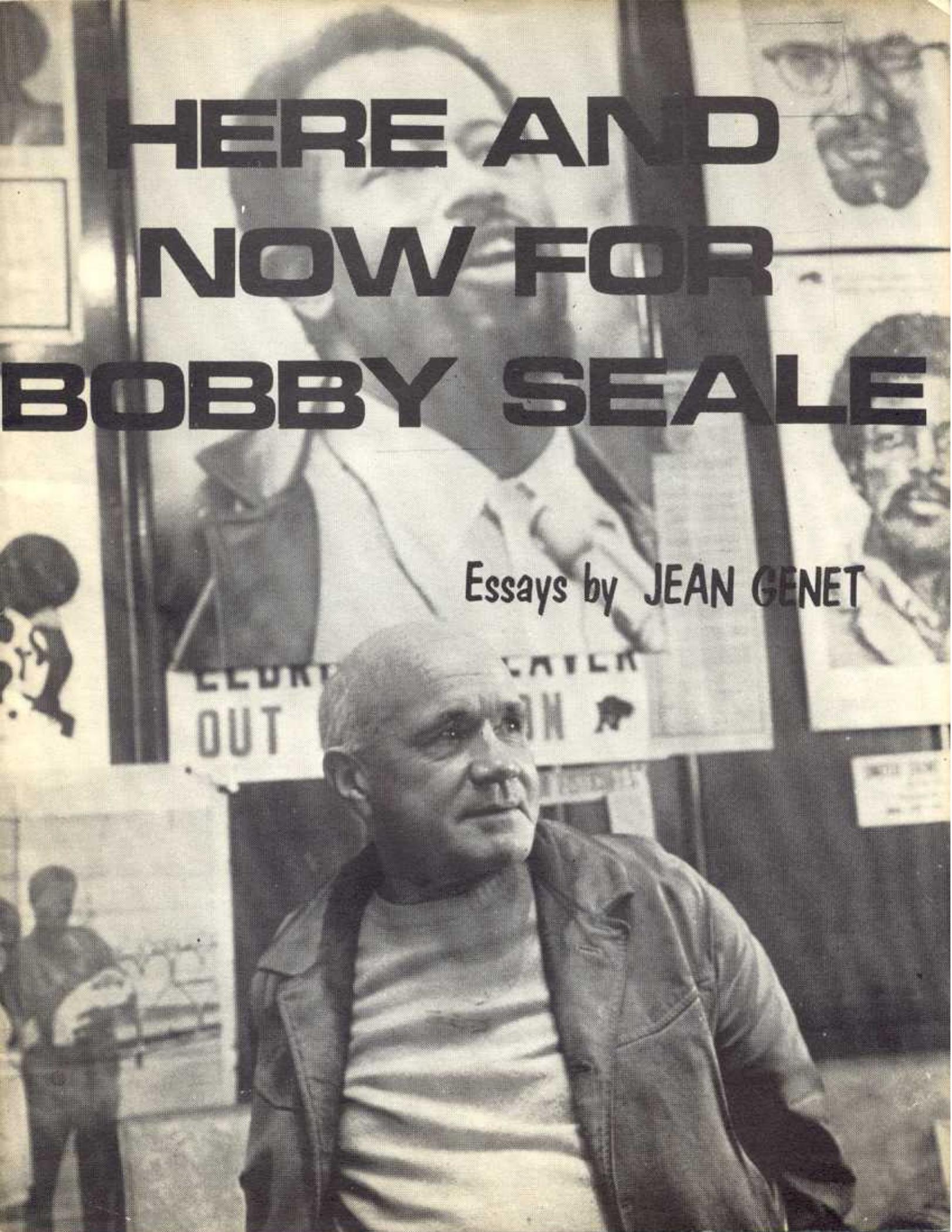


# HERE AND NOW FOR BOBBY SEALE

Essays by JEAN GENET



### 3 HERE AND NOW FOR BOBBY SEALE

*For the white man, history, past and future is very long, and his set of references is very imposing. For the black man, Time is short, for his History has been brutally interrupted and modified by the whites, who have done everything to prevent him from having his own, original development. And in the U.S.A., we are still busy setting limits on black people's Time and Space. Not only is each and everyone of them forced to withdraw within himself; he is also imprisoned by us. And when this is not enough, we assassinate him.*

