

Draft ThesisPERSPECTIVES 1967-68:

I. NEW STAGE OF NEGRO REVOLT AND THE DISARRAY IN THE BLACK AND RADICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Detroit has opened a new stage of Negro revolt. In common with the outbursts occurring throughout the land--from Boston to Spanish Harlem, from Tucson to Newark, from Cleveland to Sacramento, and some 80 other cities--the voice of anger, frustration with, and rejection of, their conditions of life was loud and clear. Unlike the other rebellions, Detroit revolted, not against "whitey", as such, but against class society.

Though 40 lie dead--more even than in Watts--and though property damage was likewise the greatest in the whole nation--estimated as high as \$500 million--there were no acts of violence against individual whites. This held true even when the Negroes left their ghettos and travelled to far out "fashion row" to appropriate the fancy goods. What they attacked was property; whom they left alone were people. Instead of being against whites, as such, the outburst was against white landlords, merchants, white and black--where the Negro merchant had robbed them, the sign "soul brother" did not save his establishment--and, above all, against white police, against police precincts, against police command posts, no matter where stationed. In Detroit the appropriations and sniping were bi-racial.

This class sense is what made life tolerable for those who went to work after the first day's outpouring of wrath. While none could say there was an actual camaraderie in the factories, white and black workers got along better on the production line better than they had in years. Nothing so tells the isolation of the black nationalist leaders from the Negro worker than their insensitivity to this fact, their insensitivity to the fact that management had always pit one worker against another along racial and national lines, and hence their shouting not only for burning down the country, but "honkies and all." It would never have dawned upon a Negro worker to use such derogatory and class divisive terms.

This does not mean that the black worker is not as conscious of his race as of his class. Nor does it mean that the black worker has any illusions about the lack of prejudice among the ordinary white workers. And it certainly doesn't mean that he himself overflows with "love" for his fellow white worker. But it does mean there is sufficient class consciousness to want to fight him in a different way. It is his class awareness that distinguished the Negro revolt from all others now covering the length and breadth of the land.

This may not mark the dawn of a heightened class solidarity, but it does show that this revolt was not so much one of race against race as the "have-nots" against the "haves" who had it in the first place because they took it out of the hides of the working people.

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Nor were the participants in the revolt in love with violence for violence's sake even if violence is supposed to be "as American as cherry pie." Violence burst forth spontaneously and did not, for the masses, become either a cure-it-all or a "proof of militancy." Rather, the underlying philosophy of the masses may best be summarized in this fashion:

What they were saying: down with ghettos. What they were not saying was: "we want two nations, the separation of black from white."

What they were saying was: we want good jobs. What they were not saying was: throw out the white workers so we can get their jobs.

What they were saying was: we should be fighting the enemies at home-- poor jobs, poor homes, "the whole system", not the Vietnamese people. What they were not saying was: as against my home here, I chose to live in China, or Cuba, or Russia, or even Vietnam.

Where what emerges from the actual struggles of the Negro is a search for a total philosophy to change society from the bottom, the leaders, self-styled and otherwise who presume to speak "for the Negro", small-change it into a slogan. And a tactic imposed from above. Where Detroit has shown a class awareness within the race struggle, the leaders proclaim "black consciousness." And where what marks history for Carmichael is Castro's revolution in the late 1950's and Castro's visit to Harlem in the 1960's; what marks history for the Negro workers is his wildcatting against Automation in the 1950's and the new stage of Negro revolt in the 1960's. In moving the question posed by the struggles with Automation--what kind of LABOR should man do?--to the question posed by the Negro revolution--what kind of LIFE should man lead?--the rebels were indeed taking in the whole human condition. The type of questioning was itself a philosophy, a total view, thereby bringing the very division between theory and practice to the vanishing point.

Carmichael notwithstanding, their inspiration was not Castro, but their own aspirations for a different kind of life. To grasp all the ramifications of the deep division between masses and self-styled spokesmen for the Negro people, all one has to do is to contrast the vitality and class awareness emanating from the new stages of Negro revolt with the disarray in the organizations of the multitudinous "vanguards", that is to say, leadership groups--the assorted "talented tenths" from the NAACP, the Urban League and SCLC, through CORE and SNCC who have proclaimed "black power" but not only does each put a different interpretation of it, but each time they speak it means something else still, to the old radicals like Communists and Trotskyists, Maoists and Castroites, down or up to (as you please) the many varieties of black nationalists invoking the name of Malcolm X.

