressors.

Martin

"It's terrible that the crooks are on the outside and the good people in the jails."

-- Mae Mallory

"Malcolm X developed his ideology in jail. In jail you are faced with nothing but the bare facts of imprisonment, and this is exactly what the Black masses are facing on the outside. I would say that the jails are the universities of the Black masses."

-- Kathleen Cleaver

"For Black militants, experience in jail parallels the experience of imprisonment which the Black masses have in the ghettos."

-- Bobby Seale

The Struggle Against Oppression

66

March 1, 1968

Dear Jerry,

Received yours dated February 20th and am glad that I succeeded -- despite the strenuous efforts of "Mad Dog" Marshall to block it -- in pulling the legal and psychiatric covers off the goons of the racist-militarist power structure and exposing the methods employed by them to frame-up, coerce, intimidate and eliminate (via prison, insane asylum and assassination) those who oppose their fascist policies.

It is the duty of us activists who are fortunate enough to be locked in combat with the fascists, not only to vigorously struggle against them with every weapon at our disposal, but to dramatize the struggle, the issues, our tactics, and the viciousness, cruelty and reactionary nature of the oppressor. [Only by personal example can we hope to reach, awaken and inspire the masses to action against fascist oppression.]

The inspiration, example and hope which the heroic struggle of the people of Vietnam gives to millions of little people like us all over the world best illustrates this point. Another heroic example was that of the thousands of Black freedom fighters of Watts, Detroit, Newark, Buffalo, Rochester and other cities who, though unarmed, fought against the tanks unleashed against them by the frightened rulers after they defeated the combined forces of the city and state police goons. The anti-war demonstration in Washington, D. C. last fall and the demonstrators' defiance of the awesome display of force employed by the frightened top dogs to fend off the angry masses from the very door of their lair was another inspiring and heroic dramatization of the struggle which awakened millions of people the world over. On a smaller scale and local level -- but equally important, inspiring and heroic -- are the thousands of small anti-war picket lines in hundreds of cities -- like the ones by our group here in Buffalo -- who daily brave the assaults, jailings, abuse, coercion and intimidation of the police goons, paid scabs, fascists and brain-washed fools.

With all the above heroic examples to guide and inspire me, how can I take a different stand and still consider myself a fighter against oppression and militarism? I was fighting the oppressor outside. I am still following the same tactics. As in the case of the bookshop, I am refusing to allow these fascist goons to coerce and intimidate me into giving up and cooperating in the legal lynching they have been struggling to give me. The recent backfiring of their tactic of subjecting me to psychiatric intimidation is a case in point.

Since the original arrest was a frame-up, the fantastic \$50,000 bail, Felicetta's and Amico's lies to the Senate Internal

between him, the "gang leaders" and myself -- if any of the leaders were in the courtroom. He said that he had noticed many neighborhood youths present at every court proceeding in my case and that possibly some of them were leaders and would be present at the hearing scheduled for the following day. He further stated that he could arrange a private room for the conference. Seeing this as an opportunity to talk with my friends in semi-privacy, receive news from the outside, expose the Uncle Tom and alert the community and militant youth, I told him that I would see him in court the next day and that he should have everything ready. //

The next day (before I went to court) I had another visitor at the jail. Mr. Boccio, the public defender, came to reiterate Uncle Tom's offer and to volunteer his office for the conference. That afternoon Boccio made the necessary arrangements to use his office and he asked me as soon as I entered the courtroom if any of the young "gang leaders" were present? I told him no. Others were present, however, who would relate the message of negotiation to the leaders. Boccio asked me to pick out those who I wanted in the conference room. I picked out eight or nine friends including a spokesman for my Defense Committee and Geraldine. Uncle Tom did not appear in the courtroom that day. Before the conference got fairly under way, the same district attorney who, a few days earlier, had asked the court to set bail at \$50,000, now stuck his head in the room and announced to Mr. Boccio that he would not object if my bail was reduced to \$25,000. Mr. Boccio replied that he would make such application after the conference -- this being an inducement and bribe for my cooperation. However, they were to be disappointed. I used this conference to my advantage to exchange news and views with my friends and to expose the trickery which the officials were employing to discover and jail the militants of the community and thus attempt to prevent the rumored recurrence of revolt that weekend.

Although the Afro-Asian Bookshop was the only outlet for liberation literature in the Afro community and, therefore, the power base of revolutionary political philosophy, it was not until quite recently (June and July) that large numbers of youth began showing more than a casual interest in the literature. They even started hanging out in and around the Bookshop and making the shop a sort of meeting place. It would be easy to explain the sudden upturn in the interest in and sale of my literature by saying that this came about as the natural consequence or cumulative effect of the thousands of Marxist-oriented and Black nationalist books, magazines, pamphlets and leaflets which I have sold, loaned out and given away during the last two years. But I would be lying if I told you that, my friends, and by misleading you I would be helping the enemy. Now this is not to say that I wasn't making any

3. ^ The Alternative Community in Buffalo, 1965-76 B. Martin Sostre Bookseller Turned Black Revolutionary (1967). The Buffalonian, 2001. Retrieved 7 July 2011.
4. ^ Powell, Elwin. "B. Martin Sostre Bookseller Turned Black Revolutionary (1967)". The Alternative Community in Buffalo, 1965-76: The Buffalonian. Retrieved December 20, 2011.

headway in spreading the word because I was. But the pace, ¹² though steady, was very slow. In comparison, the sudden upturn covering the period of June 1, 1967 through July 14th (the day of the Gestapo attack) equaled or bettered the previous six month period. I believe I know the reason for this phenomenon.

It just so happened that during the month of June there prevailed in the Afro community in Buffalo an impending revolt. There had already been several minor skirmishes with the police in which neighborhood crowds took arrested persons out of the hands of the police. Tension built up which finally exploded at the end of June when the police supplied the needed spark -- as usual. During the three nights of the revolt, when all the shops in my area -- both Black and white owned -- closed early, I stayed open until 3 A.M., thereby providing a refuge (from the tear gas being indiscriminately sprayed in the streets by the police) for many passers-by and freedom fighters. The shop stayed packed and the cops outside didn't like it, but there was nothing they could do. I had the right to stay open -- as long as I wanted to. Needless to mention, I made political hay in denouncing the police brutality going on outside to the large crowds in the store. Then, after a rousing speech, I would go to the shelf and pick up an appropriate book or pamphlet, like Robert F. Williams' Negroes With Guns or Pre-Civil War Black Nationalism or a pamphlet by Malcolm X or



Liberator Magazine, etc. and show them a photo or a drawing or read an appropriate passage. With interest stimulated I would make several sales and create several new freedom fighters. Now even previous to the revolt, I have always agitated, discussed and debated the current political issues in the same manner. But during the revolt (and for the next two weeks when the images of the many brutal acts were still fresh in people's minds) I had something concrete that was currently happening right outside for everyone to see -- namely, the invasion of the Black community by droves of white armed police who were indiscriminately shooting tear gas and bullets, beating up

and arresting Black men, women and children and committing other depravities. All that was missing were the cattle prods. No one could argue against these concrete facts!

The two weeks following the revolt (until I was framed on July 14th) were the best I ever had -- politically,

5. ^ Churchill, Ward, Wall, Jim Vander (2002). *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*. South End Press. p. 61. ISBN 978-0-89608-646-3.
6. ^ Gross, Gerald J. (March 23, 1972). "Letter to the Editor: The Case of Martin Sostre". *The New York Review of Books*. Retrieved September 3, 2015.

also be obstructed and confiscated as was the legal document which I sent to you attached to my letter to you of June 4, 1968. I will give it to you (as well as the minutes of the pre-trial proceedings I mentioned in my previous letters) when you visit me.

I am also being prevented from doing research on my appeal because these people are withholding from me most of my law books -- including issues of the Harvard Law Review which I received last month -- legal papers, notes, copies of legal documents pertaining to my case, etc. They are even withholding from me my Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, necessary for my legal work, which I brought to prison from Erie County Jail. 65

As I mentioned to you in my last letter, the Warden would not give me the last letter you wrote to me. All these actions are motivated by racism and we can prove it. No one else is subjected to this oppression or restrictions for the reason he is using to oppress me, namely: "practising law without a law degree". I am challenging this in court as well as his interference with my appeal by withholding my legal materials and his subjecting me to unusual punishment.

I am being held in virtual incommunicado. I am not permitted to write my family until after thirty days. The only one I am permitted to write is you. But as I said, the Warden has obstructed your last letter and has refused to give it to me. He read me one sentence from it and said that that was all he wanted me to know. No other inmate is subjected to this treatment. This oppression and racism must be challenged now and brought out in the open. When the obstructed document is subpoenaed, the real reason for its obstruction will become manifest to all.

July 11, 1968

Although I wrote you yesterday I am writing again today so as to enable you to follow the sequence of events and circumstances which are forming a definite pattern too unmistakable to be denied and substantiating the proposed action I mentioned in my previous letters.

Today, July 11th, I was informed by the Principal Keeper that I had two prison infractions against me, whereupon I was taken out of my cell to a room where they held "court" and I was charged with having in the property they had withheld from me a letter belonging to another inmate and further charged with writing to Jeanette Merrill under my sister's name. My explaining to them that my sister's address is Leticia Sostre, c/o E. Merrill, which is already on record, proved unavailing and I was punished to 90 days loss of good time and had my sister removed from my writing list. I am thus, no longer permitted to write to her. I am being systematically cut off from all contacts in the outside world and in the prison.

pending application for removal would not be allowed to leave the prison. He further told me that I was practising law without a law degree by sending you the motion with Geraldine Robinson's name on it. Although I pointed out to him that not only was Miss Robinson my co-defendant (involved in my case making unavoidable mentioning her in all my papers related to events and facts in the case) but I was sending those papers to you, my attorney - not Miss Robinson. Even if I had sent them to her that still would not be a violation of any penal law, rules or regulations of the prison or the Correction Law. The Warden also told me that he would not give me your latest letter and that he would not allow you to bring a secretary on your next visit.

He then placed me in "segregation" (see Correction Law Section 140) and took all of my legal papers, law books and all property. The only one I am now allowed to write to is you, my attorney.

Only yesterday did I receive some of my legal papers and books back but they are still withholding important documents and notes which are essential to my doing research and prosecuting my appeal and other legal motions.

This obstruction of my mail to and from you, my attorney, and the deliberate obstruction and confiscation of that important legal document is a violation of my constitutional and civil rights and I will challenge this under the Civil Rights Act inasmuch as the reason for the obstruction was to conceal acts of racism and racial oppression being perpetrated upon me and our people.

I would like to see you as soon as possible so that I may discuss this and other issues with you and so that I may give you the minutes of pre-trial proceedings and other documents that I mentioned in my previous letters.

July 9, 1968

I am still under the same conditions described to you in my letter dated June 28, 1968 - namely, being oppressed and subjected to unusual punishment solely because I mailed to you the legal document dealing with the political and racial aspects in my case which the authorities here did not want to become known to you and the NAACP.

Although I received a few days ago the order we were expecting from the Appellate Division 4th Department allowing the appeal to be prosecuted on typewritten briefs (five copies) and directing the Erie County Clerk to send me a copy of the transcript of the trial and further providing that the appeal be placed on the Court Calendar only when the briefs and record are filed, I am unable to send it to you for fear that it may

that is -- even despite the fact that the firemen, in collusion with the police, broke out my windows and played two high pressure fire hoses inside the Bookshop under the pretext of putting out a fire which occurred in the tavern next door -- and never got near my shop. Although I suffered extensive water damage, my good friend Jerry Gross helped restock my shelves by donating several hundred new and used books, magazines and pamphlets. The plywood emergency enclosures covering the front of my store as well as the other three stores in the same building (one was vacant and the other two closed because of the fire) gave me an idea which proved very effective. In the fashion of the wall posters put up by the Red Guards in Red China, I started pasting thought-provoking articles and photos of the revolt, anti-Vietnam War articles and photos of the atrocities committed by the U.S., etc. Immediately passers-by began to stop and read and discuss the articles, cartoons and photos; many would come into the store to buy books and magazines and discuss the articles. What I had done was to convert the entire front of the building on the southwest corner of Woodlawn and Jefferson into a huge community bulletin board and each day I would paste new articles and photos cut from newspapers, magazines and pamphlets on the board to keep public interest alive. A few days before the cops raided the bookshop several people brought me newspaper and magazine clippings which they themselves had selected. According to my recollections, one was on the aftermath of the Watts "riot", one on Estevanico, a Black slave who explored the southwest United States with the Spaniards, another on Stokely Carmichael and several others the subjects of which I can't recall. This -- to me -- was tangible proof of the approval of the bulletin board by the community.

