



Arthur Turco

A GOOD BASIC HISTORY

YOUNG PATRIOTS



The story on the arrest of the Patriot Party which appeared in the March 2 Bird contained several inaccuracies because we had only partial information as we went to press. The short article below is the most accurate news story we have received. It is followed by a history and background of the Patriots.

NEW YORK—Twenty cops with guns drawn kicked in the door of Arthur Turco's apartment on Feb. 21 and arrested the five members of the Patriot Party who were inside. A few minutes earlier, seven other members of the party had been arrested downstairs in front of the building. Turco is Chief-of-Staff of the Patriots.

The 12 were officially charged with illegal possession of weapons, illegal possession of drugs, and interfering with arrest. They were held on bail totalling \$34,500.

The following day police leaked reports to the press that the 12 were being questioned in connection with the firebombing of the home of Judge John Murtah, who is running the Panther 21 trial now in progress in New York. But Turco, who was arrested in the raid, said at a press conference on Feb. 23, "They never questioned us. The first we heard about these charges was when the assistant DA made them at the arraignment yesterday."

New York City's two daily newspapers, the Times and the Post, giving the story front-page coverage, talked about a "cache" of arms that included "a 12-gauge shotgun, three pistols, a carbine, four gas masks, a sword, three daggers and hundreds of rounds of ammunition." When 21 members of the Black Panther Party were arrested in their homes last April, the press used the same scare tactics, convicting the Panthers before they ever reached the courtroom.

The Patriots denied possession of the pistols, and said that the rifles were legally registered. Turco charged the power structure, from the local DA right up to Nixon, with conspiracy to wipe out the Patriots with the same tactics used against the Panthers. The Patriots are a member of the Rainbow Coalition with the Young Lords and the Black Panthers.

The police ransacked the apartment and took gun registrations, clothes, jewelry, stereo, tapes and the only available copy of the film "American Revolution Number 2." They also found a number of hypodermic needles, which the press mentioned in connection with the dope charges. The press did not mention that Turco is a diabetic.

—liberation news service

Yorkville, New York, Dec. 30, 1969: Patriots show me pictures of a rally held in Chicago jointly with the Panthers. A Confederate flag hangs behind the podium next to the Panther flag. Another, slightly tattered Confederate flag on the wall behind us belonged to the Patriot Party Chairman's family. "It was actually flown in battle," boasts Roger, who looks about 17 but has worked with the Patriots "from the beginning" when they were a newly politicized gang of street kids in Uptown, Chicago. If you've seen *Medium Cool*, you've seen shots of Uptown—that's the slum for the poor whites who came north from Appalachia hunting jobs.

At the time of their arrest the Patriots were making last-minute plans for an organizing tour of the South, which they hope to make the main focus of a national revolutionary white community. Although their internationalist, anti-racist emphasis and much of their rhetoric derive from the Panthers, they take pride in their Southern origins and still hope to visit the South (including Atlanta) in the near future.

Roger's black cowboy hat bears two Patriot buttons, beside the stars and bars. One button shows two upraised red fists breaking handcuffs; the other reads: "Resurrect John Brown." Around us on the walls, among posters of Che and Panther martyrs, hang leaflets offering free medical care to the people of Yorkville, and urging tenants to band together "against all pig landlords." Young kids from the neighborhood drift in and out, children of German and Irish immigrants, saluting each other with "power to the people." The storefront office's taped-up window bears scars of a confrontation with the local Nazi party.

The Patriots differ from most white supporters of the Panthers, and from most white revolutionaries, not only in their Southern origins but also in their working-class roots. In 1964 some of them had joined a project set up by SDS, "Jobs or Income Now" (JOIN), but by 1968 they had politely kicked out SDS and taken over the project, renamed National Organizing Committee. In 1968 NOC ran Peggy Terry, a poor white woman, for vice president as running mate to Eldridge Cleaver on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket.

The street gang which formed part of NOC emerged the next year as the Young Patriots, joined by the Lincoln Park Patriots, a gang of bikers. They saw strong similarities between conditions in the black, brown and white slums of Chicago and concluded that the same system oppresses all poor people. Patriots began to form strong friendships with Panthers.

They feel that poor people of all races can, and must, support each other. And they are interested in organizing the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in our society. "We're concerned with our people, the oppressed whites, those who haven't even made it into the working class yet, people that are so far down, so stomped on, that they can't even get a job and have no place to go but up. We're into organizing the lumpen-proletariat, the black and white niggers, that's us," says Defense Captain Art Turco.

Some of the Young Patriots in Chicago grew restless, sensing a mood of urgency among white youth around the country. They felt that the Patriots should move swiftly to form a national party.