What characterizes them, one and all, is a conception of the backwardness of the masses who "have to be led", and the designation of themselves as those who will do the leading. This high and mighty attitude has deluded a Carmichael, (who was in London when Newark exploded and in Cuba when Detroit took to the streets), to think he has the right to claim that "we applied war tactics of the guerrillas"; has led to the pretensions of the Malcolm X Society to claim to be able to "call off" the sniping of "its"

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demands were met. All this would merit laughter if it weren't capable of harming the people, the real rebels, with whose lives these "leaders" are playing the game of big politics.

In our last thesis, when the discussion on black power did not have the cogency it has today, but was of necessity more historical and theoretical, we wrote:

"I am not saying that Carmichael or SNCC, individually or collectively, 'took' the thesis of black power from Mao, who is interested only in creating chaos in this country. What I am saying is that if they do not stop and listen to what comes from below; if they do not recognize that it is not the whites from above, but the student youth--the Negro student youth--from below, who raised the question of integration, they will so completely have misread the movement's aspirations as to leave the movement in such chaos and disruption and division as Mao himself would have aimed to create."

, Now that Carmichael has appeared in Cuba and given Castro credit for what the Negroes had achieved by their own self-activity ever since the start of the Negro revolution in 1960, and at the same time has burdened them with a concept of "guerrilla warfare" made not in Newark and Detroit, but in China and Cuba, the words out of his mouth show more clearly than our thesis how deep is the cleavage between those who claim to speak "for" the Negro and the Negro themselves.

Their kinship, instead, is to the old radicals who, thirsty for leadership, are perfectly willing to betray the Marxist concept of a revolution as a mass movement, led by the proletariat, provided only the holy of holies--"the vanguard party"--with themselves heading it is intact. Thus, the Trotskyites have transformed Malcolm X into a veritable prophet, who is a combination of Lenin and Trotsky and "the indigenous". With Malcolm X dead, moreover, they can infuse his sayings beyond recognition even as they have already done so to the founder of their own movement--Leon Trotsky. At the same time, while they may not be as experienced change artists as the Communists, anyone who has ever worked with them in such movements as the anti-Vietnam war, can testify that they too live by the precept of "rule or ruin." Bereft of a total Marxian philosophy and proletarian principles, they go where opportunism leads them to, even as some black power adherents find more succor in Havana, Cuba than in Lowndes County, Ala.

This is not a question of what is indigenous and what is "foreign". Rather it is that the class aspirations of the masses, the views of "what happens after" are totally different from the elitest concepts of the leaders. It is for this reason that the kinship of these leaders is more akin to the old radicals than to the Negro masses. Like Trotskyists, these leaders are moving in a direction away from that which emerges from the mass upsurge. Because they refuse to bend their ears to the elemental surge from below, and, instead, look for shortcuts to power, the existing organizations are in total disarray at the very moment when the movement itself is at its most intense.

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All the presumptuousness of the leaders accomplished under the circumstances is to sow illusions that sniping is "insurrection", appropriation of goods is control of the means of production, elemental outburst is the social revolution in full development while consciousness of goal can be left to the "leaders" who can keep changing the rules of the game here as they already have done on the whole front of the national liberation movements which they have helped bring to an impasse. Nothing exposes them more glaringly than the Arab-Israeli war which put to the test every political tendency, philosophical outlook, organizational concept.

II. THE ARAB-ISRAELI WAR AND THE NEW QUALITY OF THE COMMUNIST-TROTSKYIST-STATE-CAPITALIST OPPORTUNISM

The stifling air emanating from our state-capitalist epoch which has narrowed the whole world down to two, and only two, poles of capital: the US and Russia; the militarization of the world economy which gorges itself on a whole series of "little wars" as its muscles are flexed for single world mastery; the stranglehold which the two nuclear titans exercise not only over the technologically backward but also technologically advanced lands, has given new monstrous shape to Marx's thesis that, for capitalism, "disorder is its order."