The cops, however, did not like it one bit and their angry glares at me and at the groups of people who were reading the bulletin board left no doubt that they considered this adaptation of the Chinese Red Guard wall posters a threat to themselves and their bosses. I noticed also during this period of uneasy lull following the revolt (June 30th to July 14th) that, in addition to the increased number of police cars patrolling the area (with their windshields, back and side windows taped to prevent their shattering when struck by bricks and bottles), more cars appeared carrying police brass and white civilian high officials and these would slow down upon approaching the area of the Bookshop and all their attention would focus on the Bookshop and the entire length of the bulletin board. It became evident that our activity had come to the attention of the high officials. One morning when I came to open the store I noticed that some of the posters had been ripped off and that unsuccessful attempts had been made to rip the others off (they were too tightly glued to be ripped off). A taxi driver who works on the night shift came to the shop an hour after I opened to inform me that he had observed the local cops ripping the posters down after I closed the shop at 2 or 3 A.M. I immediately put up more articles and photos to replace the ones ripped off or damaged. I used more glue to paste them

to make it harder to rip off. A sort of battle developed between the cops and me during the five days preceding the raid and framing of Geraldine and me on the dope charge. 14

Another significant fact which, no doubt, reached the ears of the high officials and further alarmed them was word of the Afro Freedom Fighter (AFF), a mimeographed newspaper which was in its pre-publication stage. Two weeks before the revolt I had purchased a used Gestetner mimeo machine for \$100. I had already lined up the necessary personnel (writers, reporters, typists -- who all agreed to work on a volunteer basis until the paper became self-supporting -- all I still needed was a cartoonist). Had it not been for the fire the AFF would have been in print before my arrest. Before the fire and just previous to the revolt I was proudly displaying the machine (which I had in the shop) to many people and informing them that the AFF was going to be a genuine grass-roots community newspaper completely run and published by the militant youth of the community -- by us "little" people; that unlike any other local Black community newspaper, the AFF was going to "tell it like it is" and expose and denounce all those Black traitors who are selling out the Black community for the patronage crumbs which the ruling white oppressors dole out to them. I would miss no opportunity to let the people know (in the above language) what the policy of the AFF was to be. The overwhelming majority of the people to whom I talked were glad that such a newspaper was to be published. Many stated that this type of newspaper was long overdue in Buffalo.

As for the so-called Negro leaders in Buffalo, the revolt of June and its aftermath showed them up for what they really are: a group of parasitic opportunists who command neither a following, respect nor prestige in the Black community and are merely traitors, handpicked by the white ruling oppressors who appointed them "leaders" for the sole purpose of having the injustices and deprivations daily heaped upon the Black community, legitimized by their sanction and approval. During June and July these "leaders" -- preachers and politicians -- ran around the neighborhood like chickens with their heads cut off, pleading with the youths, begging, promising, but to no avail. The youth would not listen to them. Every time they opened their mouths, they put their feet in. They promised the youth jobs, but the youth answered them, "Who the hell said we were fighting for jobs? You miss the whole point, man! We can always get one of those hot and dirty, low-paying jobs. We don't want jobs, we want justice!"

The fact is that none of the established Black political groups, religious leaders or other organizations command the allegiance of the youth who comprise the largest and most dynamic segment of the Black community. If this is true then the next question should be: What must a Black revolutionary do to command the allegiance of the militant Black youth? I believe I have the answer.

June 10, 1968

Thank you for your letter of May 31 informing me of the list of lawyers in the Buffalo-Rochester-Syracuse area for Geraldine Robinson. Was glad to hear about the Chicago convention of the Republic of New Africa and your plans to visit me after June 17th. Re: list of legal publications, I didn't think that U.S. Law Week was that expensive. I believed the subscription was in the neighborhood of \$25 or \$30 a year. \$121 is too expensive. My Committee has sent me a subscription to the U.S. Supreme Court Reports at \$10 a year. Finances being what they are, I won't be able to afford many essential items, but I'll manage. Re: lawyer for Geraldine. Geraldine's main problem is not so much obtaining an attorney, since she has been resisting the Court's appointment of counsel. Her problem is obtaining a change of venue to Kings or New York County where she can obtain a fair and impartial trial. The reason I was forced to defend myself is because the original attorneys that the Committee obtained for the defense withdrew from the case because of the political pressure of the power structure in that racist town. All of the judges, the District Attorney's office and the Police and Sheriff Department are determined to convict us and make an example of us in order to terrorize and coerce the Black militants of Buffalo. 63

I am now finishing an application for Geraldine to be submitted to the Appellate Division for an order pursuant to Section 347, CCP to stay the trial to permit her to file application for removal (344, 346, CCP) on grounds that a fair and impartial trial cannot be had in Erie County. I will send you a copy for your review and suggestions.

Re: Kennedy assassination. Right-wing fascists are using this to disarm the people, pass laws curtailing constitutional rights and turn back the rising tide of militancy among 25 million Afro-Americans and allies. We must be vigilant and escalate our preparedness to prevent the planned takeover by right-wing elements. Victory will be ours.

June 28, 1968

On June 24, I sent a letter via certified mail to you containing three legal documents, namely, 1) a copy of Indictment #33508 entitled PEOPLE, ETC. VS. MARTIN SOSTRE AND GERALDINE ROBINSON, 2) a motion for stay of trial pending application for removal entitled PEOPLE, ETC. VS. MARTIN SOSTRE AND GERALDINE ROBINSON and 3) an order of the Appellate Division 4th Department dated March 7, 1968 entitled MARTIN SOSTRE VS. TUTUSKA, SHERIFF OF ERIE COUNTY.

The next day, June 25, I was summoned to the Warden's office where he told me that the motion for stay of trial

Letters From Green Haven to Attorney Joan Franklin

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May 22, 1968

With intelligent and capable persons such as you, your secretary and Mae assisting and guiding the Republic of New Africa in its first steps, its rapid development and emergence as a potent world power is assured.

Your assistance in the prosecution of my appeal spells certain defeat for the fascist power structure's determination to destroy me via their framed-up legal lynching - a tactic being increasingly employed by the alarmed power structure as a part of its futile program to destroy and intimidate all Black militants who actively oppose the oppression of our people. But the world-wide struggle for national liberation - of which the Afro-American struggle is merely a part - having developed its present momentum over a period of centuries of grinding slavery and oppression, will certainly not be stopped or even slowed regardless of what desperate means the oppressors employ.

I consider myself fortunate in having you and Mae and the forces of liberation which you both represent, in my corner. You have my complete trust and confidence in this legal and political struggle. I only regret that my limited knowledge of law, confinement, lack of access to legal materials and factual data precludes me from aiding you as I would like. However, as I mentioned when you visited, I shall aid you to the best of my ability.

As soon as I obtain the rest of the minutes of trial I shall send them to you. I have already made arrangements to have the rest of the papers - including the search warrant and underlying affidavit, informations, etc. - sent to you. On your next visit I shall give you the records in my possession which I previously mentioned. Except for confidential communications - which I will reserve for your visit - I'll keep you informed via mail of all developments, ideas and fruits of my legal research, etc.

Give my regards and thanks to Mae and my message to Rob is to "stand firm", for the escalation of the struggle for the liberation of our people proves the correctness of his stand. Regards also to Betty Shabazz and family; condolences to the family and comrades of our brother Bobby Hutton of Oakland whose murder shall not be forgotten.

In closing, I reiterate my allegiance to the Republic of New Africa and support for the stand of its Prime Minister and Cabinet. My message to them is to escalate the struggle for national liberation. The racist power structure is reeling from the blows of the forces of liberation the world over. Let's press harder than ever now and go "all the way" for victory is closer today than it was yesterday.

In my two years as owner of the Afro-Asian Bookshop I was continuously plagued by two main problems: 1) how to make the shop self-sufficient and 2) how to convert the shop into a political center for the Afro-American youth. I was working alone, without any experience, political connections, money, friends (I was a stranger in Buffalo, having made it my home when released from Attica Prison in October 1964), or sponsors. I had to play it by ear, through the time-consuming process of trial and error in the blending of different types of literature with rhythm and blues and jazz records, African carvings and lithographs, African type earrings, etc. When I first opened the Bookshop it was solely a bookshop with nothing but paperbacks on Negro and African history, culture and politics. Although some of the books were by Black nationalist writers, some by Marxists and others by traditional Negro writers, they did not sell. I then sought to diversify my meager stock by adding a few novels. I included the works of Richard Wright, James Baldwin and LeRoi Jones. These books sold better than the ones on history and politics, but not at the volume required to make the shop self-supporting. Luckily, I was working at Bethlehem Steel and able to pay the rent, light and phone bills out of my pay check.

Casting about for some means of attracting customers, I decided to adorn my walls with large lithographs of African subjects. I also displayed a few in my windows. They attracted a few customers who usually also purchased a book or magazine when I brought them to their attention. Shortly thereafter, I stocked some African woodcarvings. As soon as I put them in the window they began attracting curious passers-by who would come in to ask what the carvings represented, who made them, where did they come from, how much did they cost? It was surprising that many had never seen African carvings before. While the many inquiries did not result in the sale of many carvings, book sales did increase.

The Bookshop was still not self-sufficient, but after

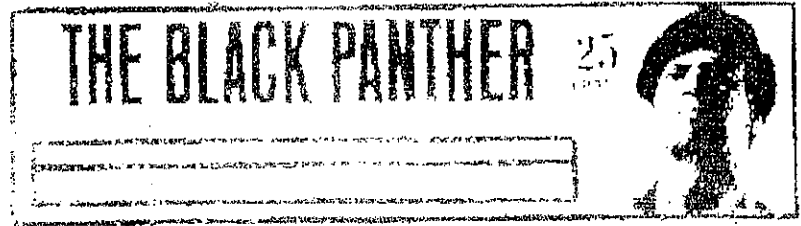


a year of experimentation with above-said stock and the addition of many different titles, the store at least began to pay its own rent, light and phone bills. I still had to use my Bethlehem Steel pay check to buy stock each week and put in 16 eight hours at the store without pay -- but at least the goal of making the store self-sufficient and self-supporting was in sight. I reasoned that if keeping the store open only eight hours daily achieved such a result, would not the final goal be achieved in half the time if I quit the Steel Plant and put in 15 or 16 hours a day at the shop? To be sure, quitting a \$135 a week job to depend on a store which wasn't paying for itself was very risky business. Several days later, while still undecided as to what step to take, the problem was resolved for me by something I saw in the street.

While walking down Jefferson Avenue, I passed a group of youths standing in front of one of the local record shops listening to the loudspeaker (all record shops in the Afro community have loudspeakers outside) blaring out a popular jazz number. The idea struck me as I watched them stomping their feet with the beat and enjoying the music. This was it! Why not add a record department to the Bookshop? Sell jazz and rhythm and blues records and place a loudspeaker outside. Music is the best form of advertisement in the Black community; it attracts attention because everyone loves music -- especially youths. The following pay day I went to a pawnshop and purchased a used record player, bought a ten inch television loudspeaker at a TV repair shop and set up my own music system by placing the loudspeaker outside the shop and wiring it to the record player. The next day I went to the local record distributor on Main Street and purchased \$50 worth of the latest records. So with an investment of about \$70 I was in the record business.

The reaction was instantaneous. As soon as I played the first record, heads turned toward the shop. Even pedestrians across the street would turn to look. People started coming in the store to purchase records. Some would browse and buy a magazine or book or carving. A lot of youths, including teenagers, started hanging out in the shop. Some requested that I play certain records which I did. In conversation, I would explain to them the tenets of Black nationalism, socialism and Afro-American history. I would illustrate my points by showing them photos and cartoons from books and magazines on the shelves. I taught continually -- giving out pamphlets free to those who had no money. I let them sit and read for hours in the store. Some would come back every day and read the same book until they finished it. This was the opportunity I had dreamed about -- to be able to help my people by increasing the political awareness of the youth. A month later, I quit my job at Bethlehem.

Being forced now by my decision to quit the Plant, to make the store not only self-supporting but also support me,



CAPITALISM PLUS RACISM

BUILDING A
COMMUNITY-BASED
ANTI-FASCIST
MOVEMENT

~~FASCISM~~

June 24, 1968

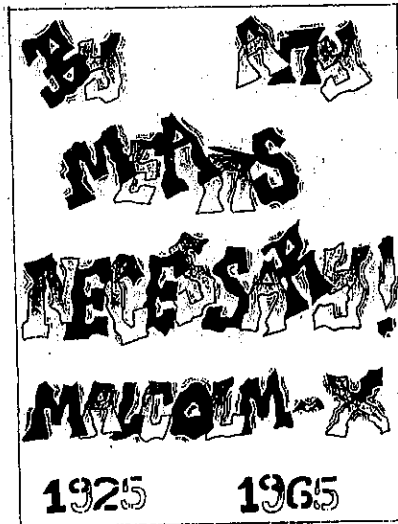
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It looks like the reactionaries are taking advantage of the Kennedy assassination to ram through laws curtailing individual liberties of the people and increasing the power of the guardians of the status quo - the police and prosecutors. Under the guise of a "crime control" bill, the police now have legal sanction for invading one's privacy through wiretapping and using illegally obtained statements (including those extracted in police stations) as evidence against the victim, in violation of the 4th amendment constitutional guarantee against self-incrimination.

Fear of the second phase of the present rebellion of militants - the armed phase to which things are now evolving - is motivating gun control legislation in a futile attempt to disarm the people. But as with all other measures designed to stem the tide of change, it will not succeed. It will backfire and merely expand the black market in guns created and nourished by the profit-hungry foreign and domestic gun manufacturers who want to capitalize on the increased self-defense needs of the oppressed. The increase stems, of course, from the vicious repressive measures being unleashed on militants by the more and more completely unfettered police goon squads. Taken together, these new developments - "no-knock", "stop-and-frisk", police wiretaps, admission in evidence of police induced statements and identifications, "anti-crime" and "gun control" bills, Warren's resignation and Rockefeller's bid to buy the presidency - spell: Right-wing takeover!



BAM THE PITT PANTHER ART ATTACK



BAM THE PITT PANTHER ART ATTACK

I kept it open an average of fifteen hours a day, seven days a week. Thus I was able to wring from the shop about \$60 a week in salary. So actually, the decision to quit the plant cost me a \$75 per week pay cut. I didn't mind that. The important thing was to pass the knowledge and political ideas which could free my people to them via the literature in the Bookshop and this is what I was doing. True, I was always pinched for money and I was always behind on a bill to a publisher or the landlord (sometimes I paid an overdue bill with the rent money or vice versa), and my shelves were never fully stocked, but I did manage to stay open. Slowly but surely, the Afro-Asian Bookshop was becoming the mecca for politically motivated local youth. Also, people came from Rochester, Syracuse, Lackawanna, Erie and Toronto to obtain literature which was unobtainable in those cities.