*Because of Chairman Bobby Seale's exceptional political stature, his trial is in fact a political trial of the Black Panther Party and, on a more general basis, a race trial held against all of America's blacks.*

*The reality of the black colony within the United States is very complex. Dispersed as they are within a nation so chauvinistic that she likes to think of herself as master of the world, the blacks who are oppressed by racism and indifference and threatened by an oppressive police and administration, have been forced to wage a very new type of fight. That is how the Black Panther Party was created: first of all to defend the rights of the colonized blacks inside the U.S.A., but also to synthesize new ways for blacks to struggle against white oppression.*

*Faced with the vigor of their action and the accuracy of their political thinking, the whites - and especially the police - had a racial reaction almost immediately: as soon as the blacks proved that they were able to organize themselves, the whites rushed to discredit their organization.*

*The police were therefore able to hide the true meaning of their intentions behind pretexts - trials based on drug, murder and conspiracy charges. The fact of the*

*matter is that they were trying to massacre the leaders of the Black Panther Party.*

*In 1968, at the time of Huey Newton's trial, the government still seemed reluctant to massacre the Black Panther Party. From May 2, 1967, to September 28, 1968 - the date of Huey Newton's trial there were 55 cases against members of the Black Panther Party. All of this happened within a period of 16 months.*

*But if we do another calculation, this time from September 28, 1968, to December 8, 1969, we find that there were 373 cases against the Panthers. That was during a period of 15 months. It is now April 1970. Less than a month ago, Bobby Seale was extradited from California and sent to jail in New Haven, Connecticut. There were a few demonstrations, but they were really very weak compared with what happened during Huey Newton's trial.*

*What about us: What are we doing? When the bombs hit Hanoi, we had some epidermal reactions. So did we during the Korean war. These massacres were taking place far away. Here and now, we are finding out that the colonized, within our own borders, who still appear to us like shadows in our midst, are about to become our adversaries, in our own country.*

*To a foreign observer, the deterioration of relations between blacks and whites is without mystery. In one year, police repression has so brutally escalated that white Americans are full of fears. All kinds of fears. First of all, there is fear of the police. Intellectuals know (or think) they are threatened by Agnew's bragging. Even if they've demonstrated their disgust with Newton's trial, today they are silent: Bobby may die.*

*By intensifying the repression, the Nixon administration knew it could quiet the in-*

tellectuals who are comfortably set up in universities or in well-protected neighborhoods. Intellectuals owe it to themselves to take up the challenge, and to refuse the Nixonian order.

Liberals who hollered so loudly during the Chicago trial are now mute. And to justify themselves, they even say that the Panther Party is endangered by its own violence.

Another fear is showing its true colors, and without daring to call it by its proper name, everybody recognizes it. "Bobby Seale? After all he's a black man."

This reflex, in each white man, is less abrupt than I have stated. Probably it's never expressed in these terms, even under people's breath. But in an even more surreptitious way, the thought goes through people's minds and corrupts them. The intelligence and political daring of the blacks makes white people uneasy and indignant.

Blacks who have kept their sensitivity intact even in the face of such threats once again recognize the appearance of the old enemy: racism.

If young white Americans in the past few years have tried to conduct themselves on an equal basis with blacks, police terror is about to throw them back into their forefathers' stupidity.

While middle-aged Americans in the lap of comfort huddle snugly in their security, the young will have everything to lose if they let themselves be dispossessed of their fighting spirit. If they want to bring themselves together with blacks, whose revolutionary maturity is evident, they will need courage - but also intelligence, which is much rarer in this country.

Bobby Seale's trial will be a test for young white revolutionaries. It is their turn to prove how clearly they can analyze the situation and how skillfully they can go about finding the means for action. This, here and now, is the moment of truth - for Bobby Seale, for the Black Panthers, for young

white Americans.