The stench from the decomposition of the exploitative class system defies reason. Reason which lives in unreason violates international as well as proletarian principles. Yet Marxists too--the impatient ones, those bent on short cuts to power--are caught in the bourgeois vice of empiricism. This can be seen clearest in the Arab-Israeli War which has put not only the world powers, but every independent political tendency and philosophical viewpoint to the test, and thereby exposed the new type of Communist-Trotskyist opportunism.

As against the opportunism of established Marxism during W.W. I, which caused the collapse of the Second International, but at least lay exposed in thought long before revolutionary Marxism had the opportunity to overcome it in action, today's claimants to the Marxist banner help cover up both the impasse of the national liberation movements and even totalitarian Communist global ambitions. The spurious vacuity in thought is seen in all its abysmal depth in the refusal to face the new reality, not that of 1956, but that which exists in 1967.

Thus an attempt is made to identify the Egypt of 1956 when she stood alone in the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the deepening of the Arab revolution against the attack by Anglo-French imperialism (in collusion with Israel) with Egypt in 1967 when, instead of proceeding with her internal revolution against remnants of feudalism, she is in a spurious unity with feudal sheikdoms for the "annihilation" of Israel.

Thus, the allegation is made that, "because" US imperialism is out to dominate Middle East oil, she is "behind" Israel--without once mentioning that it is not Israel, but the Arab Middle East which has

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the oil, and it is that fact, precisely, which led US to be "neutral" and betray whatever commitments she may have once made to Israel.

Above all stands the refusal to admit that neo-colonialism could never have recaptured parts of Africa, or Asia, or Latin America, by economic means alone IF the revolutionaries from Ghana to Egypt had themselves fundamentally changed the conditions of life and labor of the masses. Instead of facing this new reality such disparate elements as Mao and Nasser, Brezhnev and the Sheik of Kuwait, Trotskyists and DeGaulle, Castro and the Kings of Libya, Jordan and Saudi Arabia as well as Arab socialists all united in shouting about "Zionist imperialism" as if the "anti-imperialist forces" are led, not by beys, but by proletariat and peasant revolutionary guerrillas? Marxists, moreover, persist in this in face of the popular revulsions from below against their own rulers' obscene identification of the Israelis with the Nazis when it is Russian Communism which concluded the pact with Nazi Germany, and it is Russian Communism which crushed a genuine proletarian revolution against its overlordship in Hungary?

The tragedy is that the theoretical void in the Marxist movement has been filled with a practical opportunism without parallel. As we wrote in the Political Philosophical Letter on Arab-Israeli Conflict:

Where Stalin's "socialism in one country" meant transforming the Communist Parties of the world into mere outposts of Russia's foreign policies, Khrushchev's "deStalinization" and recognition of "other paths to socialism" meant opening the doors wide to the "neutral countries" -- so long only as they aligned themselves with Russia against Western imperialism. In turn, Russian Communism spelled out its anti-Zionism as anti-Israel.

It is Stalin who set the foundations when, in place of the class struggle, he had declared that the whole postwar world was now divided into but two camps: his, which he called "socialist", and "the others", which he called imperialist. Moreover, the very specifics of anti-Semitism were spelled out by him. The anti-Semitism of Russian Communism came to the surface in the last years of Stalin's life not only because of Israel, but, above all, because he had to contend with the true internationalism of Russia's returning soldiers -- workers, peasants and intellectuals -- who had seen "the West" and now asked what is so different about Russian Communism. Whereupon Stalin discovered that the new "enemy" was "Zionism", the "rootless cosmopolitans". Everyone -- from the Jewish doctors whom he was plotting to frame in Russia, to the Communist leader Slansky in Czechoslovakia -- were all accused of being either "rootless cosmopolitans", or "Zionists", and very often both.

On this question there was a spontaneous affinity of ideas between Russian Communism and "Arab socialism". . . .

Needless to say, anti-Semitism was not the only point of affinity. Russian state-capitalism that calls itself Communist has its greatest point of attraction for the Middle East because

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stratification can be done from above whereas revolutions cannot; because industrialization demands a great deal of sweated labor and "socialist" ideology hopes to extract it where private capitalism can no longer do so; and, above all, because it holds out to be "vanguard" (which was supposed to stand for the proletariat but then got reduced to "the Party" and further degraded to "educated revolutionaries, military and civil") to become the ruling class.