By the careful blending of revolutionary literature, protest novels, traditional Negro histories, paintings by local artists, African carvings, tikis and lithographs, jazz and rhythm and blues records, earrings, etc., an indigenous soul-atmosphere was created and projected which was so completely in tune with the consciousness and soul of the Afro youth that they instinctively identified themselves with it. Even so, I found that there was a further requirement. I have seen that a person not in tune with the mentality of the street youths can create a gulf between him and them and neutralize the soul-climate. This situation arose when I allowed a friend to operate the shop for a few weeks. Although a politically sophisticated Black nationalist with plenty of revolutionary enthusiasm, he antagonized the youths with his personality; he was too square and inflexible. He was driving them away, so I had to relieve him.

Although the effect of the indigenous soul-atmosphere fully manifested itself in May 1967, circumstances prevented me from taking advantage of it. I put a deposit on the mimeo (for the community newspaper) in May, making additional payments every week during May and June, which placed me under considerable financial strain. When I had just finished paying for it, the firemen's hosing caused me extensive water damage. Two weeks later I was framed by the police.

Of the thousands of titles which at one time or another passed on to and off of my shelves, one name attracted the Afro youth more than all the rest -- Malcolm X. Whether it was his autobiography, his speeches, the pamphlets and magazine articles about him, his L.P. records, his was the magical name which made them respond. His books would sell so fast that I had a hard time keeping my shelves stocked with his words. His books -- particularly his pamphlets which, selling for only 25¢ or 35¢ were within the financial reach of everyone -- functioned, therefore, as introductory manuals into revolutionary thought, the only philosophy which will free us from our oppressors.

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They would listen to Brother Malcolm because he was one of them, he talked their language -- the language of the ghetto street where the Black youth are freely able to express themselves -- relieve their frustrations -- tell it like it is -- without biting their tongues. All these qualities, the Black youth are in tune with. After reading and absorbing Malcolm's pamphlets, they then became receptive to the writing of other political thinkers like Rob Williams, Nkrumah, Mao and others, because they were then able to relate these writings to what Malcolm had said and could therefore easily perceive that their struggle for freedom lies squarely within the framework of the world liberation struggle.

The sum of the above is this: In order to command the allegiance of the Afro-American youth, militant Black leaders must organize, in their totality, all of the indigenous cultural forces that have meaning for and give substance to the outlook of the Afro youth. Through sheer necessity and trial and error, I gained enough experience in my two years of developing the Afro-Asian Bookshop to be able to establish a bookshop similar to mine for about \$600 and make it pay for itself. Now I know how, but gaining the knowledge took the better part of two years.

My only regret is that after so many sacrifices and being so close to reaching my goal, I was stopped by the police. Although my Defense Committee is working hard to raise the bail money (I am being held under \$25,000 which requires \$1,000 cash plus collateral to cover the \$25,000), they may not be able to do so. Should I be freed on bail, I know I shall succeed in helping to organize the Black youth. Everything is in readiness awaiting my return: the East-West Bookshop at 767 Jefferson Avenue (being managed by my help-mate and co-defendant, Miss Geraldine Robinson) where the remnants of the Afro-Asian Bookshop were moved, the Gestetner mimeo machine for the publishing of the Afro Freedom Fighter, and a

I was selling dope! No doubt his "white masters" had him do this to alienate the Afro-American community from my cause and prevent them from coming to my aid.

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May 28, 1968

There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that I will be out soon, either having my appeal reversed in the courts or by being liberated by the universal forces of liberation. The fact that the militarists of this country are being defeated in Vietnam and are already engaged with an escalated rebellion at home by the oppressed Afro-American people and their white allies are sure signs that the power structure is on its way out. They are now in their last days and soon they won't be able to oppress anybody because they themselves will be before the people's courts to be punished for their crimes against humanity as were the German war criminals at Nuremberg.

June 5, 1968

Since this is a political case it must be fought on a political level and all the issues must be brought out. Otherwise, we will be going along with the ruling class's program and acquiescing in the lynching. Of course, they would like to omit the fact that they had the Afro-Asian Bookshop under surveillance and that I was originally charged with riot and arson; that they took books and personal documents in the raid; that I was made the scapegoat for the June rebellion, etc. If they can suppress these facts - the political aspects of the case - then Geraldine and I will emerge as common dope peddlers and our defense of the politically motivated frame-up will be nullified. This is why the court struggled so hard to try to force me to accept the court-appointed attorneys (even having me committed to pressure me) knowing that the attorneys would abandon the political aspects and "fight the case" - if it can be called "fighting" - according to the court's program and rules. In the Spock case, by precluding the issue of the legality of the War, the court has effectively deprived the defendants of their defense since the legality of the War is the issue. It is like denying one who has killed an intruder in his home - in defense of his family - of the right to show that the deceased was an intruder, and instead, limiting the defendant's defense to the sole issue of whether or not he killed the deceased. Yes, they are very vicious; but people are waking up. The frame-up of the RAM defendants whose trial has started in Queens County should further wake the people up. Answer soon and let everyone know that I am "standing firm".

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Letters From Green Haven Prison

Within one-half hour after his sentencing, Martin Sostre was shipped off to Attica Prison near Batavia, N.Y., the site of his previous 12 year imprisonment. He remained there only overnight and then was rushed by prison authorities to Green Haven Prison in Stormville, N.Y. (outside of Poughkeepsie). Besides desiring to get Martin as far away from his Defense Committee as possible, it seems likely that the authorities wished to prevent Martin from taking advantage of the relationships and respect that he had developed during his previous term at Attica. It was Sostre who organized and led the legal struggle at Attica which eventually resulted in a Supreme Court ruling that Muslim services were to be allowed in the prison. And this was only one facet of a constant fight which Martin had waged at Attica on behalf of his fellow inmates against the brutality and dehumanizing qualities of the American penal system.

The following are a few excerpts from Martin's recent correspondence which show that even the three days in "the hole" when he first arrived at Green Haven have not succeeded in breaking him. He is filled with hope -- confident of the inevitable victory of the forces of liberation over those who unrelentingly oppress the vast masses of this planet's humanity.

May 12, 1968

I am glad that the Afro-Asian Bookshop in Exile is successful. Besides the income it brings in for our legal expenses, it is a sower of seeds in the struggle against the power structure. Don't worry about their attempt to silence me with the 41 year sentence; it won't hold up in the appeal courts. There are more constitutional errors than you can shake a stick at.

May 22, 1968

Only by a complete awareness of what the entire struggle is and what role everyone is playing, namely, who is on our side and who is on the enemy's side, can we successfully oppose those trying to oppress and oppose us. Feeling sorry for those about to destroy us is a sure sign that we are vulnerable and if we don't "tighten up", not only will we be tricked through our misplaced emotions, but we are subject to being used by the crafty enemy against our own comrades. Just before my trial a new inmate was placed on my floor in Erie County Jail and he informed me that _____ had been spreading the rumor in the Afro community that he knew for a fact that

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sizable following of youths from the Bookshop.

I feel helpless sitting idle here in jail, for if I were out on bail I could, in addition to organizing, get my old job back at Bethlehem Steel. Since I still belong to the Steelworkers' Union, they would get me the job and take the pressure off my friends in the Defense Committee.

But should I not be freed and should our enemies who framed me succeed in putting me away for thirty years, I would not mind so much if I knew that this report has contributed in any degree toward a knowledge of how to organize the Black youth of this country. The burden of a long sentence would be lightened by the satisfaction of knowing that the mission set out for me, that of helping my people free themselves from the oppressor, is being accomplished.

Thanking you, I am your Afro Freedom Fighter,

Brother Martin

Erie County Jail
Buffalo, New York
August 2, 1967

Martin Sostre

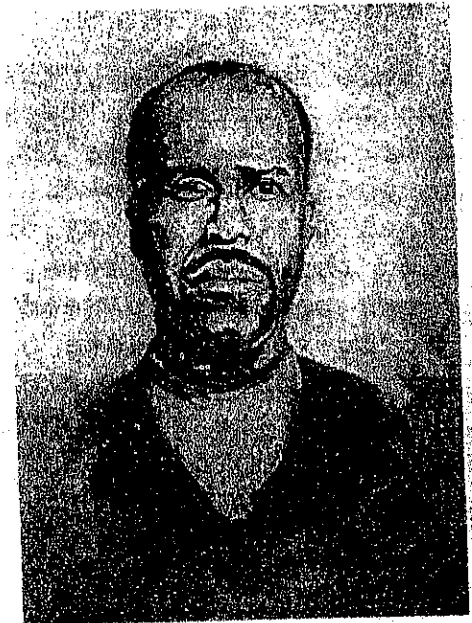


photo of Martin Sostre as a young man by Jerry Ross (painter)

"I greet you from prison and thank all of you who are supporting me in my defense against the frame-up designed to destroy me and the bookshop which some of you are familiar with which they, the power structure, say is inflammatory and Marxist, etc.

My position is that, although the literature may be objectionable to some, and I have had threats to cease the sale of this type of literature, I have the constitutional right to sell all literature which promotes freedom of thought and discloses facts which are hidden from us by the controlled news media.

If this is a crime, then I must always be a criminal because as a bookseller who believes in freedom of thought in this so-called democracy, I feel that it is my duty to always bring this literature, not only to my own people who need it the most, but also to you students of the white community and to all people who are seeking knowledge and other opinions, other than those projected by the controlled press."

-- August 1, 1967

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A couple of weeks before he was arrested in 1967, a riot erupted in Buffalo. Law enforcement targeted Sostre as the instigator of this disruption without providing any actual evidence for their accusation. Those who knew Sostre were certain that the police were framing him with trumped up charges. A defense committee was established to help free him. He was supported by both the Young Lords and the Black Panthers. Soon after his conviction, the only witness to his so-called crime recanted his testimony and said that the police had framed Sostre. Eventually on December 24 1975, Martin Sostre was granted clemency by the Governor of New York, Hugh Carey. He had spent 7 years behind bars for a crime that he had not committed.



Martin Sostre as a young man

Martin Sostre's

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Letter From Jail To My Student Supporters And Friends

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August 1, 1967



Miss Joan Franklin

Appeal Attorney

Those of you who came to the Afro-Asian Bookshop to pick up your copy of the LIBERATOR or the PEKING REVIEW or the PARTISAN or, perhaps, a book by LeRoi Jones or Chairman Mao Tse Tung (until the U. S. Customs held up my shipment of books from Hong Kong and denied my application to release them), know that many of the books, magazines and pamphlets on our shelves were not obtainable on Main Street or at your own student and campus bookshops. The purpose of my bookshop from its humble origin two years ago when all I had was forty books on my shelves and five empty racks which I had made -- was two-fold:

1. to provide the Afro community (which was without a bookshop) with our first bookshop where books about our history, culture and the writing of all our Black freedom fighters and thinkers could be purchased, and
2. to make available to the Black and white communities (in addition to the aforesaid books) the so-called controversial or leftist literature: the voice of protest and dissent -- the other side of the story.

Several months after I opened the shop, I had two visitors who after some careful browsing, came to the counter, identified themselves as FBI agents and asked me if I was the proprietor. Upon getting an affirmative, they came right to the point: the gist of it being -- was I affiliated with any Socialist or Communist group and why was I selling that type of literature? My answer was that I was not affiliated with any group and that as owner of the bookshop, I alone determined what books were sold in my shop -- that this right is guaranteed me in the First Amendment to the Constitution. They obviously didn't like my reply, but they left without any further comment.

Two months later, two city detectives from the Subversive Squad visited my shop. They were not as polite as the federal agents. They identified themselves and one of them said, "Nice place you got here, Marty. You're doing alright for yourself since you got out of prison. What are you doing now behind this bookstore front?" I told him this was no front, that I was working at Bethlehem Steel and operating the bookshop, that I paid my debt to society for the mistakes I made in the past and was now living the life of a law-abiding citizen. The other detective said, "A law-abiding citizen doesn't get involved in hate literature and communist propaganda." I then repeated what I told the federal agents regarding my constitutional right to sell literature of my choice. One of them replied, "O. K., Marty, have it your way."

Last month, as all of you know, the police invaded and sacked the Afro-Asian Bookshop. They accused Geraldine Robinson and me of arson, riot, possession and sale of narcotics and assault.

They terrorized and frightened one of our witnesses who can ²² prove that we are being framed - to such an extent that she was forced to leave town and is now afraid to come forward and testify to the truth. Another witness was beat up and two more were jailed and intimidated by the police. The police obviously intend to make the charges stick and send me to jail for thirty years - the amount of time I face as a second felony offender. While under arrest at police headquarters, the detectives went back to the Bookshop, gained entry with the keys taken from me and stole everything that wasn't nailed down. What remained, they deliberately wrecked. They accomplished their mission of destroying the Bookshop. The trial and implied verdict of guilty given me by the controlled press, radio and TV - which in this age of mass communication and mass brainwashing has supplanted the trial by jury - makes it virtually impossible to overcome by myself the combined weight of all the powerful forces mobilized against me. Only with your massive support will Geraldine and I be able to overcome.

