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Police Death Squads

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin

Police death squads in American cities are a sign of the times. Every year in the USA anywhere about 800-1,000 persons are killed in police custody. Like the nine people in Detroit this year, Amadou Diallo in NYC, Tiyesha Miller in Riverside, California, and many others whose names we don't know, they were undeniably slaughtered by the police. But these were no accidents, idle acts of racism, or even isolated vigilante actions by crazed cops. No, these death squads are carrying out *government policy* to rid the cities of "undesirables". In that sense, they are little different than the death squads in Latin America, who kill poor people and street kids in Brazil, Leftists and labor leaders in Guatemala, or police goon squads in any military dictatorship.

This killing is consistent government policy, and part of a policy to seize control of and maintain the "peace" in the cities. This is all happening in the face of serious urban decay, and inner city demolition. The government of all major cities want to reclaim the inner cities for the rich and their corporations, they want to move the poor out and they want to move their white middle class workers in. It's already this way in most

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parts of Europe, the suburbs are for the poor, while the more valuable inner city is reserved for the rich.

Since the 1960's, the government has had various plans: urban renewal, spatial deconcentration, and others designed to remove the poor, the Black community (and the barrios of the urban SouthWest), and cripple our ability to resist in the inner cities like we did in Detroit and Watts during that time. Mostly though this government scheme has failed, as it has been resisted, and we have refused to be moved and held on to the urban landscape. But if you couple today's police terror, with the current destruction of low income housing projects, the thefts of low income housing tracts by government-financed and supported land speculators, the destruction of rent control, and mass imprisonment of the poor, you begin to get a picture that the military model of policing is designed to uphold a new order of austerity and official criminality.

Then when we realize that it is the government which is responsible for the drug epidemic in our communities, we understand that we have an enemy which is destabilizing our homeplace; this stuff is not just happening without cause. These SWAT teams, Tactical police, and new drug paramilitary police units are clearly being used for military repression in the inner city.

I don't believe in conspiracies, or more precisely the idea that somehow the American government's latest crimes, whether police racial profiling or CIA drug pushing, are somehow disconnected from their past treachery. No, they are part and parcel of *one scheme* of historical oppression and economic exploitation. Lynchings in one historical period, police murders in another. How many Black, Brown and other poor people dying from police gunfire does it take before we start understanding all this?

What bothers me is that I don't see very much of any kind of organizing against it, whether so-called nonviolent demonstrations or the creation of militias in the Black community.

I am not advocating just taking the cops on with gunplay, or some type of macho posturing, but rather taking it to the people who are more ready than we might imagine to resist...by any means necessary! We must teach them to stop these police murders with every means at our disposal. We must make it impossible for the rich and their murderous cops to rule over us and our communities, make ourselves ungovernable like the Palestinian people have been doing for the last 15 years in the Occupied Territories with their Intifada.

Like Bro. Malcolm X, I believe that we must bleed this government economically with boycotts and with armed street resistance, but we cannot sit idly by and do nothing. We must make sure that these 21st century lynchers get a dose of their own medicine. I ain't "advocating violence", I'm talking common sense for our survival. Hell, thousands of right-wing White folks are organizing militias in the state of Michigan, in every one of the 83 counties of this state counties. What are we thinking?

I know that the white government will put forward sellouts like Jesse Jackson or Al Sharpton, "responsible Negro leaders", who tell us we can depend on Attorney General Janet Reno and the Department of (In)Justice to stop unlawful police murders, and that we should not "turn to violence." Well, I believe that we must turn against these so-called "national Negro leaders" as well as local traitors like the Uncle Tom preachers and corrupt politicians like Archer in Detroit or "Uncle Bob" Jones in Kalamazoo who tell us just to sit passively by, waiting on some puppet "citizen review board" or the Negro Mayor to save us from these cops.

Ain't nobody saving us but ourselves, and our communities, which if properly organized can stop police brutality. Police Death squads are a sign of the times, but the times have to be changin'!