Other members wanted to wait until they had organized more of their home community. The national faction changed its name to the Patriot Party and left Chicago. "By the time we got Uptown 'together' the Panthers could be completely wiped out," they explained. They also claim that those left behind were too indulgent of their old friends and neighbors and didn't push the Patriot principles consistently.

The Party now has chapters across the country—Eugene, Oregon; Cleveland, Ohio; New Haven, Conn.; and Richmond, Va., as well as Yorkville. If Wallace could do it, why not a revolutionary party? The Patriot's Yorkville newsletters answer the charge of "outsider" by affirming: "We are no strangers to the conditions that exist here in Yorkville. . . . Housing problems, tax problems, unemployment, bad schools, and on and on. . . . We are from the thousands of Yorkvilles all over the country." And Uptowns. And Cabbagetowns.

At the same time, the Patriots hope to remind "their people" of America's radical tradition, especially in the South: the mountain counties that opposed slavery and sent troops to the Union army, for example. (Fannin Co., Ga., flew the Union flag.) They avidly read such works as *Millhands and Preachers*, *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel*, and *Black Reconstruction in America*, all of which show black and white Southerners struggling against oppression.

All this sounds much like the now-dissolved Southern Student Organizing Committee in its "Southern nationalism" period. The difference lies mainly in SSOC's middle class, mostly Southern student orientation, contrasted with the Patriot's emphasis on solidarity between poor people across lines of color and region. In spite of these differences, the similarities show how attractive the "rebel" tradition can be, since the Patriots seem to have had very little contact with SSOC. On the other hand the Patriots may not use the stars and bars to organize in the South, where they are identified with a racist ruling class rather than an oppressed minority.

The Patriots hope to organize people around a lot more than history lessons. They adapted the 10-point program of the Black Panthers, which outlines the basic needs of poor communities: jobs, housing, control of police, etc. The Eugene chapter, for example, feeds breakfast to about 50 children, runs a liberation school, and has organized a firewood co-op for mountain families using wood stoves.

This winter Patriots opened a free clinic and a free breakfast program in Yorkville. An earlier Patriot drive to combat the destruction of Yorkville's low-cost housing continues, with slowly increasing community participation. Although most of these services mirror ones designed by the Panthers, the Patriots assert that they spring from the real needs of Yorkville's poor. "Even if the parents have food for their kids, they have to get up at six or seven in the morning to go to work and can't prepare it."

The Patriots, like the Panthers, emphasize community control. "We don't want to run this clinic for the people, we want them to learn how to run it and take it over." Another difference is the source of the breakfast food. Their leaflet explains:

We are asking merchants in the community

to contribute food to the program. Since they make a profit on what we need to survive we believe they have a responsibility to the community, especially the big stores, ask them if they are contributing to the free breakfast program. If not, we should all begin shopping somewhere else.

Poor whites who support black militants—and try to organize other poor whites to do the same—have to have a lot of guts. The Patriots already have one martyr: John Howard, a white welfare recipient from Georgia who came to Chicago seeking work. In 1964 he began working with JOIN in Uptown. The film "American Revolution # 2" shows a meeting attended by Uptown whites and Panthers in 1966. In that scene John Howard says: "I'll stick with the Panthers if they'll stick with me, and I know they will." When Howard returned to Georgia in 1969 to visit his family, he was identified at a meeting as "the guy who works with niggers in Chicago." The next day he was found dead, his throat slit.

The Patriots' expansion South has possibilities. "If you feed 15 poor white kids till you get to the point where you can talk to them about Bobby Seale [jailed Panther chairman], you're doing more to free Bobby than if a whole university came out on a 'Free Bobby' demonstration," they feel. But can the Patriots get their anti-racist message across while emphasizing white solidarity? "Whites have to start getting together. If we're the ones to get them together, we'll be able to deal with this racism thing."

At the moment, a few charismatic male leaders hold the party together. A certain arrogance has characterized the Party's relations with other Movement people whom they tend to label "petty-bourgeois." As the Party grows, it will have to deal with male chauvinism, as well as racism, in a structural and programmatic way.

But ever since 1966, when SNCC told white radicals to organize their own communities, the Movement, with a few exceptions, has hesitated at the edges of the campus. We talk a lot about organizing workers, unemployed youth, and over-taxed Southerners who vote for Maddox because he seems to stand for "the little man." The Patriots seem ready to do more than talk. Right now, especially in the South, they're just feeling their way. We owe them our support and encouragement.

—barbara joye



Actual
Specimen
The BIRD

3/9/70