Today, when vital issues and policies affecting our and other people's lives are being arbitrarily resolved and implemented without our consent and against our wishes by those motivated solely by greed and profit, when we are being asked to sacrifice our lives and to destroy other people's lives in a war which we know is not just - when we are being asked to acquiesce in the continued oppression of the Afro-American - to name only two vital issues - must we go to slaughter like sheep? Must we go along with the program of oppressing and brutalizing other humans. Those dissenters who read this know as I do that dissent carries risks, but the risks of silence or assent are even greater - for it is your own lives that will be sacrificed. Even sheep let out an occasional "baa" in protest upon being led to slaughter.

So let us not be intimidated into spineless silence; let's close ranks and combine our voices of protest until the rising volume overwhelms those who would use us for their own selfish ends. As for me, far from being cowed by the vicious beating inflicted on me by the police, you have my assurance that upon getting out on bail, I shall strive to make my bookshop the main library of dissent and protest literature in Buffalo.

I am deeply grateful for your generous moral and financial support without which we would most certainly be crushed. I thank you.

Martin Sostre

- The Prison Letters of Martin Sostre: Documents of Resistance Warren L. Schaich, Diane S. Hope Journal of Black Studies, Volume 7, Issue 3 (Mar., 1977), 281-300. <http://www.freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/Black%20Liberation%20Disk/Black%20Power!/SugahData/Essays/Schaich.S.pdf>

Martin Ramirez Sostre (March 20, 1923 - August 12, 2015) was an American activist known for his role in the prisoners' rights movement. 55

He served time in Attica prison during the early 1960s, where he embraced doctrines as diverse as Black Muslimism, Black nationalism, Internationalism, and finally anarchism. In 1966 Sostre opened the first⁽¹⁾ Afro-Asian Bookstore at 1412 Jefferson⁽²⁾ in Buffalo, New York.⁽³⁾ For its somewhat short existence, Sostre's bookstore was a center for radical thought and education in the Buffalo ghetto. As Sostre details:

I taught continually - giving out pamphlets free to those who had no money. I let them sit and read for hours in the store. Some would come back every day and read the same book until they finished it. This was the opportunity I had dreamed about - to be able to help my people by increasing the political awareness of the youth.⁽⁴⁾

Sostre was arrested at his bookstore on July 14, 1967 for "narcotics, riot, arson, and assault" (charges later proven to be fabricated, part of a COINTELPRO program⁽⁵⁾). He was convicted and sentenced to serve forty-one years and thirty days. Sostre became a jailhouse lawyer, regularly acting as legal counsel to other inmates and winning two landmark legal cases involving prisoner rights: *Sostre v. Rockefeller* and *Sostre v. Otis*. According to Sostre, these decisions constituted "a resounding defeat for the establishment who will now find it exceedingly difficult to torture with impunity the thousands of captive black (and white) political prisoners illegally held in their concentration camps."⁽⁶⁾

In earlier legal activity, Sostre secured religious rights for Black Muslim prisoners and also eliminated (in the words of Federal Judge Constance Motley) some of the more "outrageously inhuman aspects of solitary confinement in some of the state prisons."

In December 1973 Amnesty International put Sostre on its "prisoner of conscience" list, stating: "We became convinced that Martin Sostre has been the victim of an international miscarriage of justice because of his political beliefs ... not for his crimes."⁽⁷⁾ In addition to numerous defense committees in New York State, a Committee to Free Martin Sostre, made up of prominent citizens, joined in an effort to publicize Sostre's case and petition the New York Governor Hugh Carey for his release. On December 7, 1975, Russian Nobel Peace Laureate Andrei Sakharov added his name to the clemency appeal. Governor Carey granted Sostre clemency on Christmas Eve of 1975; Sostre was released from prison in February 1976.⁽⁸⁾

August 30, 1967

Boston Sunday Globe

New England's  Largest Newspaper

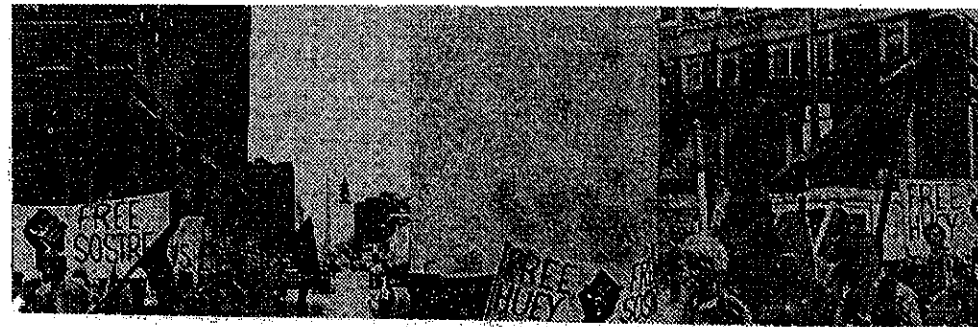
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1965



Buffalo police mug shots of Sostre.

If only I were out on bail, I could be publishing the newspaper (the Afro Freedom Fighter), organizing, speaking, etc. This, over and above my searching for the customers who were in the shop when the alleged sale of narcotics was supposed to have occurred. Everyday that I lie here in jail lessens my chances of proving my innocence. That is why I was trying to rush the hearing even without an attorney. If we could have had the hearing, all my witnesses would have testified, all the ones who were available, and their testimony would have been a matter of public record. Now that the police have gotten to some of them, we have lost key witnesses.

Although Mr. Fahringer was supposed to apply for a reduction in bail, he has not yet done so. I can't understand this delay. I wrote him about it. Could you see him and have him make the application as soon as possible? The \$25,000 is still unreasonably high. (Bail was originally set at \$50,000. Ed.)



Martin Sostre has opened up a new form of struggle in the fight against injustice by refusing to be sold out by those lawyers and "public defenders" who are more interested in their own positions and advancement than in defending liberation fighters. As he says in a letter, "Though there are those few who are courageous and have continued to fight for the oppressed, one should be very wary of putting one's life in the hands of a professional who has agreed to be, as lawyers have to, an 'officer of the court'". Revolutionaries, unlike most lawyers, are not enamored of the bourgeois system of law which has crushed several generations of militant fighters in this country. Martin has made his frame-up very expensive, time-consuming and telling for the racist establishment, and his battle is far from over. These excerpts tell, chronologically, the story of the first eight months of his struggle. Ed.

Sostre in Solitary

His friends swear that black radical Martin Sostre has been framed by Buffalo authorities as part of America's colonialist suppression of black revolution.

Story by William Worth

This 4-page magazine feature in the Boston Globe's Sunday supplement was the only mass-media article to appear on Sostre.

Reprints available from the

Martin Sostre Defense Committee

UNTIL July 14, 1967, Martin Sostre of Buffalo, New York was the proud and affluent owner of the local Afro-Asian Book Store.

Before that, he had been a Black Muslim—a religious-political convert while serving 12 years in Attica, New York state prison.

Years before that, he had been a youthful peddler of narcotics and had entered prison while in his twenties.

Today Martin Sostre, age 44, is in Green Haven State Prison near Poughkeepsie.

October 3, 1967

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I have been in jail now for three months which is too long to sit idle while the police prepare to lynch me. The financial burden which the blood-sucking lawyers have imposed is too much, especially if we have to pay them that fantastic amount to sell me out through their inactivity so that the white rulers can succeed in putting me away for thirty years. All this time and they haven't even gotten me a reduction in bail which is plainly illegally excessive. The money we gave them could better have been applied for my bail.

This is a political lynching which was conceived, planned and executed by high political circles for the purpose of concealing the true cause of the rebellion - which far from being caused by "outside agitators" or "Black Power fanatics" - the two stock phrases of white bigots, both Northern and Southern, who to hear them tell it, think oppressed Black people are happy and contented by the treatment accorded them in the ghetto by the white power structure and were it not for these "outside agitators" and "fanatics", everything would be just lovely - was caused by the accumulation of injustices and unredressed grievances endured by my oppressed people for much too long. When Police Commissioner Felicetta told those lies in Washington, he sounded like a sheriff from Buffalo, Mississippi.

I am facing thirty years in prison and the white oppressors who are determined to give me a legal lynching - Northern style - will not hesitate to give Geraldine fifteen years any more than they hesitate in pouring death and destruction upon the innocent people of Vietnam and in killing and oppressing my Black brothers in this country.

I am sending a copy of this letter to County Court with the enclosed motion for a speedy trial. The bigots in judges' robes are holding me in jail under an illegal, excessive bail higher than anyone else charged with a similar crime, in order to suppress me. They cannot also deny me a speedy trial!

More on the Sell-out

October 5, 1967

I received a letter from Attorney Fahringer today informing me of his having informed the court of his resigning from the case because we were unable to meet "the very minimum financial requirements" fixed for the handling of my case. He said that the monies received were used to compensate for the appearances made in court for me. (The Martin Sostre Defense Committee had, up until the case was dropped in October 1967, paid the law firm \$550 toward the \$2500 fee which it had agreed to have paid in full by the end of December 1967. The Grievance Committee of the Erie County Bar Association found that total courtroom time devoted to Martin Sostre's case was approximately 4 hours!! Ed.)

tween brilliance and genius." . . .

TO HIS FRIENDS and legal counsellors there is no question of Sostre's personal rehabilitation as a consequence of his conversion to the puritanical Black Muslim faith. His friends say it is unthinkable for him ever to be involved a second time in the peddling of drugs.

When Malcolm X in 1964 parted company with the Muslims, Sostre, an admirer of Malcolm, broke too.

He worked for \$146 a week in the Lackawanna steel plant, saved what he could, and solicited and borrowed additional money to open the Afro-Asian Bookstore in the Buffalo ghetto.

Shortly before his arrest last year he gave up his steel plant job and was devoting 14 hours a day to the store which, without any pretense, was highly political and radical.

He sold the writings of Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams, LeRoi Jones, James Baldwin, Richard Wright and others.

From foreign continents he imported such periodicals as China Reconstructs, African Opinion and Peking Review.

He sponsored classes in black nationalism and colored history. . . .

LATE LAST June, shortly before Newark and Detroit erupted, Buffalo had its own racial upheaval. In subsequent testimony before Senator Eastland's Internal Security Subcommittee, Police Commissioner Felicetta blamed Sostre for the trouble.

At the height of the riot, according to passerby, firemen used the pretext of a fire next door to sack the bookstore and to turn their

hoses on the literature shelves. Not book burning, but book watering.

Nevertheless, Sostre reopened the store, only to be raided at midnight two weeks later. He was arrested and beaten up. Originally he was held in \$50,000 bail on the heroin charges as an alleged second offender. Charges of arson and rioting were dropped.

Even when bail was reduced to \$12,500 cash, he could not raise that sum and remained in jail for eight months until his 3-day trial in March.

One cop testified that the same Sostre who didn't have the money to bail himself out of jail had been making \$5,000 a week from selling narcotics. . . .

THE MARTIN Sostre Defense Committee in Buffalo labels his case "one of a chain of frame-ups."

They cite what they call a nationwide pattern of legally harassing in the freedom movement those with leadership qualities and charisma:

H. Rap Brown, who will be tied up in bail bonds, trials and appeals for several more years Cleveland Sellers, long an activist in SNCC in the South; the New Haven militants who are accused of conspiring to dynamite public buildings and to overthrow the local government; Huey Newton of the Black Panthers in Oakland, California; Max Stanford of Philadelphia; and author-activist Eldridge Cleaver, who was just released from a California prison after a judge ruled his parole had been recently revoked for purely political reasons. . . .

53 BUFFALO IS, of course, an exceptionally conservative northern industrial community. The pattern of repression there tends to be more unabashed than one might expect in the Empire State.

If Martin Sostre is even half the remarkable person that all who know him say he is - and I myself do not know him - his removal at this time from the Buffalo ghetto and the closing of his bookstore will be a serious intellectual setback to the local movement, even if a year or two from now the higher courts release him from prison.

A setback, yes. But by no means a final defeat. The British, French and other colonialists tried similar methods to crush Afro-Asian independence movements. In the end, the European powers probably deepened and extended revolutionary anti-colonial militancy by these methods, and hastened their own violent expulsion from the colonies. . . .

HERE IN the United States, there is no logical reason to expect a qualitatively different end product from the accelerating era of racial repression.

The future, they say, comes with the same degree of violence which is used against it.

In Buffalo, the cops who raided Martin Sostre's bookstore and beat him up may well have created more teen-age revolutionaries and more urban guerrillas than would the books of ideology that Sostre used in his classes and sold to his customers to eke out a precarious living.

7. ^ Jump up to: "Schaich, Warren L. (March 1977). "The Prison Letters of Martin Sostre: Documents of Resistance" (PDF). *Journal of Black Studies*. Retrieved June 25, 2015.

The rising tide of millions of persons who no longer will submit to oppression and who no longer will meekly acquiesce to being shipped 8,000 miles to a foreign land to murder and oppress its population and, in turn, to be killed and maimed, will overwhelm and pull down from power the racist-militarists and replace them with leaders of our own who believe in peace and justice.

By challenging and exposing for public scrutiny every unlawful and underhanded act of oppression employed by the rulers, I am alerting everyone to these methods and raising serious questions which will have serious legal, political and moral implications. I have found this to be the most effective method of fighting the oppressor. By challenging every unlawful act you force him to commit other overt acts in order to cover up his original crime. He will then be forced into a defensive stance and will compound the original crime into two. Two crimes are more difficult to conceal than one so he is then more vulnerable. Now you have two acts to attack and expose, thereby forcing him to commit further crimes in order to continue his deception.

