

Writer Foresees Collision Course

By Nick Ludington

ISTANBUL (AP) — James Baldwin lives. He is alive and well in Istanbul.

In an interview in his apartment overlooking the Bosphorus, Baldwin said that although he is "in some ways" the last unassassinated Negro of his generation, his long residence abroad does not mean he has withdrawn from the civil rights struggle in the United States or lost hope for the future.

Living in Istanbul is "preparation, not flight," said the 45-year-old essayist-playwright-novelist, once considered a leading ideologist of the black movement.

While directing a play here, "Fortune and Men's Eyes," Baldwin is writing a new civil rights analysis to be called "No Name in the Streets," and plans a lecture tour of U.S. campuses early next year.

"What we called the civil rights struggle can be said to have been buried with Martin Luther King," he said.

"Because as of that event . . . and with the arrival of the new administration, it began to be very clear to black people in the United States that what Time magazine calls 'the troubled American' is not going to listen, does not want to know, does not want to hear the truth about the situation of the American black."

But, said Baldwin, "It is not up to me whether I counsel extremism or whether I don't . . . How violent the situation becomes, how extreme the situation becomes, isn't up to the blacks in America, it is up to the whites in America.



JAMES BALDWIN
... in Istanbul

"If I were really pessimistic, a long time ago I would have found a cabin on some mountain and I would be sitting there. And I would not be talking to you.

"I would not be planning to go home.

"I would not be planning to do a play.

"I would not be planning to write another book."

Blacks and whites are on a collision course, said Baldwin. "I know America has gotten itself into a place it does not know how to get out of. It's been coming for a very long time. Now here we are. What happens is anyone's guess. I'm no prophet.

But, said Baldwin, "It seems very unlikely to me that there is enough moral energy left in most white Americans to accomplish the miracle which is now demanded. I hope I am wrong."