

EXCALIBUR INTERVIEW

With Stokely Carmichael on pan-Africanism

Stokely Carmichael, 60's leader in the American Black civil rights and anti-war movements, and ex-honorary prime-minister of the Black Panthers, is currently a member of the All African People's Revolutionary Party. Carmichael and his party promote an ideology of "pan-Africanism". He discusses this, the struggle for socialism and Idi Amin in a recent interview with Excalibur.

By PAUL KELLOGG and
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EXCALIBUR: Could you first explain what the word "pan-Americanism" means?

CARMICHAEL: Pan-Africanism entails the total liberation and unification of Africa under scientific socialism.

EXCALIBUR: But do you believe Blacks should fight for socialism in Canada?

CARMICHAEL: Well, it's a question of where our primary interests lie. I think that, if we understand the relationship of Africa to world imperialism's structure, we would understand that liberating Africa would advance the world socialist revolution by a qualitative leap that is unimaginable. So, by fighting for socialism in Africa, we are fighting for socialism in Canada. That is not to say that the African in Canada does not struggle in Canada. He struggles in Canada, because he's struggling against capitalism, and wherever capitalism is he must struggle against it. But what is he struggling for? His objective struggle must be the struggle to win back his national home, and his national home is not Canada, it is Africa.

EXCALIBUR: But under socialism, will there be national homes?

CARMICHAEL: Of course under socialism we can talk about international socialism. But if we talk about international socialism, I as an African, when we come to the international table, must bring forth my African experience so the African personality can be projected. If not, then I just come as nobody.

EXCALIBUR: Can you tell us about your organization which adheres to this ideology, the All African People's Revolutionary Party?

CARMICHAEL: It's an international party. Its objective is pan-Americanism which was defined earlier and its ideology is Nkrumism. It seeks to organize Africans all over the world and let them see that our primary objective must be the liberation of Africa under scientific socialism. Until Africa is liberated we will not be liberated, that's clear.

So now our party is organizing Africans in Africa, in the Caribbean, in South America, America and in Canada to try and bring this party into reality.

EXCALIBUR: Now I want to get this clear. Are you actually saying that Africans in Canada should go to Africa?

CARMICHAEL: In the final analysis, yes. Now understand that we're talking about generations to come.

EXCALIBUR: In your opinion, would the best thing that a Black socialist in Canada could do, today, be to go to Africa?

CARMICHAEL: It depends objectively on what could be done at that point, where he could struggle most effectively and where his struggle will bring the most effective results. But he must be prepared to go back to Africa.

The question isn't where you struggle, it's what you struggle for. As long as he's struggling for pan-Africanism and against capitalism, wherever he is, well let's get it on.

EXCALIBUR: In the 60's you were involved in the student movement, in SNCC

(Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee), and you were fighting racism... racism...

CARMICHAEL: ... and capitalism, and for socialism.

EXCALIBUR: Initially? I didn't know you were initially.

CARMICHAEL: Oh yes! The fight for socialism is a fight that's independent of man's will, whether he's conscious or unconscious of it. For example, a white youth going to fight in Vietnam may think he's fighting for democracy, freedom, etc., etc., but objectively he's unconsciously fighting for the interests of capitalism. So, a student involved in a sit-in at a restaurant, who thinks he's fighting to open up this restaurant for Blacks, is in fact unconsciously fighting for socialism, because this is a fight for democratic rights, and the fight for democratic rights is an objective fight for socialism.

It is on this basis, that we can say the world will go socialist, even though people are not conscious of it.

EXCALIBUR: In the 60's, you were part of that fight, sitting in restaurants, and that type of thing. What was wrong with that movement, you're not a part of it now, what made you become a pan-Africanist?

CARMICHAEL: Well, you don't stand still. If a man stands still he doesn't grow. Everything changes. That struggle was a good struggle, if the same conditions existed again, I'd be right in the middle of it again. Of course now, the objective conditions have changed. The struggle doesn't stop, the struggle must continue.

