

PERSPECTIVES, 1966-67

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PERSPECTIVES REPORT TO CONVENTION BY NATIONAL CHAIRMAN
 SEPTEMBER 3, 1966

P E R S P E C T I V E S , 1 9 6 6 - 6 7

I THE WORLD TODAY

I see by today's paper that DeGaulle is not only a self-proclaimed peace-maker, but an historian who is ready to rewrite France's colonial past. Thus, France as exploiter and Cambodia as exploited, have become transformed by his euphemism into two nations who "for a time, joined their destinies." (New York Times, 9/2/66). I doubt that the new peaceful co-existence appearance of France means that the Asians have forgotten French colonial policy. It is clear the Africans haven't, for they know that fighting for freedom from "French glory" is not merely past history.

The Somalis at Jibouti the other day showed the true face of DeGaulle France, which, during the war, had perpetrated the first massacre against Africans when there was an uprising in Madagascar. Like his friend, Churchill, DeGaulle felt that he wasn't fighting "against" Vichy France, and "for" the "Free French" in order to preside over the dissolution of the French Empire, but in order to maintain and extend it.

The new peaceful appearance of DeGaulle France wasn't the only surprise in store for us this week. Were we to believe Defense Secretary McNamara, we would need to believe that he is running, not a barbaric war in Vietnam, but an "Education" Department in South USA, and that he was concerned, not with "kill-ratios" that he has hitherto so callously and glibly reported on, but with the "appalling waste of talent" (New York Times, 8/14/66). He didn't hide his military armor too well, however, for soon enough it developed that he was out to "salvage" (there is a discarded-rag-type description for human beings!) these great talents only in order to transform them into cannon fodder. It turns out further that 30 percent of the rejects were Negroes, and we know what chances for high-skilled jobs they have -- providing they survive the Vietnam war, in which the Negro casualties are already disproportionately high. We needn't wait for these Negro GI's to return to Natchez, Mississippi, in order to see the golden opportunities awaiting them. Just let them try returning to Watts, California!

If the self-appointed "educator" had only salvaged his Texas Chief -- pardon me, Commander-in-Chief -- from his demands for "civil peace and social progress" -- the type that his predecessors have been carrying on for the past century, at a pace set by the first Johnson who snatched defeat from the jaws of victory in the Civil War. It is the type that has left the Negro ill-paid, ill-clad, ill-fed, ill-housed, and born into unemployment -- born onto the rolls of so inhuman a relief system that it dares tell a Negro mother that if she has another child, she'll forfeit that munificent sum which compels her to raise her children in an educational system that makes them "rejects" for the "high" standards of war-making!

Should one think that this type of interference in home life is possible only under private capitalism, but not for so-called Communism, just look

at Communist China's "cultural revolution" and how it trains up teen gangs to invade public parks as well as private homes, have them denounce such "bourgeois customs" as love and young lovers who sit in lonely places and "do things that burn the eyes", not to mention what is worse yet, diminish their work capacity "by sitting up late at night and writing love letters." (New York Times, 8/25/66).

And Russia, I see, has finally got around to admitting, or at least allowing publication of a novel that admits, the German massacre of Jews at Babi Yar. The silence about these German atrocities all these years and the pretense that these were of "Soviet citizens" speaks volumes of anti-Semitism, both latent and not-so-latent. Those who were massacred were, indeed, "Soviet citizens", but that caused neither the massacre, nor the silence. What is telling is the fact that those massacred were Jews and that other "Soviet citizens" acted as cover-up in a land that calls itself "Communist" and that has had power all to itself for one-half a century.

Mao's "Great Leap Forward" may have sounded more revolutionary than Russia's peaceful co-existence, and may have looked like the answer also to Africa's desire to industrialize without going through capitalism. A closer look, however (and not only at the failures, but at the successes) shows that just as under private capitalism, so under state capitalism calling itself Communism, industrialization has been achieved at the expense of the Chinese masses who have yet to experience any control over their own lives, either at the point of production, or in society. And on the 15th anniversary of the success of the Chinese Revolution, the Chinese rulers promised them a lot more of the same for generations to come.

So no matter in which direction we look, the world system of capitalism, private and state, with its two world wars in a single lifetime, readying itself for a third, demonstrates the irrationality, if not outright insanity of our existing society, which manifests itself daily in fantastic dualities.

Thus, in its most affluent state, and at its highest scientific point of achievement, we are being told by scientists that, by the 1970's, we can expect to be engulfed by the greatest famine ever suffered by mankind -- one that will leave it decimated, IF before then, the whole of mankind hasn't gone up in a nuclear holocaust.

And should we wish to look at the world, not a decade hence, but at this very moment, this affluent society reaching for the moon must still face the fact that two-thirds of the world goes hungry!

Should we wish to isolate ourselves from the world, even the one-third of it which is rich, and look only at ourselves, the richest of the rich, we still cannot escape the following truths: (1) "the pockets of poverty" do not disappear; (2) unemployment is still 4 percent of the population, and the outlook for next year is for "a mild recession"; (3) racism continues apace; and (4) so do the rat-infested slums, while (5) abroad, napalm bombing and U.S. power are synonymous.

No need to look at the fringes of society: the drifter who murders nurses, or the nice-boy ex-marine sharpshooter turned madman who indulges in

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a shooting spree from the Texas University Tower. The drifter, the madman -- they are but symptoms of a much greater, all-pervasive disease. This society is rotten at its core: in its race relations, which are as barbaric as the war it is imposing on Vietnam; in its automated productive system which is as exploitative of "its own" workers as any imperialism is of "foreign populations"; in its educational system which produces "rejects" and its class system which guarantees that despite all, this war remains a poor people's war, for which they are paying not just with their taxes, but with their lives; in the totality of its alienations, frustrations and meaninglessness of life for a whole generation of youth.