This is the pattern in my case. What started out as another frame-up - one of the many being employed to silence those opposing the racist-militarist power structure - turned out to be a long, drawn out, embarrassing struggle when the victim, instead of cooperating in his legal lynching, chose instead to fight and challenge every unlawful act, thereby forcing the would-be lynchers to the defensive. This is the same situation the U.S. now finds itself in in Vietnam. What started out to be a classic takeover of a small country by the U.S. in 1956, turned out to be an embarrassing, prestige-losing defeat for this country's military might by the resoluteness of the Vietnamese people. The tables have turned and the U.S. is now on the defensive, desperately trying to extricate itself.

THE AFRO-AMERICAN, JULY 6, 1968

By WILLIAM WORTHY
Until a year ago, Martin Sostre of Buffalo, N.Y. was the proud and defiant owner of the local Afro-Asian Bookstore.

Before that, he had been a Black Muslim - a religious-political convert while serving 14 years in Attica, N.Y. state prison.

Years before that he had been a youthful peddler of narcotics and had entered prison while in his early twenties.

Today Martin Sostre is in another, New York prison,

near Poughkeepsie, not far from Vassar College but several hundred miles from his Buffalo home.

The charge: possession and sale of heroin. The sentence this time: from 31 to 41 years, plus 30 days. On the vehemently outspoken Sostre the judge imposed that extra month for supposed contempt of court.

RECENTLY at O'Hare Airport in Chicago I happened to run into the Harlem attorney who, earlier in this decade, helped Martin Sostre establish the

legal right of Black Muslims to hold their own religious services behind prison walls.

The wardens and state correction officials had all resisted vigorously, and it was an important First Amendment victory. Sostre himself did much of the legal work in the state and federal courts after having studied law while in Attica State Prison.

"Martin Sostre," said the lawyer as we talked between planes, "is the most extraordinary personality I have ever met. He operates somewhere in the area be-

The Fight for Reasonable Bail

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October 11, 1967

As you saw, the racial bigot Latona had to terminate the hearing on the reduction of bail application by avoiding the entire issue and using my previous record, particularly a warrant issued for my arrest in 1951 -- sixteen years ago -- when I did not appear in court because of my lawyer's failure to notify me when my case came up for a hearing. Although from the very beginning in July the District Attorney made my entire record available to Latona, he now acted as if it was new information and used it as a basis to deny my application.

I was not surprised because the hearing on Monday went so well in my favor when I presented to him twelve cases far more serious than mine whose bail was much lower. Some of the defendants in those cases were second and third felony offenders. Moreover, I told him that of 270 inmates in Erie County Jail, I was the only one with such excessive bail for the class of crime charged. Since the D.A. could not refute any of this evidence, the judge -- had I been getting an impartial hearing -- would have had to grant me a reduction of bail. However, you and I know he couldn't do this so on the pretext of having the D.A. check on the list of names and amounts of bail which I submitted, he adjourned the hearing until Wednesday. No doubt during this time his bosses ordered him to stop me and silence me. This is why he tried to divert the bail hearing toward a different issue: counsel representing me and my motion for change of venue. When I fended this off, he then tried to get me in his chambers to have a secret hearing to silence me. I refused his offer. Then finally, he used the flimsy excuse of my record of sixteen years ago to arbitrarily deny my application.

I really had two District Attorneys to contend with: the judge -- instead of at least pretending to play the role of a judge and simulating impartiality -- opposed me even more than the actual D.A.!

Complaint to the Erie County Bar Association

October 24, 1967

Dear Mr. Gage,

In further support of my complaint to you dated October 11, 1967, here is additional information which proves beyond any doubt not only that the firm of Lipsitz, et al, abandoned the case and mishandled it, but that they used duplicity in order to keep the fee which they stole from me.

1.) Mr. Blumberg, a member of the firm, states in his affidavit to County Court dated August 7, 1967 that: "... your de-

ponent was not aware until Monday, July 31, 1967 that the law firm of Lipsitz. . . had been retained to represent the defendants. . . and. . . on July 31, 1967 before your deponent was made aware of such retention, deponent reported to the City Court. . . that the law firm of Lipsitz. . . did not represent the defendant Sostre." This paragraph (#13) reveals, inter alia, that my case was grossly mishandled in that Blumberg wasn't even aware that his law firm was representing me. This unawareness caused another one of the series of adjournments which resulted in my being deprived of the preliminary hearing. Blumberg's affidavit, moreover, clearly shows that the law firm's jumping in and out of the case from July 18, 1967 until August 8, 1967, the last day it represented me when I was indicted, left me without adequate legal representation during that period. The law firm had ample time from July 18, 1967 to July 31, 1967 (before the case was submitted to the Grand Jury) to conduct the preliminary hearing had it been diligent and properly safeguarding my interests. Now, my key witness, who was then willing to testify, has been intimidated by the police and left town. Please request from Mr. Lipsitz a copy of Mr. Blumberg's affidavit, since no investigation of the facts by your Association can be complete and impartial without it.

2.) County Court's record will reveal that after I was indicted on August 8, 1967 no further motions or any other attempt to defend the case was made by Lipsitz's law firm. They completely abandoned the case. Nor did the attorneys interview any of the witnesses nor did they come to interview me. Ask Mr. Lipsitz what move was made by his firm to prosecute the case during the two months from August 8, 1967 to October 2, 1967 when they wrote me informing me of their discharging themselves from my case.

3.) But the clincher, Mr. Gage, is the duplicity employed by the Lipsitz law firm to cover up the fact that it sold me out by submitting to the political pressure applied by the establishment. Request copies of the following letters from Mr. Lipsitz as part of your investigation and have him reconcile the divergent statements therein. Mr. Fahringer's letter to me dated October 2, 1967 gave the following reason for withdrawing from the case:

"As you may know by now, those interested in your case were unable to meet the very minimum financial requirements that we had fixed for the handling of your case. What monies have been received were used to compensate us for our appearances that we made in court for you and particularly the Grand Jury investigation which was conducted in Erie County Court. I have on this date notified the Erie County Court that we have discharged ourselves and suggest to the Court that other counsel be assigned to you. . ."

Yet two days later, Mr. Lipsitz gave the Chairman of my Defense Committee, Mr. Gerald Gross, a different story, for by letter dated October 4, 1967, Mr. Lipsitz said that:

"I am writing to you to inform you that Mr. Fahringer

8. ^ Jump up to: "How One Inmate Changed The Prison System From The Inside". NPR.org. Retrieved 2017-04-15.

escalated war in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaya and Korea in addition to the escalated domestic struggle against those refusing to go and die in the unjust, undeclared War and those refusing to be oppressed in the nation's ghettos - that their repressive measures only produce greater resistance from the people, that escalation of violence breeds escalation of self-defense measures against the violence.

Legal Coercion Against Dissent

February 16, 1968

The swelling wave of dissent against the war has the racist-militarists so frightened that the consequences of their indicting Spock and the others have not yet gotten home to them. Instead of stopping or even slowing down the anti-war movement, the latest repressive measures have done the opposite - they have dramatized the struggle even more and supplied us with free news media and the additional forum of the courtroom to bring to the masses the issues in their sharp perspective. Their latest repressive measures have gotten us more allies and sympathizers. Far from coercing and cowering us into abandoning our struggle, they have made us more determined than ever to not only continue our struggle but to escalate it to match the enemy's escalation of repressive measures.

So you see, the fascist oppressors are in a hell of a situation here, similar to their predicament in Vietnam: their escalation of the War has been matched by the counter-escalation of the Vietnamese people during the last three weeks (the weeks of the Tet Offensive). They may not be aware of it but escalation of the war in Vietnam and the repressive measures against the activists of the Black liberation movement and the anti-war movement is hastening their defeat. All the fascist-racists are doing is speeding up the timetable by bringing these issues to a showdown more quickly. All we have to do is continue socking it to them harder and faster. The cumulative effects of the blows of millions of people fighting against war, racism and oppression will defeat them soon.

Defeating the Oppressor

February 17, 1968

The racist-militarist power structure will find that their recent escalation of repressive measures against the anti-war and Black liberation movements is counter-productive. Like the recent military consequences of their escalation of the Vietnamese War, their stepped-up repressive measures will only hasten their defeat.

Far from stopping the anti-war movement and coercing the rank and file and leadership into silence and non-activity, the recent indictments not only have galvanized our anti-war activity but have provided our position with massive news coverage which otherwise would not have been available to us.

in a demonstration in front of the U.S. Embassy. Those demonstrators came well-prepared and gave a good account of themselves. They wore crash and football helmets in addition to goggles and some type of gauze mask over their noses to keep the tear gas out of their eyes and lungs. They also had their signs and placards tacked to long stout poles which became effective clubs when the helmeted police attacked them. Demonstrations there have reached a high degree of sophistication, no doubt as a result of the many cracked heads, bruised faces and inflamed eyes and noses inflicted upon their ranks by the police goon squads. Our ranks also will have to adopt these and other self-defense tactics against the escalating sadism being heaped upon us on orders from Washington. The rulers, seeing that the spreading wave of anti-war demonstrations will force them to get out of Vietnam, are determined to break the back of the anti-war movement at all costs. 50

Since the war in Vietnam is unconstitutional - it was not declared by Congress as provided by article 1, section 8 of the U.S. Constitution - and the Administration, despite nation-wide pleas, is determined to wage this illegal war and is employing all the powers and branches of government to block all challenges to it, no political or judicial means is available by which we can legally obtain redress. Therefore, under the "Doctrine of Legitimacy of Purpose" (expounded, I believe, by Federal Judge Kaufman in New York about ten years ago in a ruling involving a case where persons deliberately violated a law or court injunction in order to obtain redress to a violation of their constitutional rights) the refusal to obey a police officer's order to cease exercising your constitutional right of freedom of speech, assembly and petition and the physical resistance to his attempt to prevent you by force from exercising these "preferred" rights is justifiable since no other means is available to stop the illegal war in Vietnam and prevent your being drafted illegally and being subjected to loss of life and liberty.

I wish I could be out there with you fighting the common foe who has framed me on the bogus charges precisely because I sold and distributed anti-Vietnam War, Black Power and liberation literature. However, since the anti-war struggle and the struggle of Afro-American people against oppression is precisely one and the same struggle, I hereby authorize you, Jerry, as chairman of my Defense Committee, to use any and all funds of my Committee for the purpose of bailing out any demonstrators working with you.

Imperialist Violence

January 24, 1968

You can rest assured that they do not possess the means - even though they are applying the massive coercive power of the state - to subdue me. The oppressors will learn - perhaps this spring when they find themselves fighting an

finds it impossible to represent Mr. Sostre. His involvement in other matters which will preempt his time completely has forced him to come to this decision. Mr. Fahringer and I would both like you to know that we regret his having to make this decision, but it is impossible to represent Mr. Sostre further." 27

Although I have more . . . the facts set forth are sufficient to raise serious questions. These and other facts will be submitted to the courts if I cannot get justice from the Bar Association. The many small people who contributed 50¢ or \$1.00 and the college students at U. B. who gave shows, time and money for my defense will not tolerate being robbed like that. Two hours representation by Fahringer on August 8, 1967 is not worth \$550 particularly after they bungled the case and then abandoned it. I may even have grounds for a damage suit. Please inform me of your answer as soon as possible. . .

Martin Sostre

(Ed. note. - On April 12, 1968, the Erie County Bar Association finally got around to ruling on Martin's complaint. They ruled, as might have been expected, against Martin and in favor of the law firm.)

The Lawyers' Duplicity

October 26, 1967

When you compare Fahringer's letter of October 2, 1967 with Lipsitz's letter of October 4, 1967, the duplicity employed by them to conceal the fact that they had abandoned the case because of political pressure is clearly evident. As a matter of fact, the record of County Court further reveals that they had abandoned the case two months before they officially discharged themselves from the case on October 2, 1967. The records show that from August 8, 1967 when Fahringer polled the Grand Jury until October 2, 1967, the date of his letter, they did absolutely nothing, not a single motion, no attempt to defend the case, no application for reduction of bail -- nothing at all. To all intents and purposes, they abandoned the case. These are the things I pointed out to the Bar Association in my recent letter to them dated October 24.

The Witnesses

October 28, 1967

If this were a case where I had had a hearing and the testimony of my witnesses (as well as the D. A.'s witnesses) was already on record, and my lawyers were in touch with the witnesses and had prepared the case for trial, then I could relax, knowing that even a wait of five or six months would not alter the testimony of the witnesses or substantially effect the case. But this is not the case. In the first place, because of the many adjournments of

the hearing. Also, there has been intimidation of witnesses. The lawyers didn't even interview the three witnesses who were in the shop at the time the raid was made. But more important, the four customers who were in the shop listening to and purchasing records at the time the alleged sale of narcotics was said to have been made, have not been found. _____ knows one of the women. I have seen them around the neighborhood and recognize them but don't know their names or where they live. Once outside (on bail), I can find them because they are on Jefferson Avenue often.

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Bail

October 29, 1967

I told Attorney Green (the public defender) that I was going to either appeal Judge Latona's denial or put in a Habeas Corpus or application for reduction of bail to either the Federal or State Supreme Court. I asked him which judge would be the best to apply to. He said he would approach a few and see their reaction. Evidently he told Latona of my intentions and Latona told him that he would reduce it on the condition that I remain silent and let Attorney Green argue my case for me!

SNCC

October 29, 1967

As for the people who represent SNCC in Buffalo, I don't know what their thinking is although their reluctance to get involved may stem from their considering us too revolutionary or too far left for them. This was their objection (as well as that of Buffalo CORE and other groups) to my views. They complained of my literature from China and other militant books. One thing is sure, I am not going to align myself with any reactionaries or pacifists regardless of what they call themselves - except possibly in the role of a Trojan Horse.

