

BLACK POWER

IT'S PAST, TODAY, AND THE
WAY AHEAD.

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY

CLR JAMES

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B L A C K P O W E R

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Afterword

F O R E W O R D

This address was delivered in London in the August of 1967. Since that time, much has happened. This does not make the ideas here put forward less relevant. On the contrary, it makes them more necessary than ever. Every revolutionary movement needs a solid ideological foundation. The movement for Black Power is conspicuously deficient here, in notable comparison with its magnificent militancy, above all in the United States. Here, as far as I know, is a first statement of where the Movement has come from and where it is headed. It was his scrupulous, his almost pedantic, concern with the philosophical, historical and other premises of revolutionary struggle in Russia that contributed to making Lenin the greatest revolutionary leader that history has known.

2 December 1968

C.L.R. James

BLACK POWER

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, Black Power. I believe that this slogan is destined to become one of the great political slogans of our time. Of course, only Time itself can tell that. Nevertheless, when we see how powerful an impact this slogan has made it is obvious that it touches very sensitive nerves in the political consciousness of the world today. This evening I don't intend to tell you that it is your political duty to fight against racial consciousness in the British people; or that you must seek ways and means to expose and put an end to the racist policies of the present Labour Government. If you are not doing that already I don't see that this meeting will help you to greater political activity. That is not the particular purpose of this meeting though, as you shall hear, there will be specific aims and concrete proposals. What I aim to do this evening is to make clear to all of us what this slogan Black Power means, what it does not mean, cannot mean; and I say quite plainly, we must get rid, once and for all, of a vast amount of confusion which is arising, copiously, both from the Right and also from the Left. Now I shall tell you quite precisely what I intend to do this evening. The subject is extremely wide, comprising hundreds of millions of people, and therefore in the course of an address of about an hour or so, we had better begin by being very precise about what is going to be said and what is not going to be said.

STOKELY

But before I outline, so to speak, the premises on which I will build, I want to say a few words about Stokely Carmichael: I think I ought to say Stokely because everybody, everywhere, calls him Stokely which I think is a political fact of some importance. The slogan Black Power, beginning in the United States and spreading from there elsewhere, is undoubtedly closely associated with him and with those who are fighting with him. But for us in Britain his name, whether we like it or not, means more than that. It is undoubtedly his presence here, and the impact that he has made in his speeches and his conversations, that have made the slogan Black Power reverberate in the way that it is doing in political Britain; and even outside of that, in Britain in general. And I want to begin by making a particular reference to Stokely which, fortunately, I am in a position to make. And I do this because on the whole in public speaking, in writing, (and also to a large degree in private conversation), I usually avoid, take great care to avoid placing any emphasis on a personality in politics.

I was reading the other day Professor Levi-Strauss and in a very sharp attack on historical conceptions prevalent today, I saw him say that the description of personality, or of the anecdote (which so many people of my acquaintance historically and politically live by)

were the lowest forms of history. With much satisfaction I agreed: I have been saying so for nearly half a century. But then he went on to place the political personality within a context that I thought was misleading, and it seemed to me that in avoiding it as much as I have done, I was making a mistake, if not so much in writing, certainly in public speech. And that is why I begin what I have to say, and will spend a certain amount of time, on one of the most remarkable personalities of contemporary politics. And I am happy to say that I did not have to wait until Stokely came here to understand the force which he symbolises.

I heard him speak in Canada at Sir George Williams University in March of this year. There were about one thousand people present, chiefly white students, about sixty or seventy Negro people, and I was so struck by what he was saying and the way he was saying it (a thing which does not happen to me politically very often) that I sat down immediately and took the unusual step of writing a letter to him, a political letter. After all, he was a young man of 23 or 24 and I was old enough to be his grandfather and, as I say, I thought I had a few things to tell him which would be of use to him and, through him, the movement he represented. I will now read to you parts of this letter:

"I was glad to hear you because I wanted to know for myself what had lifted you up to the pinnacle on which you now stand. It is a pinnacle and one that is very rare in my experience or even historically. You are just 24 and you are not only one of the people on the American continent who is to be reckoned with, but you are a world-famous figure. At 24. That fact is something very special and seems to offer immense possibilities both for the cause and the advancement, or rather I should say the development, of the personality. I am profoundly aware of the dangers of being in such a position at such an early age. I propose therefore in this letter to deal of course with the movement, because everything depends on that, but also with the specific dangers that beset you as a leader, perhaps the most prominent leader today, of this great movement in the United States."

