

Pakistani Muslim Tells:

'Why, At Times, I Refused To Cooperate With Malcolm'

(The third of a four-part series to be concluded next week)

By Abdul Basit Naeem

As I stated in my article in last week's issue of MUHAMMAD SPEAKS, I had reasons for refusing to cooperate with the late Malcolm X in such matters as appearing with him on his lectures at universities and on radio and television interviews. These were not necessarily identical in all instances. I shall, therefore, mention specific reasons for each specific occasion.

Let us take, first of all, the famed Mike Wallace TV program (produced several years ago) called "The Hate That Hate Produced . . ." I had refused to have anything to do with it because the idea of this program originated not with the producers but with an "ambitious" American Muslim (of West Indies background) known at the time to be avowedly hostile to the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. It was he, according to my information, who had approached and, with the help of "mutual friends in the networks," persuaded Mr. Wallace to produce the telecast—whose original script, incidentally, was supposed to have included a lengthy "anti-Muhammad tirade" volunteered by the "rival Muslim leader."

The Messenger's adversary had hoped to gain, through the Wallace expose, "much public sympathy" for his own Islamic propagation movement. He had speculated, I believe, that even if the program failed to generate any support for his organization, it would "undoubtedly cause irreparable damage to the mission of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and hasten the doom of

this racist movement . . ." Thus, it is that while Brother Malcolm gave enthusiastic approval to the Wallace project and eagerly cooperated with the show's responsible staff, I, for one, remained totally disinterested—and doubtful that the telecast, as projected, would actually benefit the Muslims' cause. I was not prepared, therefore, to participate in a program which, in my considered judgment, was likely to do more harm than good to the "young and precious" Nation of Islam in America.

A SECOND SPECIFIC instance I recall was when Brother Malcolm invited me to come along with him to appear at a series of talks he was scheduled to deliver at several eastern university campuses. On this particular occasion, I simply asked the brother Minister to ". . . first secure for me the necessary approval of the Honorable Messenger." (This was, I confess, my own special way of ascertaining whether or not Brother Malcolm was actually keeping his leader and teacher, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, fully informed of his various "non-ministerial" undertakings.) As far as I

know, Malcolm never made that call in my behalf . . . In fact, he never touched that subject again, though we met a number of times during the weeks that followed.

On another occasion, I remember, Malcolm X gave me a batch of newspapers—or rather, student publications issued by some of the schools he had visited as a guest speaker. Each of these contained a report on his "local" appearance and a few excerpts from his speech. Brother Malcolm asked me if I would consider preparing an article describing his "lecture tour" based on the write-ups in the said publications and send it ("on your own") to MUHAMMAD SPEAKS. Curious to examine those student newspapers at length, I accepted the assignment and told Brother Malcolm that I would try to oblige him.

As I began to work on his material a few days later, however, I couldn't help but notice that practically all the write-ups glorified "Mr. X" and mentioned little or (comparatively) nothing of the very source of his knowledge, eloquence and art of persuasion—the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. Realizing, thus, that my brother Minister's assignment constituted a severe imposition, I decided not to go through with it. . . .

IT SO HAPPENED that the day I was to see Brother Malcolm about this matter—I was to meet him, by

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appointment, at the Muslims' Shabazz Restaurant in Harlem—I found him in an unusually depressed mood. Never before had I seen him looking as dejected and worried as he did then. At first, he did not even wish to speak to me; he said he suffered from a headache, caused by sustained sleeplessness. Then, perhaps by a slip of tongue, suddenly he mentioned, almost in a whisper, that "... I've just had my ears chewed ... We

haven't had any membership gains on the east coast in over a year. . . ." My tongue, too, somehow slipped and in one quick breath I pronounced, "Maybe you've been spending too much of your time 'fishing' in the wrong waters . . ." Malcolm X was silent for a good, long minute. Then, with a faint smile and his head gently clasped between his fists, he muttered, "No . . . No, it isn't that . . ." Seconds later, deciding all of a sudden to "go home," he got up from his seat and as he walked toward the door,

he motioned to me and, with a grin that was not free of symptoms of anger, told me to "forget about that article . . . and keep those papers if you want to. . . ."

THE POINTS OF FRICTION such as those described above did not, of course, lead to a termination of the mutual, fraternal relationship existing between Brother Malcolm X and myself. They did, nevertheless, develop into a "gulf of iced water" between us that somehow only widened as time went on. . . .