And one need not go to Germany to find signs of neo-Nazism. All one has to do is look at the rabid white mobsters in Chicago, who unfold a Nazi flag to shout "white power" when what Aryanism destroyed, as it happens, was not a black, but a white race. It is as if history stood still, memories were frozen, and men lost all their five senses, especially that of smell. Yet the stench is unbearable. It comes from a capitalistic system that died 50 years ago, when it unloosed the first world war, and died at the hands of the Russian revolutionaries.

Yet it persisted as a world system. When its economic foundations were undermined by the Great Depression, it disgorged the ghoulish form of Nazism. That was not all. Neither gas-chamber fascism, nor depression-ridden, decrepit "democratic capitalism" could have survived the unleashing of a second world war were it not for Communism's aid, militarily and ideologically.

How many times must history show "transformation into opposite" before the lesson sinks in? Isn't it clear that, just as the Social Democracy, in World War I saved European capitalism, especially German, by, first voting it war credits, then actually beheading the German Revolution; so the Communists, in preparation for, during and after World War II, underpinned capitalism -- first, by themselves taking the state-capitalist path, then beheading the Spanish Revolution, and finally disorienting a whole generation of revolutionaries with theories of "social fascism" and "bloc of four classes", culminating in their own participation in an imperialist war they dubbed "a people's war."

It should be just as clear that there is no way to rid ourselves of private capitalism unless we rid ourselves, simultaneously, of Communism, which is, after all, but a euphemism for state-capitalism.

To take a historic turn away from class and racist societies, we must compel the Communists to recognize that history did not stop still either in 1917 or in 1949, and that it will do them no good to try to transform the concrete, spontaneous revolution into a supra-historical abstraction, to which human forces are reduced. We know our concrete history of the Russian Revolution and its degeneration, and know that such reduction of the human element resulted, and could have only resulted in laying the foundation, not for freedom, but of a new ruling class.

This is what happened in Russia.

This is what happened in China.

Their present conflict, of necessity, arises from the birth of a

new exploitative class, led to the conflict where each is out for world domination, exactly as is the case with the ruling classes of the West.

The added tragedy of our state capitalist age is this: the objective compulsion of this world stage of capitalist development brings in its wake an administrative mentality that inheres even in the revolutionary intellectual who has no connection with any state power. This is why we cannot allow either petty-bourgeois whitewashers like the Lord Russells and Isaac Deutchers, or leftist apologists like the Trotskyists and some racist nationalists to blind us to the fact that it was Maoist policy, his revolutionary-sounding opportunism, carried out by the Indonesian Communist, Aidit, which led, not to social revolution, but to putschist adventurism that, in turn, led to the slaughter, the unspeakable mass slaughter of some 400,000 alleged Communists. As we see, false theory isn't just "theoretical". And history isn't just the past.

It will not do to close our eyes to philosophy, or history, past or present. Despite Communism's clinging to the use of the word, Marxism, it is the exact opposite of that philosophy of freedom, and to see what that philosophy was before its perversion by state power, we better turn to Marx himself.

II MARX'S HUMANISM VS. COMMUNISM

The genius of Marx lies in this: 122 years ago, when Communism had no state power, when it expounded, like he did, the abolition of capitalist private property, he declared himself opposed not only to capitalism, but to Communism.

He did so because Communism thought, just thought, mind you, that all ills of capitalism would be done away with once you abolished private property. Remember -- he also thought that capitalism's form of appearance as private property was not just appearance, but its essence. Nevertheless, his vision beyond capitalism was so organically related to a new human dimension that he insisted not only on relating the division between mental and manual labor, which indeed is the foundation of all class societies, to capitalism, but in making the proof of the new social order reside in the abolition of this division between the alleged thinkers and workers.

He never wearied of reiterating that, unless you abolished that division; unless man, fragmented by capitalism, reconstituted himself as a whole man, with his mental, manual and emotional talents reunited in the individual; unless the individual would never again be counterposed to society but himself be the social entity; unless the freedom of the individual became the basis of the freedom of all -- unless ALL these principles were true, you would have a new exploitative society, no matter what you called it.

In a word, in place of either the profit motive or a new collectivized property form, Marx placed self-development of man. Because that new human dimension was the means and the goal, the object and the subject, the movement and the organization, Marx had no use whatever for any philosophy unless it was a philosophy of freedom and saw the history of man as the history of the stages of his freedom. He first called his philosophy Humanism. No matter what he

named it afterward -- and there were changes in his "names" from the Communist Manifesto to the Working Men's International Association -- there was never a change in the vision or the struggle to make it come true.

It governed his every thought and act, and not only in what he considered the foundation of all else -- production, material production -- but in all matters relating to the superstructure, be that the state or such seemingly peripheral "neutral" matters as language. Take the word, Negro.

When Marx moved from philosophy to economics, began elaborating his great discovery of the materialist conception of history, and creating new economic categories and using old ones, the words Negro and slave were used as if they were synonyms. Marx revolted against this alleged neutralism, and laid bare the fact that the ideology of the ruling class pervades the whole population, and especially so the intellectuals. He maintained that a Negro is a Negro, a black man. "Under certain economic circumstances", he wrote in Wage-Labor and Capital, "he becomes a slave."

Those economic circumstances have nothing whatever to do with the color of his skin, or the state of his culture. Thus, the Hebrews, with their prophet Moses, were slaves of Egypt. Thus, the greatest of all ancient civilizations in philosophy and in art -- the Greeks -- became the slaves of the Romans when they were conquered. Thus, the Africans lost out, not just to capitalism in general, but to Eli Whitney's cotton gin in particular.

Some time later, when it looked as if the industrial North, despite its economic superiority over the agricultural South, would lose the war, Marx wrote: "One black regiment would have a remarkable effect on Southern nerves." But, Marx continued, that "pettifogging lawyer" (he was referring to Abraham Lincoln) conducts a Civil War as if it were a court of debate. Only "revolutionary methods" can achieve the goal of the abolition of slavery, and the reconstruction of society on totally new beginnings. Without that, even if the North should win -- and the Working Men's International Association, headed by Marx, was born to help it win -- we would still not be witnesses to a new society arising.