I then explained why in particular I had been so struck by him. The letter continues:

"One of my most important and pregnant experiences is my experience both personal and otherwise of West Indians and people of West Indian origin who have made their way on the broad stage of Western civilisation. Some of them I knew very well personally and others I have studied, am very familiar with their work, and have systematically added to my information and knowledge about them from people who knew them well. They are Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon. These are West Indians who have played a role on the world political stage that is not even properly understood by their own people. One of the tasks I have set myself is to make people understand what these men have done

and their significance in world politics. In a substantial respect I am one of them, although I have not played the concrete role that they have played: I say that I am one of them because it means that I understand the type very well. And you are one. I suspected it when I was reading some of your writings and having heard you I am absolutely certain of it. Let me briefly state at once some of the points that brought this home to me with extreme force, particularly at that meeting."

We need not go further into that now. I went on to say (it was a rather lengthy letter) that there were certain doubtful points in his speech which he should bear in mind. I went on further to indicate in the letter that there were grave weaknesses in the whole Negro struggle in the United States; for one, that it lacked a sound historical and theoretical basis. And I suggested to him, that if he did not see his way to initiate this study himself, he should see to it that others take it up and take it up seriously. So large and far-reaching a struggle needed to know where it was, where it had come from, and where it was going.

I received a reply in which he took up the points I had made and said he recognised their importance. That was in March and April of this year, 1967. The year has not ended and now he speaks with a scope and a depth and range of political understanding that astonishes me. That the Stokely whom I heard in March and whose conspicuous political ability and character I recognised (that is why I wrote to him) in less than a year should have developed into the political leader we are hearing and seeing, this to me is a testimony not merely to him but to the speed with which the modern world is moving politically. I have to add that much that I shall now say to you I knew before, but I could never have said it in the way that you will hear, unless I had been able to listen and to talk to the new Stokely, the Stokely that we have been hearing.

SLOGAN OR BANNER

Now, Black Power. A political slogan and yet not a political slogan: rather a banner. We see that at once the moment we look at previous statements which have captured the political imagination and guided the activity of people all over the world during past centuries and up to today. I shall take some of the best known ones and that will enable us to put Black Power in the proper place to which it belongs.

You remember about the middle of the eighteenth century Rousseau's statement with which he began his famous book The Social Contract? "Man was born free and is everywhere in chains." Listen to it again: "Man was born free and is everywhere in chains." It was written two hundred years ago and yet today, in classes in political philosophy, in universities all over the world, in articles and books that are daily published, the debate rages: what did Rousseau mean by saying that man was born free and is everywhere in chains? Some people

draw the conclusion about Rousseau that he was the originator of the totalitarian state, others that we have not yet reached the kind of democracy which he had in mind. It is not our business this evening to come to any decision about that (although I know where I stand). The point is that the phrase has been a banner under which men have struggled for liberty and freedom, a phrase under which that struggle goes on today. Without Rousseau's "Man was born free and is everywhere in chains", the world would be a poorer place.

Let us take another statement almost two hundred years old, the statement by Jefferson that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal....that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights...", the beginning of one of the most famous documents in history, the Declaration of Independence of the United States, declared in Congress on the Fourth of July, 1776. Self-evident! Jefferson had a nerve. Nothing like that was "self-evident" anywhere. In Britain, all over Europe, all over Asia, all over the known world, people were being governed by kings who were supposed to have been placed on the throne by God; there were nobles, aristocrats; there were the clergy with special rights, in every part of the known globe. In the United States itself there was a solid mass of people who did not believe that even in the United States all men were created equal. Yet Jefferson had the nerve to begin the famous document by saying that this was a truth that he held to be self-evident, i.e. everybody could see it. At the time there were very few people who accepted it. To this day there are vast numbers of people who don't believe it. Nevertheless it is one of the greatest political statements ever made. It is a banner by which and under which tremendous struggles have been waged for liberty, for democracy, for democratic freedom. I hope that you are following me in my view that it is only by placing it historically that we can begin to see what Black Power signifies and avoid gross and dangerous blunders. In fact, it is not a slogan at all. Rather it is a banner for people with certain political aims, needs and attitudes, a banner around which they can rally, a banner which I believe many millions already today see and in the not too distant future will see, as the symbol of a tremendous change in life and society as they have known it.