Legal Actions

November 8, 1967

Meanwhile, I am not idle. I mailed an application for a Writ of Habeas Corpus to New York Supreme Court of Erie County on the 30th of last month. I am seeking a further reduction of bail. The application is entitled MARTIN SOSTRE vs. TUTUSKA. I also mailed an application to Federal Court for an order of show cause against the U.S. Postmaster for his refusal to send me the tracers I requested. But faced with a court action, he got the message and decided to send them, so this action is moot.

may use its police powers to prevent a citizen from exercising his constitutional right to speech, assembly and petition when the citizen is petitioning an agency of the government (the induction center or draft board) for a redress of grievances when such government, acting contrary to the Constitution (engaging in war without the consent of Congress), is about to subject the citizen to loss of life and liberty (by drafting him) and no other means is available by which the citizen may obtain redress.

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Since eventually there will be hundreds of anti-war demonstrators arrested in this area, the congested courts will have to dismiss the charges against most of them when they see that everyone is pleading not guilty and demanding trial and appealing their convictions. As a matter of principle, no anti-war demonstrator can be guilty for exercising his constitutional right to protest the illegal war.

On Demonstrations

December 9, 1967

Dear Jerry,



J., G. and others told me of your arrest by the police goons and of the courage you and others displayed in the face of the power structure's gestapo and their civilian clique. They will find that their repressive measures, far from suppressing the struggle against oppression, will intensify and escalate it. Their arrest of you and the other anti-war demonstrators in Buffalo and all over the country and the frame with those bogus charges in violation of your constitutional rights helps to dramatize our struggle and provides examples of courage against overwhelming odds and intimidation for other activists to emulate.

Now that the city ruling clique is using city ordinances and police power to deprive us of our legal rights, we must be prepared to defend these rights and resist the illegal interference of them with physical interposition. Otherwise, if they succeed in cowering and intimidating us into silence, not only will we be led to slaughter in Vietnam and other places where the militarists wish to oppress people, but the neo-Nazis will take over the complete control of the government. You and I and every activist know what that will mean for us and millions of others - incineration in the ovens.

Several weeks ago I saw in Time Magazine a photograph of Japanese anti-war demonstrators clashing with police in Tokyo

The Defense of Freedom Fighters

November 3, 1967

One of the first things that I am going to do (when I am free) is establish a Defense Fund for freedom fighters in this area. A Fund for both Black and white activists who are framed-up or jailed by the power structure for their activities or stand against racial oppression at home and abroad. We must protect our own, particularly now that the rising tide of protest and dissent against racial oppression, the unjust war in Vietnam and the drafting of our youth to make of them hired killers of innocent people - and to be killed in return - is bringing about greater repressive measures from the frightened but die-hard power structure. We must make sure that no freedom fighter be forced to lay in jail for months like me because bail couldn't be met.

December 10, 1967

Since the anti-war demonstrations and the struggle against the oppression of my people is the same struggle against the identical enemy - the racist-militarist oppressor - the least I can do since I am hors de combat because I sold anti-Vietnam War and Black liberation literature, is help those who are fortunate enough to be able to confront the enemy, get out on bail. I feel like a traitor to the cause, sitting here in jail with all that action going on outside. I should be out there in the struggle either distributing literature and publishing the newspaper to educate the masses and/or participating in the demonstrations. A few letters ago I mentioned setting up a Fund when I get out to bail out activists. Well, because of the escalation in our struggle, we better start now with my Defense Fund.

December 11, 1967

Now that orders have gone out from the administration in Washington to break the back of the anti-war movement through jailings, police brutality, intimidation, draftings and employing pro-war goons, we can ill afford to have any funds lying idle which can be employed to support our own cause; we must look out for our own and let the militarist oppressors know that our ranks are like a brick wall - each brick supporting the others.

If I were out there demonstrating and was arrested on those bogus charges placed on Jerry and the others, not only would I go to trial and invoke the "Doctrine of Legitimacy of Purpose" and the "preferred" constitutional right to free speech, assembly and petition, but, should they find me guilty, I would appeal all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court and force them to rule on the constitutional issue as to whether a state

November 15, 1967

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In regard to the court, I am not too optimistic about the outcome. The crack he (Judge Fisher) made about the Viet Cong sending me money and other statements against the Viet Cong, in addition to his statement that getting the records from the court below would not influence his decision, leads me to believe that I will not get my bail reduced. I am already preparing my papers for appeal just in case.

In many cases, they have already decided in advance (as soon as you submit the application) what they are going to do, but they go ahead and go through the formality of a hearing and argument just for the record and to make everyone believe that the case was decided on the basis of the arguments -- while in reality, it was decided before the hearing.

So let's not depend on getting any justice from Fisher. I don't know what kind of a man he is personally or how he thinks -- perhaps you know more about him than I do -- but as I said, I'm not optimistic. We should proceed just as if nothing had happened and take advantage of any favorable publicity given the hearing.

Bail Denial

November 25, 1967

Received denial from Judge Fisher. He avoided issue as to excessive bail and discrimination in imposing excessive bail completely. He denied me on the grounds that "Two similar applications have been made by petition and both have resulted in a reduction. The petitioner never appealed from the previous decisions to lower the bail. A further reduction is not warranted at this time."

(Ed. note - Of course, what they did was set bail so high in the first place, that they could reduce it two or three times and still keep Martin jailed. Concerning the ruling by Judge Fisher, it was reversed in early March 1968 by the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court -- Fourth Judicial District at Rochester, New York. But Martin had already been rushed to trial by Judge Frederick M. Marshall. Judge Marshall began the "trial" in full knowledge of the Appellate Court's reversal of Judge Fisher's denial for further reduction in bail!)

Like a Viet Cong

November 25, 1967

I want you and the others to know that regardless of the pressures, abuse, torture or any other physical or mental force that the enemy employs against me to make me submit to their frame-up charges or cooperate with the legal lynching they are trying to give

me, that I will never submit. The employment of the massive and coercive power of the state is not enough to make me give up; I am like a Viet Cong -- a Black Viet Cong, and their courage and determination in resolutely opposing the greatest military power in the world despite their poverty and the many atrocities heaped upon them is the living example which I am trying to match.

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Intimidation

December 10, 1967

Re: the trial -- they are trying to rush it to silence me. I noticed last time I went to court they called in two Black court attendants in addition to three white ones making a total of five -- an excessive number -- who surrounded me in an intimidating manner while I was in court. I noted also that not one word of that proceeding appeared in the newspapers. Evidently, there are orders from above to silence me and impose a news blackout. I am familiar with the pattern. I believe the next step is to try to "bug" me: the court will question my sanity (because I am refusing to cooperate with my legal lynching) and order a psychiatric examination to determine whether I am capable of understanding the charges against me.

Sometimes the state-appointed psychiatrist frames you with an adverse report and the court commits you to a state hospital as legally insane where they either kill you or destroy your sanity through mind-destroying drugs, or they keep you there for years until they finally declare you sane enough to stand trial at which time they return you to court to face the original charges. Psychiatrists, doctors, hospitals and insane asylums have always been employed by oppressors to intimidate, remove and destroy those who oppose them. One of my witnesses who, apart from having been beaten up by the police, is now being intimidated by his probation officer who has scheduled a psychiatric examination, is another example.

Another device also employed to create the grounds for bugging you is to provoke you into defending yourself -- by having one of their goons strike you or roughly manhandle you forcing you to resist -- then they will say that you went "berserk". The newspapers will play the story up big, stating how it took so many goons to subdue you and that you fought "savagely" etc. Another variation to this is the old stand-by "trying-to-escape" frame, or discovering a "plot" to escape. Having been in prison for many years, I have seen many foul things which the average person never hears about. I have personally talked to victims of the kinds of frame-up described above. I know what these people will do if they think they can get away with it.

(Ed. note - a few hours after this letter was written, Martin Sostre was "committed to Meyer Memorial Hospital in Buffalo, New York by court order to undergo psychiatric observation", just as he predicted!)

"Racist and imperialist America has no sane excuse to be in Vietnam. She has no more excuse to butcher the innocent and defenseless women and children of Vietnam than Hitler had to exterminate those whom he so deceptively portrayed as a threat to German survival." 47

"Now really, can any person in the world today be naive enough to believe that Americanism is maiming, murdering and plundering in Vietnam in the cause of freedom and democracy? Can any fairminded and sane person in the world today be so naive as to believe that America herself is a land of freedom and democracy?"



Do Duc Diu cuddles one of his surviving children, daughter Do Thi Nga, 15, as another daughter, Do Thi Hang, watches from her wheelchair at their house in Vietnam's Quang Binh province.

"More and more U.S. cannonfodder is being sent to Vietnam. More and more underprivileged and oppressed Black boys are being pressganged to fight the racist white man's lost imperialist cause. It is uncivilized and tragic for any human being to be pawned off and expended as cannonfodder in a war fought for a doomed status quo, but the most despicable crime that can be committed against the human race is to force or coerce the slave into defending the tottering system of slavery."

-- Rob Williams

"The lie of the U.S. government's interest in the freedom of the oppressed is shown clearly by the example of the Union of South Africa where 13,000,000 Black Africans suffer under apartheid. The only real interest the U.S. government has is its profits and supporting the brutally racist government needed to insure these profits."

-- Ed Oquendo

The Struggle Against



U.S. Imperialism DAYS AND MONTHS Cao Ngoc Phuong **MUTINIES: VIETNAM**

The U. S. Bombs Away, Then Slinks Out of Vietnam

South Chicago ABC Zine Distro / P.O. Box 721 / Homewood, IL 60430

Obstruction of Jail Visitors

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December 15, 1967

About obstruction of your and Geraldine's visits -- this is the last time I am tolerating any interference with my visitors' rights. The next time Geraldine or you are given a hard time, not only will I take that joker to court, but I will personally guarantee him that the shameful jail conditions which were previously publicly exposed will again be exposed -- only this time with greater force and in an election year. I don't believe he knows what he is doing, perhaps he had better consult with the jailer who is in direct touch with things in the jail. I have been relatively passive and cooperative insofar as the jail is concerned, confining my attacks to the police and courts, with the exception of the jail strike of last summer. Perhaps I shall have to escalate the struggle.

The "Commitment" at Meyer Memorial Hospital

December 25, 1967

Hope you and family had an enjoyable holiday. I was returned from the hospital on the 21st; had to refuse drugs in psychiatric ward which they tried to give me to dope me up and have me walking around in a drugged stupor like the other patients there. My lectures on Black Power, Vietnam, American racism and oppression to the other patients were not appreciated by the psychiatrists and hospital staff. They were glad to get rid of me. However, I planted a few good seeds before I left.

Psychiatric Intimidation

January 5, 1968

I hope that you and your loved ones had an enjoyable holiday. As you know, I spent part of the holiday season in the psychiatric ward of Meyer Memorial Hospital where the racist Judge Marshall had me committed to coerce and intimidate me and discredit my stand on Black Power and against the illegal war in Vietnam.

However, now that I have overcome that ordeal, I am making them pay by exposing, as you probably read in the papers, not only the vicious methods which the bigoted judge employed in his efforts to subdue and lynch me -- which they have been trying to do ever since Felicetta's racist Gestapos raided and destroyed our only Black Power bookshop -- but the illegal and unconstitutional methods and procedures employed by state psychiatrists to elicit information from drugged defendants in the psychiatric wards. The racists' attempt to subdue me by using the "bug" ward has backfired and has opened the door to the exposure of dirt which they don't want exposed, especially in an election year. I am really going to sock it to them.

The Olive-Drab Rebels:

Military Organizing During The Vietnam Era

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Witnesses and Bail

January 31, 1968

If the four key witnesses (not to be confused with the three who were in the shop at the time of the raid and saw the detective take the dope from his pocket and say, "This is what we're looking for." -- after their search of the shop turned up nothing) are not found by the 19th, they will have to reduce my excessive bail to allow me -- who know them by sight since they have been in the shop several times and I have seen them on Jefferson Avenue -- to go out and locate them myself. The D. A. cannot have it both ways: he cannot insist that I go to trial deprived of my witnesses because of excessive bail and at the same time pretend that this legal lynching has any approximation to a fair trial. This denial of the opportunity to locate and interview witnesses in my behalf, coupled with the oppressive delay in bringing my court case to trial constitute such serious denials of fundamental constitutional rights as to require dismissal of the indictment.

I am not going to sit on my hands waiting 'til February 19th; I am escalating the legal and political pressure and I am now working on a couple of other legal actions challenging the oppressors' unconstitutional conduct.

Exposing Psychiatric Intimidation

February 6, 1968

I am particularly looking forward to the proceedings against Judge Marshall and the psychiatric report. He really messed up and I've got him. I am really going to sock it to them and pull the covers off the rotten, illegal procedures and the judicial tyranny being employed by the power structure to coerce, intimidate and sometimes eliminate those who oppose them. This exposure is particularly important now, when the power structure -- beset on all sides by opposition to their illegal war and their oppression of the Black masses in the ghettos -- are desperately escalating their employment of coercion, intimidation, frame-ups, jailings and violence in a futile effort to suppress the rising tide of opposition to their fascist policies.

The employment of the "bug house", psychiatrists and mind-destroying drugs, although more sophisticated than the blackjack, jail or the bullet, is not new and has been employed to destroy or intimidate many persons. But because of its insidious nature and the legal and medical trappings with which it is insulated, it has not yet been recognized as a weapon of oppression by the masses. I will do my utmost to fully expose them in the courtroom.