To this day we have suffered from this unfinished revolution.

This does not mean, however, that racism has remained unchangeable, a supra-historical abstraction. No, we will see how, concretely, the Negro did not allow racism to get mummified. For the moment, let us not forget that the Negro has always been the touchstone of American history, and thereby also of the radical parties in the U.S.

Thus, in Marx's day, Marx had to separate himself from those who called themselves Marxists, but would not participate in the civil war to abolish chattel slavery since they said they were opposed to "all" slavery, including wage-slavery. To rationalize one's inactivity by the use of such ultra-left phraseology only caused Marx to explode: "If this is Marxism, I'm not a Marxist!"

At each succeeding period in history the Socialist, Communist and Trotskyist Parties in this country have in this question of the Negro revealed their Achilles' heels, as we shall soon see.

On the other hand, the Negro has not only shaped American history, but also African history. The African Revolutions were by no means a one-way road. The Negro had long since substituted, for the triangular trade around slaves, one around ideas of freedom.

At the present crucial moment of world history, when the third world of underdeveloped countries has become the bone of contention, not only between "East" and "West", but also within the so-called East, the Sino-Soviet orbit, it is imperative that the Negro maintain his independence from any state power, and its ideas. Presently, many of these have jumped on the bandwagon of the "black power" slogan. It therefore must be closely examined.

Our thesis on Organization did just that. At that time we had only a slogan, not a whole policy statement to base ourselves on. Now, however, the SNCC statement, which evidently SNCC had been discussing for months before its publication by others, is before us, and we see it is not outside of a certain philosophic framework, certain principled tenets.

In turning to these, we, of course, take the statement at its face value when it declares: "These views should not be equated with outside influence or outside agitation but should be viewed as the natural process of growth and development within a movement; so that the move by the black militants and SNCC in this direction should be viewed as a turn toward self-determination." (New York Times 8/5/66). At the same time, however, we know that ideas have a history of their own, and a logic of their own, and we must follow each to its logical, bitter end, including all its historic ramifications, not the least of which, both for past and present, is the inter-relationship between class and race.

III RACE AND CLASS

We repeat, there is no such supra-historical abstraction as racism, In each historical period it was something different. It was one thing during slavery, another during Reconstruction, and quite something else today.

To maintain, as the new SNCC statement and its new chairman, Stokely Carmichael, do, that there is something called a "white psyche" and that this "white psyche is part of the white fear-guilt complex resulting from the slave revolts", is but the reverse side of the same coin which standard bourgeois white textbooks maintain, that it is not the exploitative class that is keeping the Negro down, but that it is due to some sort of "stigma of slavery". That, naturally, was not the intent of the SNCC statement, but ideas have a logic of their own.

To further insist that "whatever their political persuasion", "all whites" are "part of the collective white America" so that the U.S. has

"180 million racists" is to blur the class line which cuts across the race divisions as well as to muffle the philosophy of total freedom which has created a second America. In this, the Negro has played a vanguard role and it is this role we must save from the SNCC statement which means to separate "all blacks" from "all whites" -- and thus end up by flying in the face of how the Negro shaped the course of the second America.

The truth is this. Despite the ruling Bourbon South's economic power with its Simon Legrees, despite its political power in the halls of Congress ruling the North, despite their "fear complex" (I know nothing of any "guilt complex"; none of them had sufficient of that to do anything about it -- but regarding their fear of Negro revolt they did plenty in the South, in the North, in Congress, and in the Supreme Court) -- despite ALL these powers, the Bourbon South not only failed to brainwash all the people, but a very important section was inspired by the slave revolts, just those slave revolts which SNCC thinks all feared, to organize the most remarkable organization this country had ever seen. I am referring, of course, to the Abolitionists.

It was no coincidence that in 1831, the year of the greatest slave revolt, Nat Turner's, a white New England Abolitionist, Wm. Lloyd Garrison, founded the Liberator.

It was no accident that the Negro runaway slaves, the white Abolitionists and Negro freedmen gathered together, determined to resolve the problem of slavery, not by founding a colony abroad, but right here at home.

And it was neither accidental nor a mean achievement that these males had a different view of voteless women than that which was then prevalent, and the suffragette movement also arose out of this most remarkable organization of uncompromising freedom fighters that predated the origin of Bolshevism by 80 years.

Nor was it "an overnight affair." It lasted for three long decades, until they impelled the Civil War, and during all those 30 years, in slave-ridden America, these remarkable individuals practiced these human relations that they espoused for the country as a whole. So that when, finally, the paths of the Abolitionists and Karl Marx crossed, the affinity of his ideas and theirs should have revealed how indigenous, how deep were the American roots of Marxism.

It is peculiar, indeed, that this page of history, so carefully hidden from all standard white textbooks which, at best, treat the Abolitionists as a tiny group of "fanatics" with no influence on the course of American history, should also have been skipped over by Carmichael because it doesn't fit into his conception that all whites have the same "psyche". This does no harm to history because it has been lived. It does a great deal of harm, however, to the SNCC philosophy which has thereby deprived itself of the awareness of the duality of historic development, of the dialectic methodology which is born out of these contradictions, and which has led Marx to see men's development as the development of various stages of freedom. This is the methodology which enabled Marx to make pivotal to his philosophy the vision that, just as man develops through contradiction, so his "quest for universality" is most intense when people are most degraded.

Either SNCC has not the slightest conception of this world view of history. Or they deliberately disregarded it, to continue with the logic of

their first false premise, that "all whites" have one "psyche" and "all blacks" another, and if ever the twain meet, it is always to the end that the whites interfere with or pervert the Negro's self-organization.