BLACK POWER: ITS ANCESTRY

Let us now leave these slogans (I prefer to think of them as banners) and go directly to the origin and ancestry of this world-shaking movement, Booker T. Washington. For, yes, it is with Booker T. Washington that we have to begin. Today the name of Booker T. is not often mentioned in regard to the development of Negro struggles. Most often people mention with a certain disdain his famous concession, or I can call it his infamous capitulation to race prejudice in the South. It is part of the history of the Negro and of the history of the United States that Booker T., in a famous speech in Atlanta, Georgia, told the South:

"In all things purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."

Today we ought to be able to see first that Booker T. Washington faced a situation in which he was seeking desperately for a way out, and he could see no way out except capitulation. But Booker T. did something else. He said that Negroes should prepare themselves for the work of artisans and labourers: everybody could not be a scholar or do a skilled clerical job; the Negro had to prepare himself for manual labour. But, added Booker T., he should also seek to educate himself in the humanities. So it was that Tuskegee, which was the centre of Negro education in the South for many years, became a great pioneer of modern education, i.e. education for the members of a modern community, education of body and mind for manual and intellectual labour. So that today Booker T. Washington's method of education, forced upon him by race prejudice, has become an educational ideal which is more and more widely accepted as a necessity for the world in which we live.

But Booker T. is also remembered for the fact that he drew upon himself a devastating attack by another great pioneer in Negro struggles, Dr. W.E.B DuBois. DuBois marked a great stage in the history of Negro struggles when he said that Negroes could no longer accept the subordination which Booker T. Washington had preached. On it Booker T. had built a base not only for himself but for a certain type of Negro educator and social functionary. Dr. DuBois declared the absolute right of the Negro for whatever task he was fitted. And we can see how history changes in that, looking at the qualifications and weaknesses of American Negroes in his day, DuBois championed specifically the Negroes of "the talented tenth", that tenth of the Negro community which he believed was already fitted to exercise fully the qualifications it had already attained. We can see how history moves when we understand that this, which was a legitimate demand by one of the great pioneers of Negro emancipation, would today be repudiated by Stokely and all supporters of Black Power. They do not seek to advance claims, rights for one-tenth of the present Negro population of the United States. They say that it is this tenth of the Negro population which has been and is being given special positions which corrupt it and act as a deadweight on the development of the great mass of the Negro people as a whole. So that "the talented tenth" in the days of DuBois fifty years ago represented an advance, while today it is the main enemy of all those who fight under the banner of Black Power.

But if we wish properly to understand the advanced position which Stokely Carmichael and the advocates of Black Power hold today, we have only to see that Dr. DuBois was not a man whose reputation rested only on the fact that he was one of the great leaders of Negro emancipation. Not only white journalists have thus circumscribed him. I have had to protest to leading people in the coloured community in the United States about what they said when DuBois died. I am glad to say that I had had the opportunity to point out that in organising the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People and founding its periodical The Crisis, Dr. DuBois took the lead in making the United States and the world recognise that racial prejudice was not a mere matter of Negroes being persecuted but was a cancer which poisoned the whole civilisation of the United States. Secondly, in the Pan-African Conferences that he organised all over the world, he first made people in the United States

and elsewhere recognise that Africa could not be left in the state of stagnation and exploitation in which it had entered the twentieth century. Thirdly, in his study of the American slave trade and in his studies of the Civil War he was undoubtedly one of the most penetrating and effective historians of his time: there is no noteworthy American historian writing today and during the last fifty years who does not owe a tremendous debt to DuBois's work in history. So that in all these respects he was far more than "a leader of our people". In fundamental respects he was a generation in advance of most American thinking of his time and he is one of the great citizens of the United States in the twentieth century. We must bear that mistake in mind and not make it again as we are on the way to doing in regard to the advocates of Black Power. Think of this seriously, please.