- Malcolm McLaughlin (2014): Storefront revolutionary: Martin Sostre's Afro-Asian Bookshop, black liberation culture, and the New Left, 1964-75, *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture*, DOI:

"The morale, discipline, and battleworthiness of the U. S. Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States.

By every conceivable indicator, our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers, drug-ridden, and dispirited where not near mutinous. Elsewhere than Vietnam, the situation is nearly as serious."

Cong are our allies even though they are fighting the enemy at their front 8,000 miles away. But they are weakening the racists and the weaker the oppressors get, the less able they are to oppress us. They can't fight the Viet Cong and fight us too. They are barely holding on in Vietnam; where will they get the millions of troops needed to subdue us when full-fledged guerilla warfare - Saigon and Hue style - breaks out in every city in this country? The enlightened segment of the white community is another big problem to the rulers, so they are now trying to intimidate them by using gestapo goon squads against the anti-war pickets and protesters and indicting their leaders.

Although the struggle is a global one, each army must fight the enemy on its own front. The brothers in Africa - five were recently hanged by the racists in Rhodesia - are fighting the common enemy on their front; the Viet Cong are fighting on their front; the Cubans are fighting on their front; the white militants of this country are fighting on their front; and we must continue to broaden the fight on our front.

The Police State

March 15, 1968

Now dig this carefully: you brothers could not help but notice the many goons, armed troopers, detectives and court attendants that the frightened white power structure had to produce on March 5th - the day they tried to intimidate the souls from coming to the courtroom by taking photographs, removing the last row of seats from the court gallery, filling up the gallery with their own so they could say that "all the seats are filled" and prevent souls from coming into the courtroom, etc. Do you know how many goons they employed altogether? One of my guard informants (who is sympathetic to our cause) told me that the Sheriff's Department alone supplied 40 men; he stated that about 50 detectives were also on the scene as well as an undetermined number of FBI agents. He said that about 25 court attendants were called for special duty. He got these figures from the Sheriff who he heard talking to Commissioner Felicetta. Altogether there were about 120 goons. The significance of that fact is this: If the white power structure felt the need of mustering that many goons and the need to adopt the police state tactics which they used, they were scared.

An oppressor can rule the oppressed only so long as the oppressed submit to his law voluntarily. In other words, an oppressor must somehow, either through fear (as in our case, when he imposed his law upon our foreparents forcibly brought to this country in slavery) or trickery and deceit by employing Uncle Toms and sell-out political and/or religious leaders to fool our people - to induce the oppressed into accepting and obeying his law - which is his authority. Law means authority. Once he accomplishes this, he has it made. He can control and rule the oppressed with their cooperation! This is a slick psychological trick, brothers and sisters, so I want you to dig this very close. I will make it clear by this known example. How did England, France, Spain, Portugal and Belgium rule the vast continents of Africa, America, Asia and India for such a long time? Did they do it by brute force like the U.S. is using in Vietnam? Of course not! If they had to go through those changes with the millions of people of Asia, Africa and India, they never would have made it; it would not have been worth it. The cost in lives and money expended in pacifying every town, hamlet, village and city in the entire continent would exceed the fruit of their exploitation. What they did was to induce, via force or pay-offs, the native rulers to accept and obey the oppressor's law. Once this was accomplished the European power had it made and they even used native troops to enforce European authority over the natives! But eventually the natives woke up to this trick and rebelled. Even the native troops rebelled - against their white commanding officers - and refused to obey the officers' orders to fire on their brothers. Instead, they killed the white officers. The Europeans were then forced to employ white troops against the rebellious natives and were forced to give it up when their "good thing" came to an end. The French ruled Vietnam that way until 1954 when the Vietnamese woke up and defeated them. Now the U.S. and their Vietnamese sell-out leaders can only rule by martial law, which means force, because the people are in rebellion against their oppressors. It's only a matter of time before the U.S. negotiates a ceasefire with the Viet Cong brothers or gets out of Vietnam, because when a people are collectively determined to throw off the yoke of oppression, no amount of force or troops that the oppressor musters can prevail against the will to resist.

The Black Struggle December 15, 1967

Like the struggle in Vietnam, the struggle against us is one they cannot win. Our resolution and steadfastness against oppression cannot be defeated. Victory will be ours.

Solidarity March 15, 1968

The white militants are our allies in the overall struggle against the racist-fascists just as the heroic Viet

Legal Actions

February 6, 1968 33

Enclosed with this letter, I am sending you a copy of the complaint I mailed today to Judge Henderson at the U. S. District Court under the Civil Rights Act seeking an order restraining the Sheriff and his agents from denying me the right to receive and read a newspaper.

Am also making arrangements to lodge complaint with postal inspectors about the illegal obstruction of mail, harassment of visitors and other violations of law.

(SEE ATTACHMENT PREPARED BY MARTIN SOSTRE IN ERIE COUNTY JAIL)

Mail Obstruction

February 11, 1968

I have written the U. S. Postal Inspector at 1200 William Street a letter. I am putting an end to the obstruction of my mail. We have to make a stand somewhere, and this is it. So I want you also to file a complaint with the Postal Inspector about the letter you mailed me and the two letters from me which you received at the same time although I mailed them ten days apart and about your failure to receive my letter of 2/6/68, etc. If they obstruct the writ to Judge Henderson, they will be in real trouble. If we don't check this now, they will get bolder. So until we get the P. O. Inspector (or U. S. Attorney) to straighten these violations of postal laws out, this is the theme I will harp on in every letter I write and in every appearance I make in court.

Letter to Postal Inspector

February 11, 1968

I am hereby making a formal complaint to your department against the Sheriff of Erie County and his agents and servants who have been and are now obstructing my outgoing as well as my incoming mail in violation of U. S. postal laws by refusing to mail my letters to their destinations without either informing me of this obstruction or returning the letters -- which were in envelopes with U. S. postage stamps affixed thereto -- and refusing to give me the incoming mail or returning same to the sender.

I know the difference between the limited right which jail officials have for purposes of maintaining security, and deliberate obstruction of mail for the purpose of depriving me of the right to prosecute my case. So I am requesting an interview with a postal inspector so that I may file a formal complaint and/or the appropriate post office department forms for such a complaint.

February 19, 1968

Although I wrote you on February 16th, today's events require this letter to thank you and all those who spent valuable time, braved sub-freezing weather, defied the intimidating presence of those dozens of goons to let the racist-militarists know not only that I have the support of many people in Buffalo, but that this support is steadily increasing.

Although you already were familiar with Marshall's dictatorial tactics, the desperation with which he fended off all my efforts to enter the area dealing with his misconduct, racism, militarism, etc. made him reveal his true self. Now you can see why defendants, as well as some lawyers, have given him the nickname of "Mad Dog Marshall". He bulldozes lawyers in the same manner.

As you saw, he suppressed the real issue of the hearing which was that: he had me committed to the psychiatric ward to make my passing of a psychiatric examination a precondition to my constitutional right to act as my own counsel, and that he committed me to the nut ward to coerce Geraldine, my co-defendant, and me into accepting court-appointed counsel. He also arbitrarily terminated the hearing and certified the psychiatric report without allowing me to question the two other psychiatrists who had examined me at the hospital.

Since I knew that Marshall was determined to block all issues, I concentrated on bringing out the facts that:

1. No tests were given to me in the psychiatric examination.
2. The psychiatric diagnosis that I had a paranoid personality was a subjective determination not based on any scientific data.
3. Paranoid personality is a normal state if one is, in fact, surrounded by hostile elements or is persecuted.
4. The fact that I am a member of the persecuted Black minority living in a hostile, racist environment was not taken into consideration in evaluating my personality, and
5. Issues of personal conscience influence behavior and if such behavior runs counter to the established standards, it will provoke hostile reaction which could produce paranoid personality because the hostility is real. In other words, not only was the psychiatric diagnosis subjective, but the reason for my being labeled a paranoid was because of my stand on Vietnam and racism.

erroneous concept that the struggle is solely one of race) especially when, although sincere, one is young and politically unhip.

On Death

March 15, 1968

Being a revolutionary Black militant, the only way that I would hate to die is like a hog - as described by our militant Black poet, Claude McKay, in his poem, "If We Must Die". His poem sets for us the standard for dying - if we must:

IF WE MUST DIE - LET IT NOT BE LIKE HOGS
HUNTED AND PENNED IN AN UNGLORIOUS SPOT,
WHILE ROUND US BARK THE MAD AND HUNGRY DOGS,
MAKING THEIR MOCK AT OUR ACCURSED LOT.
IF WE MUST DIE - OH, LET US NOBLY DIE,
SO THAT OUR PRECIOUS BLOOD MAY NOT BE SHED
IN VAIN; THEN EVEN THE MONSTERS WE DEFY
SHALL BE CONSTRAINED TO HONOR US THOUGH DEAD!
OH, KINSMEN! WE MUST MEET THE COMMON FOE;
THOUGH FAR OUTNUMBERED, LET US SHOW US BRAVE,
AND FOR THEIR THOUSAND BLOWS DEAL ONE DEATH BLOW!
WHAT THOUGH BEFORE US LIES - THE OPEN GRAVE?
LIKE MEN WE'LL FACE THE MURDEROUS, COWARDLY PACK,
PRESSED TO THE WALL, DYING, BUT FIGHTING BACK!

The Oppressor

What I have demonstrated in the courtroom is the weakness of this fascist beast; I have demonstrated that with all his front of power and law and authority he cannot control one militant Black brother when that brother is in rebellion. Threats of contempt of court cannot control me for what the hell does 30 days contempt of court mean to one in rebellion and facing 30 years? His having me gagged was ineffective and made him look foolish because he had to take the gag off in order to hold the trial and as soon as he took it off - I talked the same thing. His having to employ goons to enforce his wishes by force is proof that I had broken down his authority. I am dramatizing this for all the brothers in Buffalo and elsewhere to see. I am setting the example of total rebellion, even in the courtroom, against the oppression, frame-up and kangarooism against me and my militant brothers all over the country. I am telling all the militants: "Look brothers, what I am doing to the oppressor. If I can do it by myself, practically alone and already in this man's jail, imagine what 30 or 40 organized militant brothers can do on the outside if they should defy white authority! I am upsetting him and setting an example which could have very serious consequences if adopted by other brothers all over the country.

standing militant leaders recently proclaimed.

February 22, 1968

Yes brothers, the white press, radio and TV had a field day telling everybody how bad I am and what bad literature I sold (its a wonder they didn't plant pornographic literature along with the dope to say that I was selling it to children to corrupt them). But when they covered the so-called riot they did not tell how the police shot tear gas into a bus filled with our children, how they shot at Black people who were innocently walking or standing in the street. How they beat and brutalized our youth for no reason at all. How they shot tear gas inside of public places filled with our people. No, this police brutality and savagery they did not report. But all of us know this because we saw it with our own eyes. This happened to us in our community.

Although it was a foregone conclusion that Judge Marshall would block the real issue -- namely that he subjected me to a psychiatric test as a precondition to my exercising my constitutional right to waive counsel and to coerce and intimidate Geraldine and me into accepting court-appointed counsel. I, nevertheless, exposed to public scrutiny and thought several important facts among which were:

1. That anyone who actively opposes war and racism could be classed a "paranoid" personality because his conduct is hostile to those norms established by the power structure.
2. That it is possible for a person to be committed to the psychiatric ward by an unscrupulous judge for reasons other than that of testing the person's sanity or ability to conduct his own defense, and
3. That the psychiatric diagnosis of "paranoid personality" is the subjective determination of an individual psychiatrist based on characteristics which lead to a different determination if evaluated by a different psychiatrist. In other words, state psychiatrists can put any kind of label on anyone (to discredit their stand on an issue) or even declare them insane on the prejudiced basis of their own subjective determination.

Every man, woman and child in our community saw those white goons come into our neighborhood by the carloads armed to the teeth with helmets on their heads. We saw the vicious dogs that they used on us and we felt the burning in our eyeballs from the gas which they shot indiscriminately at us. No, all of you know that it wasn't Brother Martin or any other group of individuals who started the revolt in June; it was the accumulation of unredressed grievances, injustices and brutality by our white oppressors which finally boiled over. Since the white oppressor has done nothing since June to give us justice and has, in fact, retaliated by destroying our Black bookshop and framing me and other brothers, it will require a Detroit and Newark revolt here in Buffalo for him to get the message.

Dick Gregory

March 4, 1968

Uncle Toms

August 8, 1967

The so-called Negro leaders are one of the major factors in the Buffalo revolt of June-July 1967, for, by playing down and refusing to articulate in plain and unequivocal language the real wants and needs of the Black community they prevented all communication between the white and Black political and civic leadership which could have led to a solution. But by concealing from the white political and civic leaders the long-suppressed hatred and frustration festering in the Black community (engendered by the long accumulation of injustices heaped upon us) in order to curry political favors and patronage, these Uncle Tom leaders lulled the white leaders into believing that everything was alright in the Black community and so left them totally unprepared for the violent revolt which shook Buffalo last June.

The national attention focused on this case by Dick Gregory's appearance in the court room frightened Judge Marshall into postponing the hearing. The avoidance of the issue and the fear of additional publicity forced him to again postpone the hearing on February 29th. We definitely have them on the defensive.

Black Traitors and Infiltration

March 4, 1968

Although I started this letter yesterday, I am now continuing it after having returned from the farcial, one-sided trial being conducted by the "Mad Dog" to cover up his inability to explain to the people of Buffalo why I am being held in jail under exorbitant bail, and why I am being prevented from getting the witnesses necessary for a fair trial.