It is to that end that Stokely Carmichael, instead, singled out the organization of the Niagara movement, which he says was all black and great, until it was "perverted" by whites and merged into the then new NAACP. Whatever the white liberal did in changing the direction of the Niagara movement as it became the NAACP, this was not grounded in either their whiteness or their liberalism. Rather, it had its origin in the thesis of Du Bois himself; in his concept that each nation, each race has its own "talented tenth", and that this elite "brings" freedom to the mass.

With such an underlying philosophy, the Niagara movement couldn't possibly get a mass following, no matter how militant it was in its demands for full equality as against Booker T. Washington's philosophy of "Cast down your bucket wherever you are."

It is true that by then (the turn of the century), racism had become rampant, North and South, for, with America's plunge into imperialism in 1898, the other great pages in American history of black and white solidarity, including the greatest page within the South's development -- Populism -- were fully expunged. It is true, also, that the only rational voice came from the Negro. It isn't true, however, that the failure of these movements to become mass movements was due to the whites "taking over" the NAACP.

As against Carmichael's rewrite, here is how one of the leaders of the Niagara movement summed up this failure: "...their cause was just, their motives pure, their goals noble and practical; but they were perhaps too far removed from the masses to inspire them to action -- too conscious of their own privileged position as a black elite..." (Henry Lee Moon, Balance of Power, p. 848)

Now, despite the fact that the word, black, and not the word, white, precedes the word, elite, this is a class concept, a thoroughly bourgeois class concept, and it led to the isolation, self-imposed isolation of the black intellectual, from the Negro masses, and therefore from their self-organization.

The only time this wasn't true, and Negroes by the millions organized themselves and put an end to the myth that the Negro couldn't be organized (this was 1920, not 1966, Stokely) to fight for his freedom in an all-black organization, was the Garvey movement. The interference it ran into was from the black "talented tenth". The most prominent of these, and the one who appealed to the white power structure, particularly the Justice Department, to deport Garvey was -- Du Bois!

Now Du Bois was a great historian, one of the greatest this country has ever had, white or Negro, and the only one who has made a great contribution to the true history of Black Reconstruction (which everyone should reread today so that great period can be saved from the vast accumulation of white slander that still pervades that period's history in the textbooks). Unfortunately, however, his class (petty-bourgeois) character always showed.

This was so when he organized an all-black movement, and retreated. It was so when the West Indian, Marcus Garvey, organized an all-black mass movement, and Du Bois attacked him. It was so when Du Bois fought against the

Marxists. And it remained true when, in his old age, he joined the Communist Party and followed their African line.

Of course, Du Bois has great achievements to his name, and not only as a scholar, but as an organizer. Of course, he made that perceptive statement that "The problem of the 20th century is the color line." Of course, he saved the African heritage, dug it out, and made it a world concept.

He was not the only one. Carter G. Woodson was the one to popularize in this country that the "Negro has a history, and it didn't begin on the plantations in the South." The Pan-African Congress at which Du Bois made his famous statement was organized by a West Indian, Williams. The names are legion, and I am sorry I have no time to go into all the history of the Negro both as American, as African, as a world historic personality, past, present -- and future.

The point here is that, just as Du Bois showed his class character in this country, so did he show it on the world scene, especially in Africa. For, while he appealed to still another white power structure -- the United Nations -- to give Africa limited freedom, the African masses arose spontaneously and changed the whole map of the world in less than a decade.

The point is that Du Bois moved to Ghana only after it became independent, that is to say, only when state power was won. The point is that, as with all intelligentsia, so with the Negro, there as always been a separation between the elite and the mass.

This was so not only as they organized themselves in nationalist movements, but when they organized themselves, with white labor, to reorganize the whole industrial face of the nation through the CIO. Considering George S. Schuyler's present reactionary stance, it is important to see how differently he spoke under the impact of the CIO, as he lashed out against the established Negro leaders in 1937: "Nowhere were the 'educated' classes cooperating with the unions to aid the work of organization, save in a few notable instances and there only by one or two individuals ... Their desertion of the struggling Negro workers in this crisis constitutes one of the most shameful chapters in our recent history. The new position Negro labor has won in the past year has been gained in spite of the old leadership. It has been won with new leadership; militant young men and women from the ranks of labor and grizzled black veterans of the pick and shovel and the blast furnace." (Crisis, Nov. 1937)

You cannot reverse history. This integration into labor having been achieved, the ones who will save the CIO from its degeneration, as we can see by the new formation of Negro caucuses for upgrading, for the end of lily-white departments, against the bureaucracy in general, are the workers.

It will not be achieved by those who disregard the integration, and themselves use college-type vocabulary, completely devoid of any sense of class struggle.

The great German philosopher, G.W.F. Hegel, had a phrase for this type of thinking. He called it "self-determination applied externally." That is, from above, not as it emerged from internal self-development.

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The development of SNCC to greater militancy, of necessity, had to involve a break from white liberals -- a break both from their money and their policies, it is true. But the emphasis, if this is what SNCC meant to do, should have been on the "liberalism" they opposed. Instead the emphasis was put on "all whites", as a generalization, including even those who had given their very lives for the movement.

And the trouble with generalizations is that they very often sow only confusion, because each one reads into it his specific interpretation, which may not be what you intended at all. There is no way to avoid confusion except by being specific instead of general.

An analysis which takes a development to its logical conclusion does not mean to imply that an individual must carry it through to that logical conclusion. Quite the contrary. When he sees the logic of his thesis he may very well draw back in horror: The point of logic is to show this inevitable development before it becomes a fact, when it may be altogether too late to draw back. Thus, whether we take Carmichael or Trotsky, the lesson is the same -- anyone can make a mistake and there is nothing wrong with that provided you do not make a thesis of it.

