

The Black Man's Stake in Vietnam

The most critical tests facing Johnson are the war in Vietnam and the Negro revolution at home. The fact that the brains in the Pentagon see fit to send 16 per cent black troops to Vietnam is one indication that there is a structural relationship between these two arenas of conflict. And the initial outrageous refusal of the Georgia Legislature to seat representative elect Julian Bond, because he denounced the aggressive U.S. role in Vietnam, shows too, the very intimate relationship between the way human beings are being treated in Vietnam and the treatment they are receiving here in the United States.

We live today in a system that is in the last stages of the protracted process of breaking up on a worldwide basis. The rulers perceive the greatest threat to be the national liberation movements around the world, particularly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In order for them to wage wars of suppression against these national liberation movements abroad, they must have peace and stability and unanimity of purpose at home. But at home there is a Trojan Horse, a Black Trojan Horse that has become aware of itself and is now struggling to get on its feet. It too, demands liberation.

What is the purpose of the attention that the rulers are now focusing on the Trojan Horse? Is it out of a newfound love for the horse, or is it because the rulers need the horse to be quiet, to be still, and not cause the rulers, already with their backs to the wall, any trouble or embarrassment while they force the war in Vietnam? Indeed, the rulers have need of the horse's power on the fields of battle. What the black man in America must keep constantly in mind is that the doctrine of white supremacy, which is a part of the ideology of the world system the power structure is trying to preserve, lets the black man in for the greatest portion of the suffering and hate which white supremacy has dished out to the non-white people of the world for hundreds of years. The white-supremacy-oriented white man feels less compunction about massacring "niggers" than he does about massacring any other race of people on the earth. This historically indisputable fact, taken with the present persistent efforts of the United States to woo the Soviet Union into an alliance against China, spells DANGER to all the peoples of the world who have been victims of white supremacy. If this sweetheating proves successful, if the United States is finally able to make a match with

Russia, or if the U.S. can continue to frighten the Soviet Union into reneging on its commitments to international socialist solidarity (about which the Soviets are always trumpeting, while still allowing the imperialist aggressors to daily bomb the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam), and if the U.S. is able to unleash its anxious fury and armed might against the raging non-white giant of China, which is the real target of U.S. strategy the world over—if the U.S. is successful in these areas, then it will be the black man's turn again to face the lyncher and burner of the world: and face him alone.

Black Americans are too easily deceived by a few smiles and friendly gestures, by the passing of a few liberal-sounding laws which are left on the books to rot unenforced, and by the mushy speech-making of a President who is a past master of talking out of the thousand sides of his mouth. Such poetry does not guarantee the safe future of the black people in America. The black people must have a guarantee, they must be certain, they must be sure beyond all doubt that the reign of terror is ended and not just suspended, and that the future of their people is secure. And the only way they can ensure this is to gain organizational unity and communication with their brothers and allies around the world, on an international basis. They must have this power. There is no other way. Anything else is a sellout of the future of their people. The world of today was fashioned yesterday. What is involved here, what is being decided right now, is the shape of power in the world tomorrow.

The American racial problem can no longer be spoken of or solved in isolation. The relationship between the genocide in Vietnam and the smiles of the white man toward black Americans is a direct relationship. Once the white man solves his problem in the East he will then turn his fury again on the black people of America, his longtime punching bag. The black people have been tricked again and again, sold out at every turn by misleaders. After the Civil War, America went through a period similar to the one we are now in. The Negro problem received a full hearing. Everybody knew that the black man had been denied justice. No one doubted that it was time for changes and that the black man should be made a first class citizen. But Reconstruction ended. Blacks who had been elevated to high positions were brusquely kicked out into the streets and herded along with the masses of blacks into the ghettos and black belts. The lyncher and the burner received virtual license to murder blacks at will. White Americans found a new level on which to cool the blacks out. And with the help of such tools as Booker T. Washington, the doctrine of segregation was clamped firmly onto the backs of the blacks. It has taken a hundred years to struggle up from that level of cool-out to the miserable position that black Americans find them-

selves in. Time is passing. The historical opportunity which world events now present to black Americans is running out with every tick of the clock.

This is the last act of the show. We are living in a time when the people of the world are making their final bid for full and complete freedom. Never before in history has this condition prevailed. Always before there have been more or less articulate and aware pockets of people, portions of classes, etc., but today's is an era of mass awareness, when the smallest man on the street is in rebellion against the system which has denied him life and which he has come to understand robs him of his dignity and self-respect. Yet he is being told that it will take time to get programs started, to pass legislation, to educate white people into accepting the physically impossible, to move as fast as the black man would like to move. Black men are deadly serious when they say FREEDOM NOW. Even if the white man wanted to eradicate all traces of evil overnight, he would not be able to do it because the economic and political system will not permit it. All talk about going too fast is treasonous to the black man's future.