Race and Class

November 29, 1967

I know how easy it is to fall into a racial bag and miss the entire political class struggle (because of the

The very fact that Marshall had to renege on his own signed order to have the D. A. show cause or give the reason why bail should not be reduced, shows that there is no legitimate reason they can give for refusing me reasonable bail. My refusal to cooperate in the legal lynching has placed Marshall in the position of presiding over a trial of empty gestures.

Black Liberation

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Afro Freedom Fighter

July 30, 1967

Last Friday I was glad to learn that my bail was reduced to \$25,000. I sure will be glad to get out on bail and take advantage of the present developments, for the time has never been riper for helping my people than it is now. This is the ideal time to begin publishing the Afro Freedom Fighter - the paper which I was planning - the militant organ of the youth in the Afro community. I know it will be a success because I have already consulted with my many young friends and, even before I bought the Gestetner, they were all anxious to get it started - many wanting to contribute articles and help publish and distribute it. The back room of the East-West Bookshop is ideal - when it is fixed up a little - for publishing the newspaper.

August 8, 1967

A few days before the police raid on the Bookshop I had finished payments on a used Gestetner mimeograph machine with which I intended to print the Afro Freedom Fighter (AFF), a militant Black newspaper written and published by the youth of the community themselves and expressing their own views in their own words. It will, at the same time, be a militant grass-roots newspaper independent of the traditional Negro leaders - who are utterly rejected as leaders and called Uncle Toms by the grass-roots segment of the Black community because of their willingness to accommodate themselves to white interests and sell out the Black community.

We will start out as a four-sheet mimeograph newspaper and work our way up to tabloid size. Ours will be a dynamic, socialist-oriented Black nationalist weekly, published by the youth themselves. I had already recruited a couple of high school girls who volunteered to type out the stencils; a writer who wrote for one of the establishment Black newspapers but quit because the editor considered his articles too militant and sought to editorialize them; a photographer and a reporter; and many other young people who would help - from turning the crank of the mimeo to selling the newspaper. I was looking for a cartoonist. With the launching of the AFF and other political activities, the vacuum in leadership which exists in the Black community will be filled.

The Rebellion

August 1, 1967

The boss-man now knows that we will fight, that we will not turn the other cheek like spineless cowards but rather will "fight to death" like Stokely Carmichael, one of our out-

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It's amazing how, even after eight months to rehearse, they haven't got their stories synchronized. The State Trooper from Rochester is a typical example of the Black traitor of his people's struggle against oppression. If you check the minutes of the proceedings had in City Court on July 27, 1967, it will reveal that the D. A. requested a postponement because the State Trooper was on special assignment in an undercover capacity relating to the rebellion in Rochester. He infiltrated, framed and sent to jail several militants in Rochester. The Black paid informer is just a plain stoolpigeon who would testify to anything the cops told him to just to get robbery and grand larceny charges off him. There are so many like these two Black traitors working for the fascist power structure all over the country infiltrating Black militant groups and setting up militants. The same tactics are also employed against white liberal, activist and militant groups and individuals opposing racism, oppression and militarism of the fascist power structure. So be alert at all times.

A Warning

March 4, 1968

Guard yourself, for you see what they have done to me!

The Sentencing

March 9, 1968

Although one month is the usual time between conviction and sentencing, only one week was allowed in my case. Even the probation officer who interviewed me yesterday commented on the speed and stated that Marshall wanted the report by 10 A. M., Monday. They sure want me out of Buffalo and in Attica Prison fast. I shall be ready for them by Monday just in case.

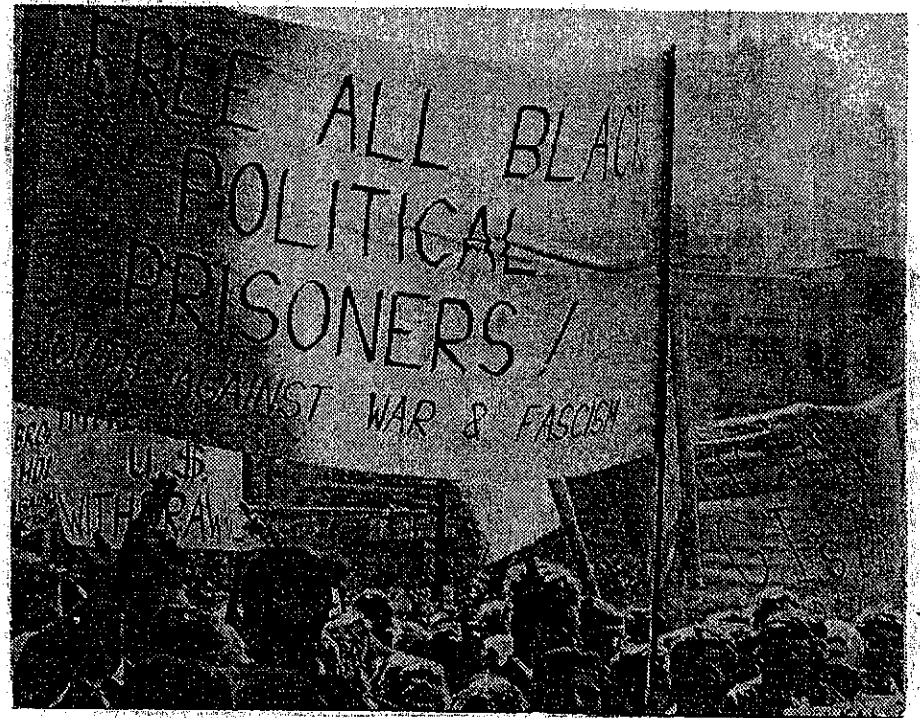
The Future and Williams' Idea About the Legal Machine

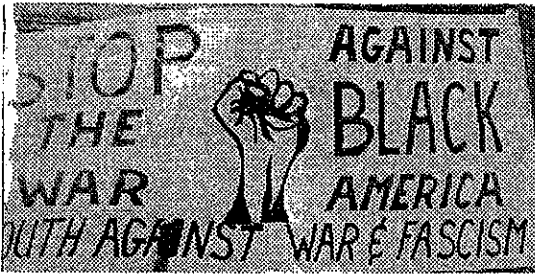
I am very optimistic about the future and there is no doubt in my mind that victory will be ours. As Robert F. Williams suggests, we will make frame-ups and kangarooism so expensive to the power structure that it will be self-defeating. One more trial like the last one, and they will be through!

black



liberation





Sostre Is Charged With Contempt

By GREG FAHERTY

County Judge Frederick M. Marshall late Thursday recessed until Monday a pre-sentence hearing to determine whether Martin G. Sostre, 44, formerly of 1412 Jefferson Ave., is a second felony offender.

Before a jury was selected to decide the question, Judge Marshall cited Sostre for contempt of court for repeatedly calling him a "biased judge." Sostre was ordered gagged at one point after he defied a court order to sit down and remain quiet.

The judge ordered Sostre to take his seat and remain silent while prospective jurors were being summoned. Instead, Sostre stood up and said:

Handcuffed, Gagged

"The fact that you are getting resistance in the courtroom means you are in trouble. We are not going to let you intimidate us. This is war."

"Gag him," the judge told court attendants.

After a brief recess, Sostre was returned to court in handcuffs and with a white towel tied across his mouth. Both handcuffs and gag were removed before start of the jury selection.

The contempt citation came after Sostre repeatedly stated he had the right to be tried before an "unbiased judge."

"If you make that unfounded claim once more I will deem it in contempt of court," said Judge Marshall. Sostre repeated the remark and the court found him in contempt. The judge said he will "pass appropriate sentence at the conclusion of these proceedings."

Sostre was convicted by a County Court jury March 8 on charges of possession and sale of narcotics and second-degree assault in the cutting of a policeman.



Sostre to Remain Silent in Trial on Narcotics Charge

Martin Sostre will remain mute during his narcotic-sale trial, he told a County Court judge today.

"I don't know how naive you are, but if you believe that I'm going to co-operate in this legal lynching, then you are more naive than I thought," Sostre told County Judge Frederick M. Marshall.

Sostre registered what he called a general objection to the trial when he was asked by Judge Marshall to question 12 prospective jurors in the case.

Sostre began to tell the court he objected to the proceedings "which everybody knows are false" but he was cut off by Judge Marshall who excused the prospective jury panel.

While the jury was out of the court room, Sostre told the court: "I will sit here and read some of my . . . (papers) I have a lot of work to do here."

Judge Refuses to Lower Bail From \$25,000 in Sostre Case

County Judge Jacob A. Latona refused today to lower the \$25,000 bail which has been set for Martin Sostre, operator of the Afro-Asian Bookstore, 1412 Jefferson Ave.

Sostre, who has been charged with selling narcotics and assaulting a police officer, has claimed that the figure is illegal and that the courts are attempting to get revenge upon him for disorders on the near East Side this summer.

Asst. Dist. Atty. Peter J. Nostro referred to similar cases in which defendants have been allowed to post a lower bail, and said: "There is a great difference between their backgrounds and his background."

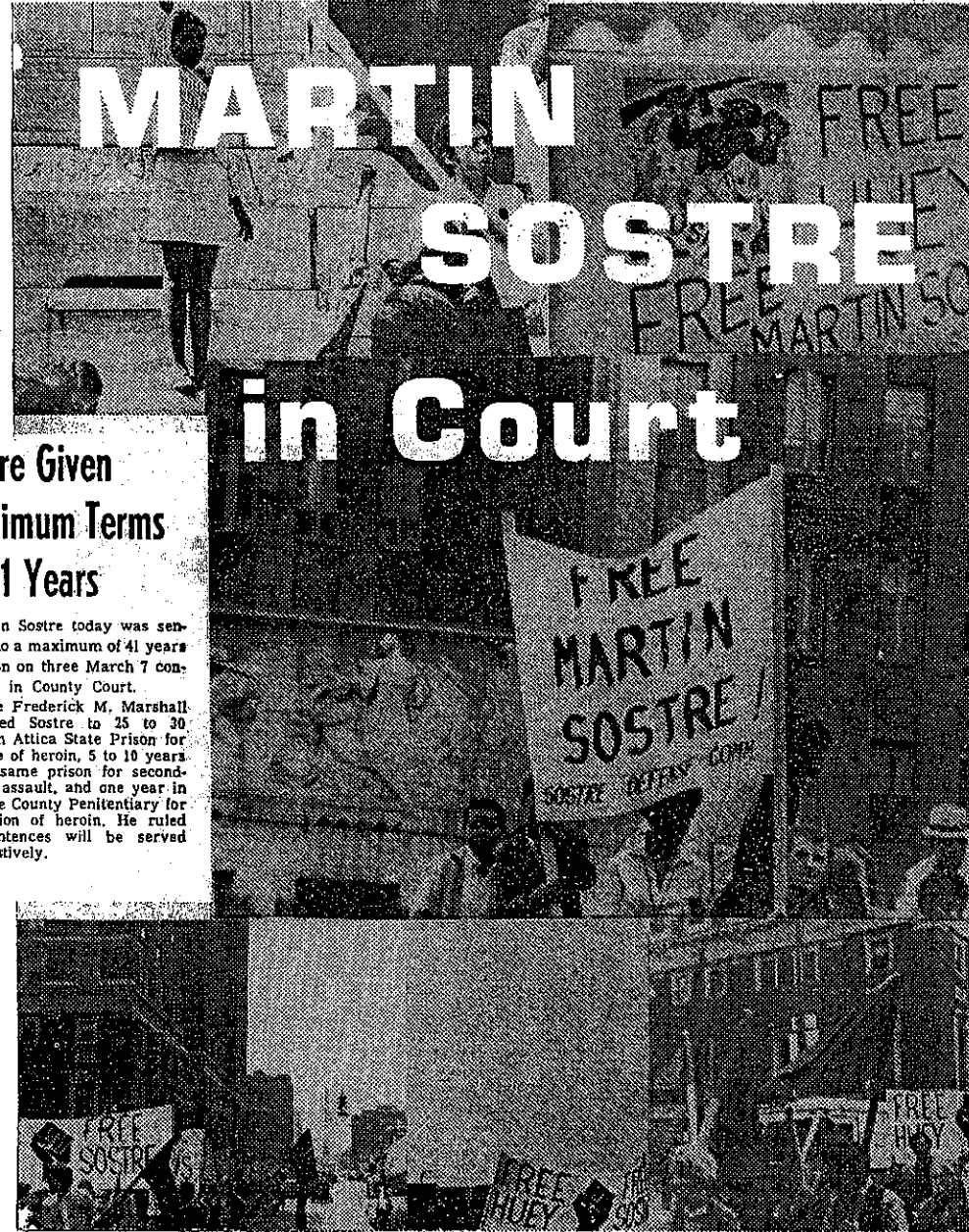
Sostre, who is acting as his own lawyer, told the court that

the bail figure is unjust and that it is more difficult for a Negro to raise bail.

Judge Latona then told the defendant a bail figure isn't set on the basis of race.

"Oh, yes it is—don't give me any of that stuff. We are an oppressed people. We are at the bottom of the totem pole. The jail is full of black faces who can't get out on bail," the defendant argued.

He charged that the judge was a "racist bigot."



MARTIN SOSTRE in Court

Sostre Given Maximum Terms Of 41 Years

Martin Sostre today was sentenced to a maximum of 41 years in prison on three March 7 convictions in County Court.

Judge Frederick M. Marshall sentenced Sostre to 25 to 30 years in Attica State Prison for the sale of heroin, 5 to 10 years in the same prison for second-degree assault, and one year in the Erie County Penitentiary for possession of heroin. He ruled the sentences will be served consecutively.

Prosecution Rests In Sostre Trial