That is what Lenin told Trotsky during the dispute over whether the trade unions should be merged into the state apparatus. Lenin told Trotsky that he was wrong to say they should be, but when the workers voted him down, he proceeded to work as the same revolutionary he had been before. If, on the other hand, Trotsky had insisted that the merging into state apparatus was a principle, he could not have proceeded as before, and would have forever been deciding for the workers.

In the same way, 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 have so completely misread the movement's aspirations as to leave the type of chaos and disruption and division within the movement that Mao would have aimed to create, if someone had followed his policy.

The point is that the Negro Revolution of the 1960's that emerged from below was for integration, not because of interference by the whites, but because it arose spontaneously from black youth who wanted it. The Muslims were completely external to this movement, outside of it. Indeed, to get back into the mainstream of the black revolution, Malcolm X found he had to break from Elijah Muhammad.

Stokely Carmichael is reversing the movement, trying to have Muhammad subsume the Negro Revolution, channelize it into "our own institutions", whatever that means. (Incidentally, not a word has yet been spoken by Muhammad, publicly, so we do not even know that he accepts this gift that is not Carmichael's to give.)

If we must take a second look at black nationalism, let's look at it, not where it has isolated itself from the mainstream, but when it was the mainstream -- Garveyism.

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IV NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

First, let us consider the historic period in which Marcus Garvey worked. It was the period when the Negro, during World War I, moved North enmasse. There he found, not paradise, but a living hell, which included white labor's total hostility.

The KKK, too, moved North and there found fertile soil for its racism. Negro blood flowed so freely during those 1919 riots that it has ever since been referred to as "Red 1919."

The total alienation of the Negro from white society, his frustrations in finding the North no different than the South, his feelings that, though this is the only homeland he knows, he will never find entrance into it, made him flock to Garveyism, though none really wanted "to go back to Africa."

In other lands than America, the years 1917-20 were known as Red Years for entirely different reasons. The Bolsheviks had won power, overthrown Tsarism and the bourgeois government which followed it, creating the first workers' state in history. The vision of the Bolsheviks was that this was but the beginning of the European Revolution, which would come to the aid of Russia, a technologically backward land. All hopes rested on the German Revolution, but this was, literally, beheaded -- Luxemburg and Liebknecht murdered -- and the proletarian revolution destroyed by the Social Democracy.

Self-determination for the Russian masses in such circumscribed circumstances, the Bolsheviks felt, would doom "Soviet power." Remember -- the slogan which brought the Bolsheviks to power was "All power to the Soviets", which was not really a state, but a form of council-functioning, councils of workers, peasants, soldiers, councils in which the Bolsheviks, when they raised the slogan, were themselves a minority.

Before Stalin's reign it never dawned on socialists that they would cling to state power, if that state was not, as Marx expressed it, "the workers organized as the ruling class." What Stalin did in clinging to power, and transforming it into its opposite; the way Mao later extended it to include the Army -- was totally foreign to Lenin and the Bolsheviks. In any case, when they found themselves isolated, Lenin posed the following question: "If not through Berlin, then perhaps through Peking." Why couldn't the revolution be extended Eastward? After all, that is where the majority of the world's population live, and that majority was colored and doubly exploited.

So -- IF, IF, IF ...

If they could break the back of world imperialism, though they themselves were technologically backward...

If the Russian Revolution stood ready to sacrifice itself to help them...

If they built soviets, and thus through council-control of production, could industrialize without going through capitalism ...

...then not only they would gain their freedom, but the world revolution would be a fact for all, and humanity would at last be able to stand to its full height.

They were mighty big "ifs". They contained great visions of mankind's development, of freedom's achievements, of the "dialectic of revolution" which, ever since the Irish Revolt of 1916, showed that national minorities can act as catalysts to bring onto the historic stage the proletarian revolution, instead of vice versa, as had been the conception up until then.

These new departures in theory were embodied in the Resolution on the National and Colonial Question, presented to the Communist International Congress in 1920. And surprise of surprises, for the American delegation: the Negro was singled out as part of the "National Question" at the very moment when, in the U.S., everyone from the "talented tenth" to the Communists were busy proclaiming that the Negroes were Americans, not Africans, as if that kindergarten distinction was the one at issue.

As we see, just as it took Marx, working on the economics of the class struggle, to come up with the most profound analysis of the Negro, so it took a Lenin, working on international questions, to work out the Negro question in the 1920's. To this day, these theses have not only not been surpassed; they have not been approached as foundation, serious foundation for analysis of the present by any but ourselves.

In one respect, I can see Carmichael's point about Americans. When I came here, in the 1920's, as a child, and first met the Negro and raised the question with Communists, I was shocked at their attitude, which appeared to me to contain a good bit of white chauvinism. I said so most loudly. I was not old enough to join the Communist Party, but I considered myself a Bolshevik and fought for the position. I then became a Trotskyist, and fought with them on the same question. I got nowhere in either party -- not on the Negro Question.

You will understand better what I mean if I take a year closer to our own period than the 1920's. Let's turn to the crucial year, 1943, when the Negro burst forth in mass revolt, and since this was during a war and Russia and the U.S. were allies, they had to fight not only against the Administration, but also against the Communists. In Harlem, for example, Benjamin Davies of the Communist Party appeared with Mayor La Guardia on the same platform and told the Negroes "to go home", to forget their grievances, that a war had to be won!

Look again at 1943, and contrast it to 1919: (1) no longer were these demonstrations defensive, provoked by the KKK; now it was the Negro who took the offensive. (2) the new stage of "nationalism" was not for purposes of "returning to Africa" but a challenge to existing society right here, on all fronts, from the Jim Crow Army to housing. (3) they coincided with the highest development also in labor, for the miners were also on strike, and also for the first time in the midst of a war were demanding their rights. Or, as they put it, if the Senators are so interested in coal for the war, "let them go dig it."