This attitude to the masses, proletarian and peasant -- that their job is to work and work harder -- has led to the disillusionment with political revolutions, whether they occurred in Asia under Communist leadership, or in Africa and the Middle East under nationalist leaders. The warp and woof of Nasser's Philosophy of Revolution, from the start, was indication enough of how the revolution would stop halfway. It could not go beyond the first steps when made from above, but continue on its class collaborationist path with both capitalists and feudal potentates. Here is how Nasser described the masses on the day of revolution: "The spark had been struck, the vanguard (Army) had taken the fortress by storm; we were waiting only for the hallowed march of the masses ... Crowds without end were flocking around. But how different was the reality from our illusions! The masses were divided and disordered ... We needed unity and discord had arisen in our wake. We needed zeal and ardour, but in these masses we found sloth and inertia. It is against these things that the Revolution set up its slogan of 'Union, Discipline, and Work!'"

Without a comprehension of this warped philosophy of revolution it is impossible to understand the present impasse in the Arab Middle East, the compulsion to go from incompleting revolutions into anti-Semitic adventures and "taking sides" with one or the other of the two nuclear giants out for single world domination. Nor is it possible fully to understand the imperative nature of a theory of liberation as integral to any struggle, without which, in fact, the struggle is bound to be but a halfway house between the old society just overcome and a totally new society.

The class relations in Israel are exactly what they are in any capitalist country -- exploitative. And as in any capitalist country, minorities -- in this case, the Arabs who live in Israel -- are discriminated against both in labor and in politics. But the solution to this situation is by the masses themselves, Jews and Arabs, in class struggle actions, and not through outside attacks by countries ranging from those who experienced some revolutionary change like Egypt to monarchies and sultanates like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya. No matter how shrill the voice, or adroit the argument, Communist Russia and China must not be permitted to succeed in their attempts to christen these feudal kingdoms as "freedom-loving, peace-loving nations."

The point is that the impasse on revolutions in the Middle East, Arab and Jewish alike, can under no circumstances be resolved, except when theory and practice do unite for total freedom, when internationalism does replace nationalism, and when the masses, and not some shortcut like the "vanguard", do have power in their hands.

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Precisely because, a decade ago, rivers of blood divided genuine proletarian revolution in Hungary from Russia's brutal counter-revolutionary suppression of it, no one would have dared to attribute to Russia's simultaneous support of Egypt at Suez a revolutionary role. Today, on the other hand, because of the new barbarity of US imperialism in Vietnam, some erstwhile Marxists are not only willing "to forget and forgive", history, but turn away from the stark class truth today. In imitation of US imperialism's actions in Vietnam, Russia and France are hell bent for tipping the world balance of power in favor of themselves in the Middle East. Because they do so not so much for oil as for a bridgehead from which to prepare for world war III, these would-be Marxists interpret it as a selfless anti-US imperialism act and "therefore" deserving of support.

It becomes necessary to repeat our class ABC's: glory-chasing DeGaulle's challenge to American dominance of NATO did not undo US might, but only harnessed DeGaulle's big power politics to Russia's tail, which, in turn, wagged at the spurious unity of oil skeikdoms and "revolutionary Arab states", all for the purpose of "annihilating" Israel, which some self-proclaimed Marxists dared equate with "anti-imperialism" on the way to a veritable proletarian revolution.

On the other hand, in contrast to the oily power politics tinged with anti-semitism, the force which is undermining American capitalism is the deepening Negro revolt, a revolt moreover, that draws a sharp cleavage between itself and its self-styled leaders--be they Uncle Toms or "revolutionaries", be they black power advocates or Communists, be they Muslim followers or Trotskyists who have glorified Malcolm X into a veritable prophet who combines in himself, though dead, Lenin, Trotsky and black nationalism that will overthrow the power structure, with or without the proletariat. But whom they are thereby dooming is not U.S. imperialism but the revolutionary movement itself. What needs to be exposed is, not Zionism whose class nature is obvious, but the "vanguardists" who substitute a cliquist elite for a mass movement.

