

TWO FIGHTING MEN



Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.

THE congressional campaigns of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Vito Marcantonio have much more in common than the fighting progressivism of their principals. These campaigns emerge from strikingly similar political foundations—the struggles of exploited peoples to win freedom and security through progressive political action.

Powell and Marcantonio are real fighting men of the people, and their campaigns are a true expression of the growing political maturity and militancy of the underprivileged masses for whom they speak.

There can be no doubt that the youthful and colorful Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., is, indeed, of the people of Harlem. Observe how they flock to his services at the Abyssinian Baptist Church, which boasts “the largest membership of any Protestant church in the world.” Watch the crowds which jam Harlem traffic every day in enthusiastic acclaim of the Powell-for-Congress band-wagon and its distinctive slogan, “Let My People Go—now!” Note how leading Republicans, Democrats, Laborites, and Independents, both white and black, hasten to endorse this candidate who they know has won, and deserves the support of the masses of “little people” of Harlem.

Nor can there be any doubt that the fighting and hard-working Vito Marc-

antonio is, likewise, of the people of East Harlem. Witness the hundreds of men-on-the-street who go to him for help every week—and get it! Recall his unprecedented reelection in 1942 as the unanimous choice of three political parties, having won decisively in contests for nomination on the Democratic, Republican, and American Labor Party tickets. Observe the hundreds of eager volunteers who now ring doorbells for his reelection in 1944—working day in and day out, almost as if their own and their nation's future depend upon returning “Marc” to Congress—which in large measure they do.

This deep popular enthusiasm for Powell and Marcantonio springs from something far more basic than their personal characteristics. Both are vigorous and courageous fighters, powerful speakers, highly intelligent, and keenly alert to the issues of the day. But these qualities by no means explain their remarkable political influence.

Powell and Marcantonio are strong because their public careers have been grounded upon the strength of the masses. Refusing to play machine politics, both have given effective expression to the true and immediate interests of the common man, organizing the masses of people for militant struggles in their own behalf.

The southern Negro masses who came to Harlem during and after World War I were rapidly approaching political maturity by the 1930's, and the leadership of Powell did much to hasten the process. As early as 1930, he led 6,000 Negroes to City Hall in a victorious fight for general improvement and the elimination of Jim Crow at the Harlem Hospital. In 1933, he managed and maintained a free kitchen which fed a thousand jobless citizens every day. Throughout the decade which followed, Powell has been at the head of rent strikes, picket lines, bus strikes, publications and campaigns which have brought jobs, security, freedom, and political influence to the masses of people in Harlem.

This is the man-of-the-people background from which Adam Clayton Powell emerged in 1942 as the first

Negro ever to sit in the Council of the City of New York. He ran as an independent, and was elected through the support of the white and Negro people of all political parties. His fight in the Council against the Jim Crow Stuyvesant Town housing project not only laid the basis for Public Law No. 20, recently signed by the Mayor, but it gave impetus to a continuing struggle which is destined soon to rid New York City completely of the imported plague of Jim Crowism.

THE low-income groups of various nationalities who inhabit East Harlem began their effective political stirrings even before their darker neighbors to the west, and they found in Marcantonio a leader who expressed their basic aspirations. This it was that enabled him to manage a series of victorious LaGuardia-for-Congress campaigns during the 1920's, and himself to succeed Congressman LaGuardia (then become Mayor) in 1934, and again in 1938, 1940 and 1942.

In Congress, Marcantonio has continued to distinguish himself as a fighting representative of the common man. Price and rent control, progressive labor legislation, anti-poll tax legislation, FEPC, federal soldier vote legislation, the GI Bill of Rights—these and hosts of other people's measures have had no more consistent, skillful, or effective champion than the Representative from New York's 17th Assembly District.



Vito Marcantonio

Nor have Martin Dies, John Rankin, Howard Smith, and other such enemies of the people been confronted with a more implacable and uncompromising foe.

It is more than coincidental that popular enthusiasm for these two men of the people extends far beyond the immediate groups from which they emerge. None attracts greater crowds and sells more war bonds at the Times Square Cash Register than the Negro Adam Clayton Powell. None received a more tumultuous ovation at the recent Madison Square Garden Negro Freedom Rally than the white Vito Marcantonio. They people recognize and respond to those who give expression to their true interests, be they black or white. Even the poisonous chauvinism which permeates our culture cannot forever overshadow the basic community of interest which increasingly unites the masses of men of all races and creeds in the common struggle for freedom and security.

Now, at the most crucial stage of this people's war, and in the midst of the most important national elections since Reconstruction, Powell and Marcantonio seek to carry forward *together*, in the halls of Congress, their fights for the people of East and West Harlem and the nation. Both have excellent chances of winning the November elections, but this is not enough.

It is of national importance that both Powell and Marcantonio win all three party primary contests in which they are entered the first of August. Then they will go to Congress, not as Democrats, or Republicans, or even Laborites, but in their true character as representatives of *all* the people.

Powell and Marcantonio are uncompromising fighters for the complete defeat of our fascist enemies and the strengthening of that coalition of democratic states which alone can bring enduring peace to the world.

Powell and Marcantonio are firm supporters of Roosevelt and Truman,

whose election in November alone can guarantee that our nation will remain true to the progressive course which was charted at Teheran.

Powell and Marcantonio are staunch champions of the rights of labor, the Negro people, and the great masses of all Americans whose political unity alone can assure victory for the progressive forces in the coming elections.

Few developments could now more strikingly symbolize and consolidate the progressive unity of the people than decisive victories for Powell and Marcantonio in all three primary contests this coming Tuesday. Few developments could more greatly influence the progressive outcome of the November elections than their three-primary triumph—*now*—in the greatest city of the nation.

Let us send these fighting men of the people to Congress. But let us send them as real people's representatives—through a smashing people's victory at the polls on August first.