

# SWP

# discussion bulletin

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## IN DEFENSE OF ROUTINE ACTIVITY

By George Breitman

On a recent prolonged visit to New York I was at first surprised and then angered to discover among some members a contempt for routine activity that they often did not bother to conceal.

Under the heading of routine activity which they look down on are mailings, collating, mimeographing, cleaning up the headquarters or keeping it open, all technical work connected with our publications, handling refreshments, serving on social committees and typing anything except for themselves. All such activities they seem to regard as slightly degrading and the people who do them as slightly retarded or inferior.

Some of them have a similar attitude, although less openly, about work like distributing leaflets, selling literature outside the headquarters, visiting subscribers for renewals, attending most party forums, attending most branch meetings, etc.

Some not only won't engage in routine activities themselves but have actually been seen and heard exhorting members not to waste their time and energies on such work. Others do not preach what they practice: they realize that someone must do these unpleasant things.

As against the disdained routine activity these members seem to believe that they should reserve their time and energies for what they call political work, or real political work. By this they usually mean writing articles, making speeches, teaching certain kinds of classes, concentrating on internal party polemics, etc.

Even the newest member can understand that the party could not survive if this attitude should spread. These routine activities aren't merely necessary, they are indispensable. Sharing in their performance is an elementary obligation of membership. Minimizing it is anti-socialist and anti-working class.

I don't say we should award medals to those who perform this work. But we should always be aware of its importance, and alert to prevent loading down a few members with so much of it that they are unable to do other important things, like study, etc.

And I don't say we should expel the members who hold and spread the attitude I am attacking. Perhaps some of them can be re-educated. What I do say is that the party, and the public opinion of the party, should not tolerate any further overt expressions of this attitude. At the very least, those who have this attitude should be made to feel uncomfortable about it, so uncomfortable that they won't dare to express it openly and miseducate new members or infect old ones.

May 12, 1961

THE QUESTION OF CRITERIA AND THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

By Frances James

I write in support of the position on Cuba presented by Comrade B. Deck and stated by him as follows:

"I believe it was possible as early as October 1959 to characterize the Cuban state as a workers state and to characterize it on the basis of the objective development of the revolution and the institutions which it had thus far produced. ... the class character of the Castro leadership, I think, was finally decided when they made the decisive step of breaking with those bourgeois liberals who had the support of American imperialism, who had the support of the counterrevolution inside Cuba. ... They associated themselves directly with the mass, turning to the mass while making the break with the liberal bourgeoisie. And then by October they established the fundamental base of the state by arming the masses as the special repressive force."

The comrades who cite the example of Bolivia and armed peoples in other Latin American countries argue as if the idea is that the existence of the militia as such determined the nature of the Cuban state power. The point, however, is that a social revolution was in the process of unfolding beginning with the period of the civil war. The workers and peasants had been in the process of establishing the fact of workers control of the major means of production in Cuba (the agricultural sector of the economy) throughout the spring and summer of 1959.

The Militant, in the course of 1959, reported the facts of the social revolution in Cuba. Henry Gitano's article in the Spring 1960 ISR gives a comprehensive picture of these developments. One hundred and seventeen enterprises owned by counterrevolutionaries were taken over almost immediately by the revolutionary government and put under workers control. It was in June 1959 when the army took over 2,357,600 acres of ranch land in the cattle-raising region of Cuba. The Agrarian Reform Law was enacted in May of 1959 and legalized the "interventions" in the interest of workers and peasants in both land and industry. INRA and the army acting together established industries, co-ops, etc., under workers control spending over \$75,000,000 for this purpose in 1959. The ISR article reports, "Alongside the agrarian reform, 700 other revolutionary decrees have given American millionaires the creeping jitters. One law authorizes the Labor Ministry to take over any business which discharges workers, goes bankrupt or has a serious labor dispute. Law 635 creates a Cuban Petroleum Institute which regulates the refining and marketing of petroleum products. It is working three shifts daily copying exploration data obtained by oil companies, whose files have been sealed and placed under armed guard." Soon after INRA's establishment, it organized a Department of Industrialization under Che Guevara's direction which was the locus of the first comprehensive economic planning activity.

The militia, appearing in the fall of 1959, was thus the arming of the workers and peasants to defend the social revolution as it unfolded. As an example of how the militia appeared, recall that, when American planes, bombs, etc., were being used in an attempt to fire the sugar crop, the Federation of Cuban Sugar Workers trained and armed 55,000 sugar workers in the interior to defend the crop.

Thus, was formation of the militia the "initial stage" of workers power, as some comrades hold? Or was it the arming of the revolutionary workers to

defend the social overturn that had already occurred in its decisive aspects?