Now the foundation having been firmly laid, we can move a little faster. Next on the list is Marcus Garvey, of whom we need say only a few sentences. Before Garvey the great millions of Africans and people of African descent simply did not exist in the political consciousness of the world in general, of the general public, and of politicians in particular. After less than a decade this Jamaican had placed them there. He had placed them there in a manner that they could never be removed again. Garvey had placed them not only in the consciousness of the oppressors but as a constituent part of the minds and aims of the great mass of Africans and people of African descent.

We can now go still faster. After Garvey came Padmore, who added a new dimension. Padmore was the originator of the movement to achieve the political independence of the African countries and people of African descent. That is why he is increasingly known as the Father of African Emancipation. So that a certain stage of African emancipation had arrived, very soon after the independence of Ghana, by actually achieving political independence, i.e. rule by local and native politicians over large areas.

There follows automatically the rise and significance of the activities and writings of Frantz Fanon. We must see Fanon as the political activist and writer who is saying that now we have actually achieved independence we have to fight against not only the old imperialism creeping back: we have to carry on a desperate all-out struggle against those native leaders who may have fought for independence. Many do not represent the forward movement of the underdeveloped peoples to some new stage of economic and political progress. Says Fanon: after independence those become the enemy. We do not see Fanon correctly if we do not see him as a natural development after what Padmore represented, and Padmore as the political stage of the wide avenue opened by DuBois and Marcus Garvey.

It is only now that we are able to see what Stokely and the advocates of Black Power represent. They stand on the shoulders of their ancestors. I have not mentioned all. For example, I have had to leave out Aime Cesaire, the man of Negritude, and I have had to leave out Malcolm X, that great fighter whose potentialities were growing so fast that his opponents had to get rid of him by plain murder. So then, it is now that we can see what Stokely and the concept of Black Power represent.

THE HIGH PEAK

Stokely and the advocates of Black Power stand on the shoulders of all that has gone before. To too many people here in England, and unfortunately to people in the United States too (you remember I had mentioned this in my letter to Stokely), too many people see Black Power and its advocates as some sort of portent, a sudden apparition, as some racist eruption from the depths of black oppression and black backwardness. It is nothing of the kind. It represents the high peak of thought on the Negro question which has been going on for over half a century. That much we have to know, and that much we have to be certain other people get to know.

Now, as in any political manifestation on a world scale, there is involved not only a general principle. As far as any particular country is concerned, we have to see it not only in its general but in its particular application. Now you notice that Booker T. Washington was from the South of the United States. W.E.B. DuBois was South and North, everywhere, and in the world outside: his was a universal mind. But the West Indians, Garvey, Cesaire, Padmore and Fanon, all worked abroad, away from home, and much of their work, in fact most of it, was concerned with Africa. And taking advantage of this immense political experience which has been accumulated, and the advanced stage of American society, we find that it is in the United States that the Negro struggle has advanced and is now taken to the highest peak it has ever reached. For note that whereas the others on the whole concentrated on Africa and peoples of African descent, in the voice of Stokely we can hear that they are laying the basis of a mortal struggle to the death for what black people believe to be their rights.

They have further extended that struggle to what they call the Third World. By that phrase, the Third World, they embrace what is today the majority of mankind. There are people who say that the Stokely they heard in England here, and the Stokely they have read about is racist. The falsity of that, or if not falsity, its dishonesty, can be easily exposed. You all have heard him say that as far as he is concerned Tshombe is a white man. Black though his skin may be, he is the servant of what Malcolm X called the White Power-Structure. He tells us specifically that the concept of the Third World includes the population of Latin America. He says specifically that they are not in the majority coloured but he includes them in the Third World. How can one call this racism except through ignorance or malice? And he embraces the concept of the Third World under the slogan Black Power because blacks are the ones who have suffered longest and most from the crimes of imperialism.