If the repression increases, it is obvious that the blacks will see a collective crime being committed against them, a crime committed in collective complicity. On the other hand, if whites who call themselves radicals are able to bring themselves together with blacks for this trial, theirs will be a great victory for the blacks, and also for the whites. One would doubt whether whites could prevent the trial from happening, but they could affect the verdict and its application. White Americans must do everything they can for Bobby, since this is how the blacks will see whether or not they must act alone. If they are forced to act alone, after the trial, they might have to act in desperation.

We must also be aware of the fact that blacks have been able to liberate themselves from the old terrors exercised by whites by means of the Christian religion. For more than 400 years, whites were able to use the Old and New Testaments with diabolic skill. We know what happened: to the blacks, the whites advised the gentleness of the evangelical moral which makes it a duty to respect the master - the white man; to suffer in silence; and to wait for divine rewards after death. At the same time, the Bible was read to them, filled with celestial threats against those who revolt.

Today, mixed with the descendants of their former masters on a common territory, the blacks want to be liberated from their former fears and to be free among men.

Violence. If we must, let's talk about it, but by seeing it first for what it is: a word. A word used by those who elaborated and imposed the language: the masters. According to how the word will serve them, it can signify God's will; used against them, it can become a sign of shame and degradation. When white men use violence, violence is good. When black use it, they are considered animals. However, it so happens that the blacks have exposed the tricks of language,

as they have exposed religious tricks, legal shams and social deformities. Blacks aren't sham and social deformities. Blacks aren't afraid of words anymore, regardless of the coloration that whites might give to them.

It is evident that recommending non-violence to blacks is an effort to retain the Christian vocabulary which has kept them imprisoned in passivity for so long. However Christian the whites are, they don't feel guilty about using guns: that is violence. Asking blacks in America to be non-violent means that whites are demanding a Christian virtue which they themselves do not possess. That means that whites are once again trying to dupe the blacks.

White people call the blacks' revolt violent, their actions violent. The blacks don't give a damn, if they need violence in order to survive and to live. The blacks cannot be intimidated. They are already the stronger because they are right.

For the whites, the cry of the blacks is an act of violence which shatters their delicate eardrums. Apparently, these whites aren't conscious of the fact that black music was once a wail: today it's a battle cry.

Let's go back to the statistics I quoted earlier: from May 2, 1967, to September 28, 1968 - a key date, the date that Huey was condemned to 15 years in prison - there were 55 cases recorded against the Panthers. From September 28, 1968, to December 9, 1969, there were 373 cases. The acceleration of the repression is staggering. It is aimed above all at the Black Panther Party. From March 1, 1968, to August 25, 1968, five Panthers were killed. From October 6, 1968, to December 20, 1969, 15 Panthers were killed. The figures are accurate. Here are some more: from March 2, 1968, to September 28, 1969, 130 Panthers were called in for questioning, as compared with 738 who were summoned from September 29 to December 9, 1969.

Therefore in one year, the repression increased in a direct proportion of one to

seven.

If we recognize the fact that the Panther movement is the most profoundly revolutionary movement in America, it is time for us to act as quickly as we can to prevent its total destruction. Without a doubt it is a question of life and death for the Black Panther Party and for Bobby Seale - but also for all revolutionary movements in this country.

We might also add, for those who don't believe they are directly concerned with the revolution because they have material security: a critical, revolutionary mind doesn't necessarily develop only among the poor or the weak. In different ways it can develop in the minds of the rich and the strong. Even though it is fed by demands which are the result of social injustice and inequality, revolution is an act of intelligence and sensitivity. Above all, revolution thinks itself into being. As such, it uses the tactics most suited for its realization. The revolution will be made by everybody.

What is new about this situation is that in a nation where white people are in the majority, the revolutionary core is contained in the black community. We must therefore acknowledge the fact that its leaders are Cleaver, Newton and Seale.

We must save Bobby Seale because  
we must save the Black Panther Party  
because  
we must save the revolutionary spirit  
in America.

Jean Genet

-translated by Judy Oringer

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