Here is what I wrote then, in a study I made that was never published, but is available here (Marxism and the Negro Problem, 1944):

"To say that labor is to fix it all is to say nothing. Labor has to 'fix' all problems. The proletariat is the only cohesive revolutionary class in present-day society and no fundamental transformation of the social order can occur except under its leadership. But meanwhile the Negroes are in constant activity and organization (NAACP, Urban League, the Garvey movement) on the basis of the fact that they are a nationally oppressed minority. They work with labor sometimes, and against labor other times. They cannot be told to wait for the day of the revolution." (p.4)

"Historians who state that the Negro problem is rooted in slavery and stop there fail to see the crux of the question. The 'stigma' of slavery could not have persisted so long if the economic remains of slavery had not persisted. The Civil War abolished the institution of slavery, but did not give the land to him who tilled it. Not having got the land, the peasant's fate was inevitable, whether he was white or Negro. Even in Russia, where there was some fraudulent attempt to give the serf the land, it was impossible for the Russian serf to rise above the needs of the backward economy. All the more so in the South where the Negro did not get his '40 acres and a mule'. Cotton remaining dominant, semi-feudal relationships were inevitable. The division of labor set up by the cotton economy may not be disturbed. The social relations arising on the basis of the cotton economy remain 'less changed than the soil itself on which the cotton is grown'. Within the economic remains of slavery lie the economic roots of the Negro Question." (p.6)

"To free himself from his oppression, the Negro will be compelled to struggle against capitalist society which cannot release him. His very oppression makes him potentially one of the bitterest enemies of the existing society, as is evident by his attitude toward the war. However, the unemployment inherent in the social crisis and the past history of the country make the proletariat most vulnerable on the very question of the assimilation of the Negro into its ranks. This will probably be the focal point of the fascist attempts to disrupt the proletariat. The proletariat must respond by recognizing not only the validity but the inevitability of the mass Negro movements against Negro oppression and strive to lead this movement and harness its revolutionary potentialities for the struggle against capitalist society. This can only be done along the lines laid down in the Marxist thesis on the National question." (p.12)

These types of principles went into the founding of News & Letters, News & Letters Committees, and no other organization.

The case may appear to be different since the 1960's when the Trotskyists finally published the 1947 thesis which the state-capitalist-tendency wrote at that time for the SWP. It is true that by the 1960's we were publishing American Civilization on Trial -- but for the SWP to publish our 1947 thesis was a good beginning for them. On the other hand, they went in for the wildest kind of black nationalism in the critical year, 1963, when they gave critical support to the Muslims, at the very moment when Elijah and George Rockwell shook hands and the latter gave the former a check. And this continued through 1964 when they began to glorify Malcolm X, right up to now when they repeat, without question, the black power slogan.

But if you read, carefully, you will see that it is only the sheerest of opportunism. For example, George Breitman writes, in the ISR (Spring, 1964) and also in the introduction to Malcolm X's speeches: "What I am talking about

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is the capacity of the Negro people to lead the working class revolution to replace capitalism with socialism." This statement, it turns out, is only there to pave the way for the conclusion that a revolution need not be led "by a majority ... it (the Russian Revolution) was led by a party that represented a class that was a minority of the country."

Note that when the Party leads, it is stated as fact. But when the Negro is projected as leader, it is only his capacity to lead that is stressed. Indeed, the SWP has not the slightest intention of giving up the role of the Party, the Trotskyist Party, their party as the one and only vanguard. Their embrace of Malcolm X and other black nationalists may, though I doubt it, get them a mass party overnight; it will surely get them a few of the young black unintelligentsia with the same elitist conceptions as they.

We, on the other hand, have practiced these principles for many a decade, and having put them as the very foundation of News & Letters and News & Letters Committees, have no reason to hedge either on the race or on the class question. A Negro production worker is the editor of our paper. Both Negro and white workers are in the leadership of the organization, and not just faces the SWP puts on the ballot. The same holds true for the youth. In other words, all the rebel forces are here: workers and theoreticians.

We don't just talk about internationalism and the two-way road between the Negro and African Revolutions. We make these international relations real. As the British Governor of the Gambia put it when he tried expelling me from the country: "Your anti-Communism is interesting, but what worries me is your pro-African nationalism."

And we don't just stand still on labor. When white labor doesn't act, we help in organizing the unorganized, like those in the Maryland Freedom Union.

V YOUTH, PHILOSOPHY AND ORGANIZATION

I dealt with the Negro Question at such length not only for its validity, but because, as I showed, it is central both to the American revolution and to world reconstruction.

There are, of course, other aspects of revolution, not the least of which is philosophy. Interestingly enough, the very year, 1943, when the Negro put himself on the historic stage in a new light, was the year I first, for my own benefit at that time, translated the Humanist Essays of Marx, using my re-discovery of them for both the role of labor in general, and the Russian Revolution and its degeneration in particular. (You can read all this in another unpublished document -- the one on the Negro Question was not the only one that, as a minority tendency, the WP disregarded. This other document is called "Labor and Society" and we mimeographed it in 1947.)

There is so much to tell of that critical year, 1943, because, internationally too, a new epoch had been opened with the National Resistance movements.

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It is all the sadder that, as late as 1966, SNCC chooses to show disdain for the white rebel youth. In no instance is the SNCC statement more wrong than when it equates the white youth's participation in the Negro revolution to his "going to pot". Let's nail this down right now, not because white youth are so much part of the history of the Negro Revolution that even SNCC cannot avoid crediting them (for 1964 only evidently, and not for 1965 when SNCC first discussed the statement, or 1966 as they moved to practice their exclusion of whites) -- but because the Negro Revolution is the only meaningful work for white rebel youth. This doesn't mean that they have thereby found a new form of "escapism". On the contrary, from it they learned how to attack some of their problems, including that of education. The return from Mississippi Summer was to Berkeley Fall and the creation of the Free Speech Movement.

Nor were the youth the only ones who were borrowing methods of expression of revolt from the Negro Revolution. The adults, especially in their anti-Vietnam War struggles, evolved the teach-ins.