Furthermore, there are special conditions in the United States to some of which I shall now draw your attention. First there are districts in the South where the Negroes are prevented from exercising the elementary rights of parliamentary democracy by the guns which the white racists keep pointed at their heads. The advocates of Black Power say that they intend (if necessary by using guns) to restore to the blacks in these areas the political power which is theirs by right.

Secondly, they say what has long been noted and commented upon in the United States, that as the whites have moved out to the suburbs, the centres of all the big cities of the United States are increasingly populated by Negro majorities. This is a source of power which they propose to organise, and use as key positions in the struggle for Negro rights in the United States as a whole. Note and note well how precise is their concrete use of the term Black Power. And finally, the Negro people in the United States are not a people of a backward colonial area; they are Americans in what is in many ways the most advanced country in the world. The kind of impact the Negroes are making is due to the fact that they constitute a vanguard not only to the Third World, but constitute also that section of the United States which is most politically advanced.

So for the time being, that is what we know. I hope we know it. That is what Black Power means, and when we consider where that banner is being advanced and held aloft, and the kind of people who are carrying it, we can recognise that it is a banner which has come to stay, a banner which the twentieth century will need in the great efforts it will need to overcome the crisis that imperialist domination has imposed upon the whole world. Not only upon the Third.

So far I have been dealing with what we know or what we ought to know. That is, I now inform you, the answer to the first of the three famous questions asked by Kant: "What do I know?"

WHAT TO DO

The second question is "What must I do?", and here I will take the liberty of reminding you of another profound warning by a famous philosopher: Every determination is a negation; that is to say: every time you do something, every time you determine on something, you do not do something else. That is very important for us here. The things that I believe we ought to do are very much in opposition to the things we ought not to do. They are, I would suggest, two in number.

Number one, we support the fighters for Negro rights and for Black Power in the United States. That means we do not apologise or seek to explain, particularly to British people (and in particular to British Marxists), or give any justification or apologise for whatever forms the struggle in the United States may take.

It is over one hundred years since the abolition of slavery. The Negro people in the United States have taken plenty and they have reached a stage where they have decided that they are not going to take any more. Who are we here to stand, or rather to sit in judgment over what they decide to do or what they decide not to do? I want to take in particular Mr. Rap Brown, who makes the most challenging statements, is prepared to challenge American racial prejudice to the utmost limit of his strength and the strength of the Negroes who will follow him. Who are we to say, "Yes, you are entitled to say this but not to say that; you are entitled to do this but not to do that"? If we know the

realities of Negro oppression in the USA (and if we don't we should keep our mouths shut until we do), then we should guide ourselves by a West Indian expression which I recommend to you: What he do, he well do. Let me repeat that: what the American Negroes do is, as far as we are concerned, well done. They will take their chances, they will risk their liberty, they will risk their lives if need be. The decisions are theirs.

A word more about Rap Brown. Whether he is what "they" call a racist, or he is not one, does not interest me at all. I am interested in Rap Brown as a political leader. And I know what Rap Brown is doing. He is not a Garveyite: Garvey's doctrine was quite suitable for his time. What Brown is doing is this: He is taking care that the total rejection of second-class citizenship, the single-mindedness, the determination to fight to the death if need be, which now permeates the Negro movement, will not be corrupted, modified, or in any way twisted from its all-embracing purpose by white do-gooders and well-wishers of whom the United States is full. Even when whites go down to the South to face blows and bullets from the Southern police and gangsters, the Negro movement finds that they cause difficulties which impede the struggle. If you want to know the facts about this you will have to go and look for it in the August 1967 number of the Negro magazine EBONY. There they are stated in full. And there you will see certain sections of the movement declare that they do not want white people in their organizations. It is not racism, it is politics, and the rapidity with which they are learning politics is proved by the masterly solution of this problem that they have arrived at. They say to whites who want to fight. "We welcome the addition of your forces to the struggle. But there up in the North, in your own town, there are areas where a Negro is not allowed to own a house or even to rent. There is an opportunity to fight American race prejudice. You want to fight? Go there and fight there. We can manage down here without you."