It would, of course, be a delusion to think that the Negro Revolt, though objectively grounded and daily growing in passionate intensity, could destroy American power, root and branch. Never has it been so clear that no revolt can succeed with a theory of revolution.

Just as the seal of bankruptcy of capitalist society is the bankruptcy of its thought, so the vacuity of self-styled, revolutionary thought manifests itself in running after "action" as if sniping can be a substitute for thinking. Degrading true philosophic abstractions--the universals of socialism and liberation--into the sham of activism, while transforming concrete questions into empty abstractions of "black power", the theoretic void fails not only in offering methodology for analysis, but no release of new energies and new forms of organization for reconstructing society.

Just as Mao's challenge to Russia's "theory of peaceful co-existence" was under compulsion either to develop totally new Marxist-Humanist foundations, or find itself, along with its revisionist enemy, leaving the Vietnamese to carry the whole burden of the struggle against the over-

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powering military might of US imperialism while each of the Communist Big Powers tended to their own national interests, so the full tide of mass activity must not only act, but fill the theoretical void in the movement. The impasse of the civil rights movement at the very moment when the activity of the masses is at its height is proof of the fact that the need for theory is not confined to Marxists. For all others it is likewise impossible otherwise to escape being caught in the web of global conflicts and national interests or to mistake war for revolution and thereby lose the fight for self-emancipation.

The dialectics of liberation, or the moment of revolution, compels what Hegel called "labor, patience, seriousness and suffering of the negative", and that which revolutionary Marxists have called the self-examination of the revolution by itself, in midstream and after victory. This need to re-examine direction of the revolution assures self-development from "first negation" or abolition of the exploitative society to "second negation" or the emergence of the positive, the new-released creative energies of the masses for the forward movement to a total reorganization of society.

As we expressed it in the section dealing with Negro revolts--to sow illusions that sniping is "insurrection", that appropriations are the equal of the expropriation of the expropriators, that the very first outburst is already the revolution and that it can evolve to its fullest without consciousness of revolution is to invite defeat. Nor is "black consciousness" a substitute for class consciousness and reconstruction of society on human beginnings. An elemental outburst is not only not the total act of social revolution, but the dialectic involves overcoming retreats that are likewise sure to appear and which must be overcome.

As Lenin saw half a century ago in the greatest actual proletarian revolution that the world has yet witnessed, the revolutionary process must be continuous and involve ever deeper layers of society who must become Reason as well as Revolution. He warned that what looks hardest,--the overthrow of the old society or first negation--is, in fact, the easier of the two tasks required for reconstruction of society. That which has been "taken for granted", on the other hand, that a positive will emerge--the second negation--is, in reality, the harder of the tasks. Moreover, without the second, the abolition of the old may likewise go backwards. Far from the forward movement being assured, it depends on patient eliciting from the masses, the release of vast untapped energies to become the proclivity of the intellectual as well as actual practice to "return backwards."

This is no longer theory. It is daily practice. It is this which has become a life and death question which spells out the dialectics of liberation as the unity of theory and practice as an inseparable act of organization and spontaneity.

III. SOME ORGANIZATIONAL CONCLUSIONS

From our very birth, the organizational expression of Marxist-Humanism has had a unique character both in its form of Committee functioning and the inseparability of theory and practice. Where other Marxist organizations write theory in separate organs aimed at intellectuals, our theoretical analyses, written by workers as well as intellectuals, have been aimed directly in our popular organ, NEWS & LETTERS. Moreover, even in its strictly theoretical expression--MARXISM AND FREEDOM-- it has been the result of a collective effort, even as PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION will be. Yet organizational growth was, at first, hardly mentioned, much less made central. This is why, at our last convention, we reversed the process, making organizational growth pivotal to our Perspectives.

Today, the objective situation itself, rather than only our subjective desires, makes organizational growth quintessential to the direction of the Movement which stands in danger of being diverted to every form of adventurism, from black separatism to "urban guerrillas." While, in the main, this is the task of the Organizational Report, which sums up to what extent we have succeeded and to what extent we have failed in achieving organizational growth in the past year, it is important here to draw some organizational conclusions from the two major events this year--the Negro Revolt, on the one hand, and the Arab-Israeli War, on the other hand, both of which have put Theory, Organization, and Politics to the test.