What the white man must be brought to understand is that the black man in America today is fully aware of his position, and he does not intend to be tricked again into another hundred-year forfeit of freedom. Not for a single moment or for any price will the black men now rising up in America settle for anything less than their full proportionate share and participation in the sovereignty of America. The black man has already come to a realization that to be free it is necessary for him to throw his life—everything—on the line, because the oppressors refuse to understand that it is now impossible for them to come up with another trick to squelch the black revolution. The black man can't afford to take a chance. He can't afford to put things off. He must stop the whole NOW and get his business straight, because if he does not do it now, if he fails to grasp securely the reins of this historic opportunity, there may be no tomorrow for him.

The black man's interest lies in seeing a free and independent Vietnam, a strong Vietnam which is not the puppet of international white supremacy. If the nations of Asia, Latin America, and Africa are strong and free, the black man in America will be safe and secure and free to live in dignity and self-respect. It is a cold fact that while the nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America were shackled in colonial bondage, the black American was held tightly in the vise of oppression and not permitted to utter a sound of protest of any effect. But when these nations started bidding for their freedom, it was then that black Americans were able to seize the chance; it was then that the white man yielded what little he did—out of sheer

necessity. The only lasting salvation for the black American is to do all he can to see to it that the African, Asian, and Latin American nations are free and independent.

In this regard, black Americans have a big role to play. They are a Black Trojan Horse within white America and they number in excess of 23,000,000 strong. That is a lot of strength. But it is a lot of weakness if it is disorganized, and the overriding need is for unity and organization. Unity is on all black lips. Today we stand on the verge of sweeping change in this wretched landscape of a thousand little fragmented and ineffectual groups and organizations unable to work together for the common cause. The need for one organization that will give one voice to the black man's common interest is felt in every bone and fiber of black America.

Yesterday, after firmly repudiating racism and breaking his ties with the Black Muslim organization, the late Malcolm X launched a campaign to transform the American black man's struggle from the narrow plea for "civil rights" to the universal demand for human rights, with the ultimate aim of bringing the United States government to task before the United Nations. This, and the idea of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, was Malcolm's dying legacy to his people. It did not fall on barren ground. Already, black American leaders have met with the ambassadors of Black Africa at a luncheon at UN headquarters. The meaning of this momentous event is lost on no one. The fact that it was the issue of Julian Bond, his denunciation of U.S. aggression in Vietnam, and the action of racist elements in the Georgia legislature which brought clearer recognition by black men that their interests are also threatened by the U.S. war of suppression in Vietnam. This dovetailing of causes and issues is destined to bring to fruition the other dream which Malcolm's assassination prevented him from realizing, the Organization of Afro-American Unity, or perhaps a similar organization under a different name. Black Americans now realize that they must organize for the power to change the foreign and domestic policies of the U.S. government. They must let their voice be heard on these issues. They must let the world know where they stand.

It is no accident that the U.S. government is sending all those black troops to Vietnam. Some people think that Vietnam is to kill off the cream of black youth. But it has another important result. By turning her black troops into the butchers of the Vietnamese people, America is spreading hate against the black race throughout Asia. Even black Africans find it hard not to hate black Americans for being so stupid as to allow themselves, to be used to slaughter another people who are fighting to be free. Black Americans are considered to be the world's biggest fools to go to another country to fight for something they don't have for themselves.

It bothers white racists that people around the world love black Americans but find it impossible to give a similar warm affection to white Americans. The white racist knows that he is the Ugly American and he wants the black American to be Ugly, too, in the eyes of the world: misery loves company! When the people around the world cry "Yankee, Go Home!" they mean the white man, not the black man who is a recently freed slave. The white man is deliberately trying to make the people of the world turn against black Americans, because he knows that the day is coming when black Americans will need the help and support of their brothers, friends and natural allies around the world. If through stupidity or by following hand-picked leaders who are the servile agents of the power structure, black Americans allow this strategy to succeed against them, then when the time comes and they need this help and support from around the world, it will not be there. All of the international love, respect, and goodwill that black Americans now have around the world will have dried up. They themselves will have buried it in the mud of the rice paddies of Vietnam.

—*The Black Panther*, March 23, 1969

An Open Letter to Stokely Carmichael

Stokely Carmichael, Conakry, Guinea:

Your letter of resignation as the Prime Minister of the Black Panther Party⁶ came, I think, about one year too late. As a matter of fact, since the day of your appointment to that position—February 17, 1968—events have proven that you were not cut out for the job in the first place. Even then it was clear that your position on coalition with revolutionary white organizations was in conflict with that of the Black Panther Party. But we thought that, in time, even you would be able to shake the SNCC paranoia about white control and get on with the business of building the type of revolutionary machinery that we need in the United States in order to unite all the revolutionary forces in the country to overthrow the system of Capitalism, Imperialism and Racism.

I know these terms are kicked around like lifeless bodies and that it is easy to allow the grisly realities behind them to become obscured by too frequent repetition. But when you see the squalor in which people live as a result of the policies of the exploiters, when you see