But, comrades argue, the decisive question was nationalization of the banks and oil industries because, without this, planned economy would be impossible, the economy could not move forward and thus the beginnings of workers power could easily be destroyed. (Incidentally, Guevara was put in charge of the National Bank in November 1959 and the American-owned oil company records were already under armed guard at that time.)

The question of a "workers state" is, however, not the question of how much of the economy has actually been nationalized. Marx put the question as follows in the Communist Manifesto:

"We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class...

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.

"Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionizing the mode of production."

In other words the economic revolution -- the reorganization of the mode of production -- takes place under the direction of the workers state, i.e., a workers "apparatus for the systematic application of force and the subjugation of people by force" as Lenin described the state, or in another formulation of his, "a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another," or as Engels put it "a special repressive force."

I would like to call the comrades' attention to Leon Trotsky's article in the July- August 1951 Fourth International entitled "Not a Workers and Not a Bourgeois State?" In this article Trotsky says:

"B. and C. themselves remark in passing that in its dependence on objective and subjective conditions the rule of the proletariat 'is able to express itself in a number of different governmental forms.' For clarity we will add: either through an open struggle of different parties within the Soviets, or through the monopoly of one party, or even through a factual concentration of power in the hands of a single person. Of course, personal dictatorship is a symptom of the greatest danger to the regime. But at the same time, it is, under certain conditions, the only means by which to save that regime. The class nature of the state is, consequently, determined not by its political forms but by its social content; i.e., by the character of the forms of property and productive relations which the given state guards and defends."

The question, then, is what forms of property and productive relations the Cuban state power guards and defends and at what point in the development was the state coming to the defense of workers and peasants control of land and industry. It is not a question of noncapitalist productive relations dominating the economy but rather a question of which forms of property and

productive relations the state guards and defends in a transitional period of social revolution.

In objection to Comrade Deck's position, the question is posed of nationalizations of industry being the decisive criterion which we have used to determine the class character of a given state (in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, etc.). True, in certain concrete historical situations developing after World War II we considered nationalization the decisive criterion. But in other concrete historical circumstances, it certainly was not the decisive criterion -- for example in Russia in October 1917 when a workers state was established and no nationalizations occurred for months. The criterion in 1917 was conquest of political power by the Bolsheviks. However, even within the Soviet Union itself the criterion changed. With the growth of Stalinism and the defeat of Bolshevism the criteria for determining the USSR as still being a workers state became nationalized property, state monopoly of foreign trade, national planning, etc.

There are many forms putting in their appearance in periods of social upheaval through which we can assess the depth of the change that is taking place and evaluate the various stages of the development of a particular revolution -- program of the leadership, political organization (democratic forms) of the masses, destruction of the old state apparatus, nationalization of land and industry, national planning, control of foreign trade, regulation of internal market, and above all in which class interest does the repressive force (police, jails, courts, army, etc.) operate?

Criteria which are decisive in our evaluation of the development in one historical situation are by no means necessarily the decisive ones in another or even in the course of development of the same revolution, as has been pointed out in the case of the USSR.

The question of criteria used in our analysis of the Cuban revolution and the nature of the Cuban state has importance far beyond a correct determination of the character of the Cuban state itself.

This revolution is by no means an isolated historical development but is part of the social revolution unfolding throughout Latin American and Africa. Working-class economic actions, mass political organizations and civil-war struggle have appeared in increasing intensity throughout every country of these two continents.

The political-economic problems of the peoples of these areas are in most cases close to those of pre-revolutionary Cuba -- one-crop agrarian economies, dominated by foreign capital, very little industrial development, extreme poverty of the masses and either direct or indirect political linkage with the dominating capitalist country. The mass movement of the people -- demanding and determined to get better living conditions in the immediate future -- this social upheaval on the continents of South America and Africa is what is today the immediate threat to the continued existence of "free world" capitalist production. When tens of thousands -- millions -- of Africans come together in political organizations of the "Freedom Revolution" shouting "Africa for the Africans," they mean that the land, mines, industry of the continent must be operated for the benefit of Africans and not the imperialist powers of Europe and America. They mean what the masses of Cuba mean when they shout, "Cuba, si; Yanqui, no!"

Cuba is the vanguard of this vast and swiftly developing revolution but

the movement has already gone further than most of us appreciate or at least are concretely aware of. Let me mention here only the fact that in the Guinea of Sekou Toure the land is nationalized, there is state control of foreign and domestic trade, the Guinea National Bank controls the financial aspects of the country, and a Three-Year Plan is underway to industrialize the economy.\*

Comrade Stein, in the plenum discussion, very correctly pointed out that Algeria, when it wins the war for independence, will have no choice except to turn to the Soviet bloc countries for support for industrialization and that a socialist development in Algeria is a possibility which cannot be excluded in spite of the present political limitations of the leadership of the revolution.