What stands out is that our organization alone met the test of the events. Not only the Trotskyists, but even some who had expounded a state-capitalist analysis of events "in general", failed on the specific event of the Arab-Israeli collision on which they ended up trailing both the Communist and the Arab nationalist position. Precisely because they had not moved from economics to philosophy, they could not develop an independent position in the complexities involved in this question. The same thing occurred in the attitude to the new forms of Negro revolt. Again, the old radicals fell into the trap of Maoist-Castroite-Black Nationalist view of "need for more Vietnams" to embroil US imperialism.

We alone held to a totally independent position which refused to settle for the "lesser evil" theory, but, instead, unfurled the Marxist-Humanist banner as the only basis for creating a new society. The Arab-Israeli question will not just disappear with the Israeli victory. With the Arab defeat, moreover, "the Russian question" has moved from one of supplying arms to an actual Russian presence in Middle East harbors and Middle East politics; thus very nearly assuring that the next conflict becomes global.

At the same time the Arab-Israeli collision has shown not only that both Russian and Chinese Communism know no limits to the depravity of their politics, including new forms of Hitler-Stalin Pacts, but also that the Trotskyists likewise lack political principle and revolutionary

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integrity.* The inability to see the world character of our state-capitalist age, lends itself to defense of the old discredited Communists. What is far worse, by narrowing the choice to one between United States and Russia, they help to disorient a whole new generation of revolutionaries.

All the more crucial, therefore, is our position on the integrality of Philosophy and Revolution. It is no longer a question of our off repeated thesis that there never has been more need for theory, and never less understanding of it. This time the need of Philosophy and Revolution is not alone for "theoretical reason", but, practically. Without this unity the road is wide open for a disastrous repetition of the organizational misadventures of Zinovievist "Bolshevisation". That is to say, small mass-partyism or the substitution of the vanguard for the self-development of the masses, becomes a way of life as if shouting from the rooftops either "makes" the revolution, or can substitute for the daily organizational grind needed for organization building.

Moreover, the resurgence of labor militancy and the few, but all-important, instances of black and white solidarity on that pivotal front underlies just how necessary our organizational growth is needed for direction also of the new developments. This is not the age for dividing theory, propaganda, and agitation. News & Letters Committees are needed by labor and its struggles both against management and labor bureaucracy. This does not mean that we are moving away from our activities in the civil rights organizations. Despite their disarray, these remain important for activity as well as forums for our views. We need to intensify our stress on the need for an underlying Marxist-Humanist philosophy for their development as for ours.

Not only to test our philosophic-political analyses, but to meet the urgent needs of the actual practice of the spontaneous developments, these three points are indications of what to do:

1) To issue a special pamphlet on the Negro developments. If even finances, or rather lack of them, make possible its issuance only in mimeographed form, the first part of this thesis, the new and analytical articles in the NEWS & LETTERS now going to press detailing both Newark and Detroit events, as well as our discussion at the plenum, which will include as many from the outside as we can get to attend our sessions, should all be coordinated by the REB and issued within a month or so of the plenum.

2) Both because the need for theory has never been more urgent (and not only for the youth) and because the self-development of our members and friends need to practice the unique form of development of our organization, NEWS & LETTERS COMMITTEES are to conduct a series of lectures on Philosophy and Revolution. These may be conducted under the auspices of a specially-created sub-committee, titled, in imitation of Lenin's advice to the editors of Under the Banner of Marxism, "The Materialist Friends of the Hegelian Dialectic."

Organizational growth becomes of the essence not only for purposes of historical continuity, and eliciting from the masses (workers, Negroes, and youth) ways of integrating theory with mass struggles, but because, at this moment, no other organization conducts truly independent class politics. While no one can know what new forms of organization the workers will spontaneously create, no form--be it Paris Commune, Soviets, Shop Stewards, Workers' Councils--has ever in toto substituted for the specific Marxist organization which has as much right to objective existence as the mass organizations themselves.

* See Militant May 29, June 5 and June 19, 1967.

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