It is true that there were other instances, serious ones, when suddenly, the white rebel youth "disappeared." This was true in Watts. We said then, and repeat now, for the youth to have all "gone off", so to speak, to anti-Vietnam demonstrations in preference to continuing with the Negro Revolution was criminal -- not because anti-war struggles are not of the essence, but because the spontaneous, indigenous, continuous and in-depth revolution is the Negro Revolution. Therefore to escape into the anti-Vietnam war movement because it both sounds more revolutionary, and affects you more directly, means blinding oneself to the fact that the latter, unfortunately, has not aroused the masses, and the former has; that this Negro Revolution is part of the developing American revolution, without which any other part of the world revolution would always stand in danger of being destroyed by American imperialism.

So it is here we must fight, and on these battlefields; the Negro Revolution is the key to all else. (One Harlem nationalist admitted this departure gave the black nationalists the chance to assume leadership roles in CORE.) At the same time, it must be admitted that the antiwar movement has not grown.

The fact, however, that there is no great progress to report among the white rebel youth, at least none which is like the never-ceasing development and momentum of the Negro Revolution, is due to many factors -- not the least of which is the failure to commit oneself to a total philosophy of freedom, like Marxist-Humanism.

But this has nothing to do with the SNCC accusations, for none is more prone to pragmatism, which is what keeps the white rebel youth from Marxist-Humanist commitment, than the Negro youth who feel the urgency of continuous activity even more. Both seem to exclude philosophy from this activity. A slogan is no substitute for a comprehensive philosophy.

Both, therefore, must face the Anglo-Saxon reality, the trap that waits in the wings for rebel youth, the existing reality that pulls at them via empiricism, the philosophy of pragmatism that so permeates the social fabric, that makes all so skeptical of "dialectics" that even the rebels think that all that is needed is activity, and more activity, and still more activity.

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Forget theory, we are told, that's old radical thinking. Perhaps. Surely we shouldn't stay stuck in old grooves, but how can one reconcile rebellion with the idea that thinking is not activity? Can you separate the idea of freedom from the struggles for freedom?

Practice, we are told, that is the way, the only way, to change society. Destruction, that is it. Molotov cocktails. But there is a type of destruction that leaves everything exactly as is. You may get a few sprinklers in Chicago, and a festival in Watts, and a dance hall in Lansing, but has anything changed, anything basically?

That it takes all it has to get even so little is true. But shouldn't energy, the passion of striving for freedom, also go into uniting thinking and doing, and put an end once and for all, to the bourgeois division between mental and manual work, between philosophy and revolution, between theory and reality? Isn't it a fact that we have otherwise not achieved total freedom, the end of capitalism, truly new historic beginnings?

We must admit that even those in the FSM who felt closest to Marx's theory of alienation as indeed being contemporary thinking which described their lives more profoundly than any "psyche" courses or sociology studies made currently; those who openly stated that if they would choose theory, Marxist-Humanism would be the one they would choose; those who even went so far as to call themselves Marxist-Humanists -- asked, "only" why have an organization?

Well, why not?

Isn't it a fact that by not having an organization of Marxist-Humanists, by showing disdain for an organization that asked for total commitment to ideas and actions, instead of only action, it laid the groundwork for the Communists to gain adherents from those youth who had followed Savio, and would have preferred following Savio to following Bettina Aptheker -- but didn't wish to end their commitment with the disappearance of FSM?

Shouldn't it be clear that empiricism is indeed the most terrible of all logics so that you always find yourself involved in the type of destruction that leaves everything where it was, instead of the kind of re-construction that would change, not just the isolated excess, but existing society at its root, its exploitative, racist root?

Shouldn't this be obvious, at least to rebels who keep fighting and find at the end only a civil rights patchwork instead of a social revolution? For a social revolution to succeed, you must have a unity of theory and practice, a unity that finds an organizational expression which takes away the one-sidedness of theory in isolation, and the one-sidedness of practice, in isolation from theory. Only this arms you to withstand the pressures, including that of pragmatism, from existing capitalism and makes it possible to get rid of the stench emanating from capitalism's half-century of decomposition which is out to suck us all back into its quagmire.

Forget the half-century. Think only of the last decade. It happens to be the one where a new epochal stage was opened by the Revolution in Hungary from Communism and the Montgomery Bus Boycott from U.S.A. racism; the year.

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News & Letters Committee was founded; the year of the wildcats against Automation in Detroit and the 100 Flowers movement arose against Mao in China. And where have we gotten without philosophy?

We have a lot of phonies, phony Communists, and phony nationalists. Without philosophy how do you

arm yourself against these seeming opposites that exploit their own working people, as do any and all forms of capitalism? As do any and all capitalisms, they lead into foreign adventures which, in the case of "unconquerable Mao's Thought" led to the putschism which resulted in the slaughter of 400,000 Indonesians.

You may have seen an item the other day that Robert Williams who left North Carolina for Cuba and broadcast from there as if that were the latest heaven of the Negro Revolution, has now shifted base to Mao's China and tells us, just as positively, that Fidel's Cuba is "racist", but, oh, Mao's China is heavenly -- including even his A-bomb!

I don't know where he lives in Peking -- I hope he is safe from the rampaging teenagers who may find his trousers too "Western". When I was in Hong Kong and interviewed refugees, I was told that the students were permitted no fraternization whatever with Africans, much less social relations. And it couldn't be otherwise in Mao's China whose arrogance against the West has nothing whatever to do with the fact that it is "white", but it is non-Chinese. And if Robert Williams thinks that this means "colored" are welcome, just let him wait^a while, and he'll find out what Oriental chauvinism can really be like!

Isn't it clear how necessary, how urgent, it is to fill the theoretical void since the death of Lenin?