No, that is not racism. Racism is on the decline in the United States. Yes, on the decline. Years ago you used to have white people fighting against black people. Not today. Stokely insists and all the evidence points to the fact that what is taking place in American city after American city is black people fighting against the police. In other words, they are challenging an ancient enemy which is one wing of the state power. That is not racism. That is revolutionary politics.

They will decide and we support. But if we do that we do not do something else. We do not go around seeking to explain away what they have done, or to prove that they are not good Marxists in that they are not waiting for the American proletariat to move. We know the first thing we must do, and that tells us what we do not do.

The second thing is that we miss no opportunity to make the British public and the public at large know that we consider the life and safety of Stokely Carmichael to be in the greatest danger in the United States. A number of people here, and all over the world, realize that the simple way out for the racists in the United States (or the men of peace, peace at any price) is to murder him out of hand. They did it to Malcolm X, and today the progress of the struggle, building on what

Malcolm X began, makes Stokely a person who is a mortal danger to those who wish to preserve the old way of life of the United States. We have not only to let the people in the United States know what we think, but we have to let the people know, and understand, that Stokely is not a person to be shot at by trigger-happy racists, or by deep thinkers who believe that the best black man is a dead black man. Let us, therefore, to personal friends and acquaintances, to unions, to whatever political parties we belong, let us tell them that it is their duty to register, by resolution and motion, the fears that all have for Stokely's safety; and so make those in the United States who want to kill him realize that such an action will make the public opinion of the world question not only the attitude of America to the coloured races, but the American attitude to elementary democracy and respect for the human person. We can do no better than take note of what Fidel Castro said about Stokely's safety at the closing of the OLAS Conference:

"And our people admire Stokely for the courageous statements he has made in the OLAS Conference, because we know that it takes courage to do this, because we know what it means to make such statements when you are going to return to a society that applies the most cruel and brutal procedures of repression, that constantly practices the worst crimes against the Negro sector of the population, and we know the hatred that his statements will arouse among the oppressors.

"And for this reason, we believe that the revolutionary movements all over the world must give Stokely their utmost support as protection against the repression of the imperialists, in such a way that everyone will know that any crime committed against this leader will have serious repercussions throughout the world. And our solidarity can help to protect Stokely's life." (APPLAUSE)

Castro is a revolutionary, one of the greatest revolutionaries history has ever known, but the sentiment that he there expresses, you can participate in and take action upon even though you may be a Liberal or, it is not impossible, a Conservative. And we in Britain have a special task to perform in regard to the role that Stokely is playing. I want to read for you a notable piece of historical literature which, though written nearly two hundred years ago, was never so much apropos as it is today. It is a proclamation by the King of England for suppressing rebellion and sedition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas many of our subjects in divers parts of our Colonies and Plantations in North America, misled by dangerous and ill designing men, and forgetting the allegiance which they owe to the power that has protected and supported them; after various disorderly acts committed in disturbance of the public peace, to the obstruction of lawful commerce, and to the oppression of our loyal subjects carrying on the same; have at length proceeded to open and avowed rebellion, by arraying themselves in a hostile manner, to withstand the execution of the law, and traitorously preparing, ordering and levying war against us: And whereas, there is reason to

apprehend that such rebellion hath been much promoted and encouraged by the traitorous correspondence, counsels and comfort of divers wicked and desperate persons within this realm: To the end therefore, that none of our subjects may neglect or violate their duty through ignorance thereof, or through any doubt of the protection which the law will afford to their loyalty and zeal, we have thought fit, by and with the advice of our Privy Council, to issue our Royal Proclamation, hereby declaring, that not only all our Officers, civil and military, are obliged to exert their utmost endeavours to suppress such rebellion, and to bring the traitors to justice, but that all our subjects of this Realm, and the dominions thereunto belonging, are bound by the law to be aiding and assisting in the suppression of such rebellion, and to disclose and make known all traitorous conspiracies and attempts against us, our crown and dignity; and we do accordingly strictly charge and command all our Officers, as well civil as military, and all others our obedient and loyal subjects, to use their utmost endeavours to withstand and suppress such rebellion, and to disclose and make known all treasons and traitorous conspiracies which they shall know to be against us, our crown and dignity; and for that purpose, that they transmit to one of our principal Secretaries of State, or other proper officer, due and full information of all persons who shall be found carrying on correspondence with, or in any manner or degree aiding or abetting the persons now in open arms and rebellion against our Government, within any of our Colonies and Plantations in North America, in order to bring to condign punishment the authors, perpetrators, and abettors of such traitorous designs.

