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Liberal Whitewash Prepared for Black Militant

If you listen carefully these days, with an ear cocked to the liberal press, you will hear the unmistakable slosh-slosh sound of whitewash being mixed. Robert F. Williams, the black revolutionary, is about to get two coats of respectability and a top coat of hokum. By the time the job is done, he will emerge as a born-again statesman, pure as the driven snow.

The tipoff came a couple of weeks ago in a lyrical interview carried on page one of the Washington Post. The story began by indentifying Williams as the North Carolina Negro who fled from the United States eight years ago in the face of a kidnaping charge. Why had he returned? "I felt it my duty to come back."

The interview took place in a neat ranch house in an integrated suburb of Detroit. Williams' family and close friends sat around the room, hanging on each word of the returned exile. They were filled with laughter and delight, but they responded with a hush of awe, anger and respect as Williams described the oppression he suffered from a mob of local white in Monroe, N.C.

"Now, looking much as he had before he left, having aged little in the Cuba and China years, he sat in his Mao-styled suit and spoke of himself as a changed man, a man who has seen a different light through the window. . . ." He longs for a selfless society, composed of selfless men. If his people want him, he will be at their service. He is looking for progress. He wants to change men as well as systems. Taking gentle exception to the emotional appeals of some black nationalists, Williams said: "I've learned that we have to be less emotional about this thing. . . ."

The Post's 1,500-word account, to put the matter mildly, was what is known in

tougher city rooms as a bucket of mush. It was the old snow job. A backward look may be useful.

On the evening of Sunday, Aug. 27, 1961, the town of Monroe was gripped in racial disorders. By happenstance, a rural couple, Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Stegall, drove into the riot area. On the following day, The New York Times reported:

"Mrs. Stegall told newsmen she and her husband had been forced from their car at gunpoint, taken to the Williams home, and bound back to back with tape from a Venetian blind. Williams, she said, had called Chief A. A. Mauney of the Monroe police and told him that if those in jail were not released the Stegalls 'will be killed or sacrificed or done away with' within 30 minutes."

Williams fled the country that night. Two days later, in a search of the Williams home, police found 56 sticks of dynamite, a large-caliber Japanese rifle, and nine steel helmets. Williams wound up in Cuba, traveled on to Red China, later appeared in Tanzania,

By his own description of the Monroe incident, "we had enough force and arms to reduce the entire city to ashes," but his guerrillas lacked "extensive outside forces to pin down, ambush and destroy the State reinforcements moving in to overpower us."

From Cuba, Williams published a newsletter, "The Crusader." In his issue for May-June, 1964, he wrote of the weapons to be used by Afro-Americans in revolt: "Gasoline fire bombs, lye or acid bombs (made by injecting lye in the metal end of light bulbs) can be used extensively. . . . Hand grenades, bazookas, light mortars, rocket launchers, machine guns and ammunition can be bought clandestinely from servicemen, anxious to make a fast dollar. . . ."

"Extensive sabotage is possible. Gas tanks on public vehicles can be choked up with sand. Sugar is also highly effective in gasoline lines. . . . Derailing of trains causes panic. Explosive booby traps on police telephone boxes can be

employed. High powered sniper rifles are readily available. . . ."

Once in China, Williams flooded the U.S. with pamphlets urging Negroes not to fight in Vietnam. If they were sent there, "they should eliminate as many of their real enemies (white Americans) as they can at the front, so that these racists will not be able to return home."

This is the gentle fellow of the Post's adulation. Will the real Robert Williams stand up?