And why are the voices of the fellow travelers, so loudly and correctly raised against the Vietnam war, so muffled on Indonesian atrocities, or even Chinese, those Maoist fanatics, the true revisionists of Marxism who have chosen, at the height of the Vietnam War, to single out a "Russian Street" to rename. And, as we saw the other day when Prof. Smale was taken out of the mathematicians' world congress when he compared the horrors of U.S. policy in Vietnam with that of Russia's in Hungary, speech isn't so free in Russia, either.

Isn't it clear that no anti-war mass movement can be created so long as we appear merely to choose Russia or China or Hanoi over Washington, D.C. when all stand in the way of self-determination for the South Vietnamese?

Isn't it a fact, to return to home grounds, that the Negro organizations fighting so militantly for civil rights do lack a total philosophy, and are open to "outside" influences, not of foreign governments or states, but "outside" of the dialectics of freedom, and inside the alleged success story of pragmatism?

Organization and Philosophy, as we see, are not just the problems we have placed forward front for the building of our organization; they are forward and front, objectively put, because the Movement has reached the cross-roads. And because they are at the cross roads, all sorts of tendencies place before them endless illusory doors leading nowhere.

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Instead of superimposing any plan on the movement, what is needed is to let the "new subject", i.e. the new human forces, come in and themselves determine the end. This isn't just "good dialectics". This is Man, mankind, man's self-development. This is why I began by stressing the Humanism of Marxism. This is why, in the Organization thesis, we repeat what has always been paramount with us:

"It was natural for us, when we were confronted with Johnsonite cliquism after so long a fight against Trotskyist elitism, that we should have drawn away in horror and made the decision that no organization would stand in the way any longer of the indispensable, urgent, time-consuming task of beginning to fill that long 40-year theoretical void in the Marxist movement with a restatement of Marxism for our age. It is true, also, that this had never meant immersion only in theory. But, while we had been active in the mass movement, it had meant playing down the importance of the vanguard grouping; playing down not just "the vanguard party to lead" (that we still reject), but the role of a grouping of workers and intellectuals such as ours that is historically and objectively as sure to arise as any mass movement because they have a validity of their own. It is for this reason that the trip to Japan made such an impact on us; it showed the continuing necessity of two of the principles which Lenin had singled out: (1) the necessity of what we call full-time workers for the organization or movement, and (2) the need for a sense of organization -- not of other organizations, but the organization of what he called Bolsheviks and we call Marxist-Humanists. " (p.7)

No doubt we should have raised the organization question before now, if not in 1955 when we first began publishing N&L and had not yet had a chance to unfurl the theoretical banner in full, then surely by 1958, when Marxism and Freedom was published and we were the first to re-establish the Humanism of Marxism, the first to establish the American roots, the first not merely to issue a manifesto claiming to be the Marxist-Humanists of today, but a comprehensive, book-length analysis of 200 years of proletarian struggles for freedom -- from the Industrial Revolution to Automation, of a century and more of Abolitionism and Marxism, as well as of Hegelian philosophy, of intellectual and social revolution since the French revolution.

Perhaps we needn't have waited for establishment of international relations in Europe, in Africa, in Japan -- and for the publication in Chinese of the chapter on Mao, which we hope will get into China itself.

Once we did issue our first "join us" invitation in the second edition of American Civilization on Trial in 1963, perhaps we shouldn't have just let it stay there, but used more legwork for building the organization, and less for activity in other mass organizations.

Let me "warn" you gently of one thing, though. Even though organization building is made primary now, we are not separating theory from practice, and we are asking others to join not just for the practical work but for help in writing the new book, Philosophy and Revolution. It is more important to find the historic link of continuity in thought, in the philosophy of freedom, than the missing link between man and what mammals we descended from; at least in the latter case we have the proof of our existence in just being, but in thought it means contention with all other organizations who are the very ones who keep opening those illusory doors leading nowhere.

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Hegel was right when he said that without what he called the Absolute Idea, and we call the unity of theory and practice, that, outside of that vision "there is nothing but error, gloom, opinion, striving, caprice."

In conclusion, therefore, I wish to ask your permission to reverse the usual procedure. As most of you know, I invariably conclude with some variation of the theme of making freedom a reality. May I be permitted this time to end by saying that if we are serious about making freedom a reality, working at it, we must first build the organization which has practiced its philosophy of Humanism in its organizational activities, and thus, with the forces, the new ones who will come to us now, will begin also to practice the self-development of "the subject" -- themselves on the inside, as well as the masses outside-- who will determine the end.

In that way, and in that way alone, can the youth, the intellectuals, the rebels who want to reconstruct society but do not happen to be at the point of production itself, escape the most insidious trap of all in a capitalist society: the identification of men with things.

As one chapter, "The Algebra of Revolution", in the book-in-progress expresses it:

Since all proof is in the subject (man), absorbing all objectivity (a world outside of him, science), the move towards a new society cannot be a mere transition as if it were only "a perfected becoming." The key is, instead, "absolute liberation...." (Science of Logic, p. 485) The greatest force for the future is this total release. Total release is not only release from exploitation, but the release of all his thoughts, freeing it from fetishism, and making man for the first time truly free. Man, having incorporated all of science in his own knowledge, the latter can no longer exist as mere objectivity, but "arises to perfect its self-liberation" in the "new sphere", that is to say, the new society. All the exaltation about freedom, self-liberation, release, absolute liberty is due to the leap from necessity into the realm of freedom, or, as Marx put it, "positive Humanism starting from itself."

Any other basis, any other basis, whether that be the state, as "collective property" or leaders as sort of "mental repositories", that would "represent" humanity instead of be it, would once again signify outside tyranny.

The one way to avoid it if you are not at the point of production where the worker daily fights this managerial fetish is to join an organization where you get the benefit of the workers' though as if you yourself were in the factory, as if you yourself were with the agricultural laborers, as if you yourself were Negro. Therein is the greatness of the organizational expression of that philosophy of freedom called Marxist-Humanism.

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