"Given at our Court at St James's the twenty-third day of August, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five, in the fifteenth year of our reign.

"GOD save the KING."

Now the curious thing about that piece is that it had in mind George Washington, Jefferson and others, as the men who were being rebellious and seditious. Today, however, the very same proclamation can be signed by Harold Wilson, the Labour Party Prime Minister of Great Britain. In banning Stokely Carmichael from re-entry into Great Britain, he is acting in the identical spirit with which George III issued this proclamation, and helped the people of the United States towards independence. And with Harold Wilson we have to link another Prime Minister, Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago. Instead of being proud that Trinidad and Tobago was the birthplace of so distinguished a citizen of our age, Williams hastened to follow in the footsteps of George III and Harold Wilson, and has declared Stokely's presence in the country where he was born to be undesirable. To Williams no doubt it is.

We have lived to see a statue of George Washington in the heart of London. History moves very fast these days, and we may yet live to see Stokely, not only welcomed in Britain, but given the honour

of a public statue. That, I am sure, is not as extravagant as some of you might think. Remember: history moves very fast these days and can quickly leave the dull behind. I doubt if we shall hear of Stokely getting married to a daughter, or any relation of the Secretary of State (and in any case, that is Stokely's business, not ours). But this much I can say with confidence, that today, over half the world, Stokely, not as anybody's son-in-law but as the Secretary of State for the United States, would be more welcome than the gentleman who today obscurely fills that high position.

SOCIALISM AND THE THIRD WORLD

Now we come to Kant's last question. The first one, you remember, was: what do I know? Second: what must I do? And now, third: what may I hope? And here I have to deal with a personal experience which I shall share with you. Needless to say, it is completely political. I went to the US from England in 1938 and found them in a rare confusion as to what a Marxist policy should be on the Negro Question. What for them, as Marxists, was a difficult social situation was further complicated by the fact that the Stalinists for years had been preaching that Marxism demanded the advocacy of an independent Negro state within the confines of the US. And the Trotskyist movement from top to bottom, at home and abroad, simply did not know where it stood in regard to this fundamental question for a socialist party in the US. I had no difficulty whatever in telling them what I was quite certain was the correct policy. And this I knew not because I was a Negro, not because I had studied closely the situation in the US. No. From the very beginning I put forward what I conceived to be a very simple, straightforward Leninist policy.

I had studied Lenin in order to write The Black Jacobins, analysis of a revolution for self-determination in a colonial territory. I had studied Lenin to be able to write my book on World Revolution. I had studied Lenin to be able to take part with George Padmore in his organization that worked for the independence of all colonial territories, but particularly the territories of Africa. I therefore was in a position from the very beginning to state my position and to state it in a discussion that some of us had with Trotsky on the Negro question in 1939.

The position was this: the independent struggle of the Negro people for their democratic rights and equality with the rest of the American nation not only had to be defended and advocated by the Marxist movement. The Marxist movement had to understand that such independent struggles were a contributory factor to the socialist revolution. Let me restate that as crudely as possible: the American Negroes in fighting for their democratic rights were making an indispensable addition to the struggle for socialism in the US. I have to emphasize this because it was not only a clarification in the darkness of the Trotskyist movement on the Negro struggle in 1938-39. Today, 1967, I find in Britain here a confusion as great as I found in the US in 1938, and nowhere more than among the Marxists.