EXCALIBUR: How have the objective conditions changed?

CARMICHAEL: Well, number one, the relationship of American imperialism is clearer today than it was then, and the relationship of the African and his crucial role in this system is much clearer than it was then. Apart from that, American imperialism itself is much weaker today than it was then, and it will be weaker tomorrow. It's irreversible, it's getting weaker, all the time.

EXCALIBUR: What was the difference between SNCC and the Black Panthers? Were the Panthers just more militant?

CARMICHAEL: You must remember, I was also honorary Prime Minister of the Panther party. When I worked with SNCC we organized the first Black Panther Party in the country. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale asked us whether they could organize the Black Panthers elsewhere.

EXCALIBUR: What happened to the Panthers?

CARMICHAEL: I was expelled from SNCC for ideological reasons and resigned from the Panthers for ideological reasons. The Panthers didn't see the importance of nationalism in the struggle, they tried to deny nationalism in the struggle, left the African community, went to the hippie community and got wasted without a base. I wasn't that stupid. I knew better so before I left I just said: "You all go that way" and I continued on.

EXCALIBUR: At one point in your talk, you used the phrase "African homeland". Now the Zionists talk about building a Jewish homeland in Israel. How do you differentiate between pan-Africanism and Zionism?

CARMICHAEL: The Jewish people are not a race, they are a religion. Secondly, the land which they take, this land they got from the British in the Balfour Declaration of 1916 or 1917. That means the land does



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not in fact belong to them. It was given to them creating Israel as an extension of world imperialism to control both Asia and Africa from going towards socialism.

EXCALIBUR: Zionists would say as you say about Africa that they had that land once, it was their homeland and it was taken from them, by the Romans, and then by the British and whoever else. How do you respond to that?

CARMICHAEL: No, I don't think history will hold that up at all.

EXCALIBUR: What are your views of President Idi Amin of Uganda?

CARMICHAEL: Well of course, President Amin, we understand that he has helped push the African revolution forward. His stands and actions against British imperialism, against Zionism, show his belief that Africans must control the economy of the country.

EXCALIBUR: Many people at York and elsewhere argue that Idi Amin discredits the African movement, because of the dictatorial and repressive way he runs Uganda. Do you see that?

CARMICHAEL: Oh, not at all. I don't think so. I don't know why they would single out Amin, certainly there are more reactionary presidents in Africa.

EXCALIBUR: Do you consider him a revolutionary?

CARMICHAEL: I see him as a progressive, certainly.

EXCALIBUR: Even after the slaughtering of some hundreds of university students this year?

CARMICHAEL: Well he never did

anyway, but the slaughtering of people doesn't mean you're not a revolutionary. How many has Mao slaughtered? How many did Ho slaughter? Kim Il Sung? So to slaughter people doesn't mean you're not a revolutionary.

EXCALIBUR: But the students in Uganda?

CARMICHAEL: Well, some students are reactionary, and can be used for reactionary purposes. Anyway, Amin didn't kill the "800" students, even the BBC said he didn't do it.

EXCALIBUR: One last question. What about the possibility of Western powers, primarily America, going in and intervening militarily in Africa as they did in Vietnam? It almost happened with Angola, and now there is the situation in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

CARMICHAEL: When capitalism comes to a deadlock as it is now today, there are only two paths open: fascism or socialism, or the third one they're trying, welfare-state-ism. Fascism will not work. The consciousness for the white youth is much higher today, especially after the war in Vietnam. Would you go and fight in Africa for example?

Not only that, the consciousness of the countries in Africa is much higher today. They will fight resolutely against any invasion of their country. As well, the capitalists are in such disarray internally, that if they try to wage external warfare, then internally, they will lose power. That's why America had to wind down the war in Vietnam. The internal contradictions were reaching such a point that had it continued, the country would have polarized and there would have been a struggle inside of America, Vietnam would have been the issue but the real struggle being for a socialist or capitalist America.