Now I am going to quote for you one statement by Lenin in which he states the basis of his argument. His actual political programme you will find in the resolutions which he presented to the Second Congress of the Third International on the question of self-determination, and in that resolution specifically you will find that he mentions the Negroes in the US. But the basic argument which was the foundation of Lenin's policy is stated many times in the debates that he carried on before 1917 on the Right of Nations to Self-determination, and I will quote particularly from his sharp observations on the Irish Rebellion of 1916:

"To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without the revolutionary outbursts of a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without the movement of non-class conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against the oppression of the landlords, the church, the monarchy, the foreign nations, etc... to imagine this means repudiating social revolution. Only those who imagine that in one place an army will line up and say, "we are for socialism", and in another place another army will say, "we are for imperialism", and that this will be the social revolution, only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic opinion could vilify the Irish Rebellion by calling it a 'Putsch'."

Lenin is very angry and though often very sharp he is not often very angry. He explains how the Russian Revolution of 1905 came:

"The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which all the discontented classes, groups, and elements of the population participated. Among these there were masses imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vaguest and most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. Objectively, the mass movement broke the back of tsarism and paved the way for democracy; for that reason the class conscious workers led it."

Now it is necessary to continue straight on with Lenin, because he seems to me to have had some experience, some feeling, that people would not understand what social revolution was. And this is one of his sharpest passages. I give it to you in full so that you may see how strongly he feels on what is for him a vital constituent of the phrases, but the way in which he underlined what he considered absolutely necessary to the understanding of what a socialist revolution was:

"The socialist revolution in Europe cannot be anything else than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all oppressed and discontented elements. Sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will inevitably participate in it - without such participation, mass struggle is impossible, without it no revolution is possible - and

just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But objectively they will attack capital, and the class conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth of a heterogeneous and discordant, motley and outwardly incohesive, mass struggle, will be able to unite and direct it, to capture power, to seize the banks, to expropriate the trusts (hated by all, though for different reasons) and introduce other dictatorial measures which in their totality will amount to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism, which, however, will by no means immediately 'purge' itself of petty-bourgeois slag."

Now the moment Trotsky agreed that the independent Negro struggle for its democratic rights was part of the way to the social revolution, the Trotskyist movement accepted it. They accepted it but I don't think they really understood it. At any rate, in 1951 my friends and I broke irrevocably and fundamentally with the premises of Trotskyism, and as independent Marxists, we advocated this policy, this Leninist policy, on the Negro question, and we believed that at any rate we understood this question thoroughly. We did not know what this policy contained in it. I began by telling you that early this year I listened to Stokely Carmichael and was immediately struck by the enormous revolutionary potential which was very clear to me. But I had no idea that before the end of the year I would hear from him the following:

"We speak with you, comrades, because we wish to make clear that we understand that our destinies are intertwined. Our world can only be the third world; our only struggle for the third world; our only vision, of the third world."

Stokely is speaking at the OLAS Conference, and the Negro movement in the US, being what it is, he makes very clear that this movement sees itself as a part of the Third World. But before very long he says what I knew was always inherent in his thoughts, if not always totally plain in his words. I wish you to appreciate the gravity and the weight which a man who speaks as Stokely has been speaking must give to the following words:

"But we do not seek to create communities where, in place of white rulers, black rulers control the lives of black masses and where black money goes into a few black pockets: we want to see it go into the communal pocket. The society we seek to build among black people is not an oppressive capitalist society - for capitalism by its very nature cannot create structures free from exploitation. We are fighting for the redistribution of wealth and for the end of private property inside the United States."

In the opinion of myself and many of my friends no clearer or stronger voice for socialism has ever been raised in the US. It is obvious that for him, based as he is and fighting for a future of freedom for the Negro people of the US, the socialist society is not a hope, not what we may hope, but a compelling necessity. What he or any other

Negro leader may say tomorrow, I do not know. But I have followed fairly closely the career of this young man, and I leave you with this very deeply based philosophical conception of political personality. He is far away out, in a very difficult position, and I am sure there are those in his own camp who are doubtful of the positions he is taking, but I believe his future and the future of the policies which he is now advocating does not depend upon him as an individual. It depends upon the actions and reactions of those surrounding him and, to a substantial degree, not only on what you who are listening to me may hope, but also on what you do.