Now, what criteria will we use when we begin to discuss the nature of the state in Guinea and in the future state of Algeria? Will we apply the criteria developed in defense of the USSR in spite of Stalinism and in the Eastern European and Chinese situations which had very different historical developments of social forces and leaderships? Or, must we consider anew the basic concept of the state as "an apparatus for the systematic application of force," "a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another," or as Comrade Deck recalls to our minds "bodies of armed men, a special repressive force," acting in the interest of one class or another. This is the basic criterion, I think, that we must apply to each specific social revolution as it unfolds through its various stages -- mass action, state power, nationalization, planning, etc.

In conclusion, the timing of the Cuban workers state victory to be around October 1959 is correct in relation to the specific developments of the Cuban revolution. And, since Cuba is the vanguard of similar revolutions developing in the rest of Latin America and Africa the correct approach to the criteria upon which we base our analysis assumes great importance. Let's not get stuck with formalistic application of criteria developed as valid and correct criteria in different historical circumstances.

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\*Further information on Guinea as a concrete case demonstrating the depth of the social change occurring there: When Guinea voted "no" in 1958 to staying in the French community, 85% of its trade was with France. Two years later the bulk of its trade is with the East -- even wine, long a French monopoly is now being imported from Czechoslovakia! When Guinea quit the French franc zone and printed its own francs, the Political Bureau launched a huge state-run agency to determine the flow of all import-export trade and to govern the sale and distribution of goods internally. In August 1960, foreign banks were ordered to deposit fifty per cent of their accounts in the government's National Bank or get out of the country. Of five firms, one has managed to stay under these terms.

The ambition of the Three-Year Plan is to "decolonize the economy" and industrialize the means of production. Toure warns Africans that they face a more subtle but equally sinister threat of being "asphyxiated economically" by the ex-colonial masters. "As long as Africa remains an economic appendage of the metropolitan powers, true emancipation will never be won," he says. Following Toure's trip to the UN last year, he went to Havana and worked out a cultural exchange and trade pact with Cuba.

Politically, Guinea is governed by one party -- the Parti Democratique de Guinea -- which includes almost the entire politically active population. The

P.D.G. was founded just before independence as a national front made up of several other political organizations. The government is organized on the village level into councils, regional councils and a national assembly.

Ninety per cent of Guinea's population live off the land and most of them operate as small peasant producers. Of some 1,500 French-held plantations at the time of independence, only about 500 remain in French hands today. Cash crops dominating the exchange economy are coffee, bananas, palm oil and citrus fruits. The land has been nationalized and a plan for crop diversification and development of large-scale co-operative farming is being realized with the aid of Chinese and Soviet technicians.

Foreign capital investment was largely in utilities which have been completely nationalized. One large aluminum plant (Fria) exists. It was only under construction when Guinea became independent and produced its first aluminum in June 1960.

The Economist (London) reports that there is no conventional standing army in Guinea -- the armed forces are occupied with road building, housing, school construction, land clearing, etc.

About private capital and investments, the Minister of Planning says, "We haven't got much of it and don't intend to provide the soil for its development. We don't want to see the rise of a bourgeoisie in our country. We reject the capitalist path of development." "Our main source of wealth is human labor," says S. Toure. It is estimated that one-fifth of the budget for the Three-Year Plan will be paid for in the form of volunteer labor on social development projects.

May 5, 1961

## BUILDING A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN CUBA

By Barbara Doritty

In the discussion on Cuba, no one has said nor does it appear in any majority documents that Cuba or any other country can skip over the party or make substitutions for the party. The actions of the Cuban government indicate that a revolutionary party is being built in Cuba today. Is it so outlandish that the 26th of July Movement, or a section of it, can become a revolutionary socialist Marxist party? The present Cuban government has been moving rapidly to the left. Every time it has been faced with a decision the government has gone to the left -- not the right. Nor has it been vacillating, at one time going to the right, at another to the left. The political task of the Cuban Revolution was to replace the capitalist state with a workers state. The social task was to replace the capitalist private property system with the nationalization of industry.

The working class in Cuba went through bitter struggles before it solidarized itself with the Castro leadership. It was on the basis of its own experience that it became convinced that this new leadership was firmer, more reliable and more loyal than the old. And come what may, the working class is not going to break with Castro for a very long time; even if degeneration should set in. From our own experience we know that workers do not easily break with the party that "awakens them to conscious life."

Castro's forces were weak at first, very weak; and he did not clearly understand the course to be taken in the revolution; but at each stage he chose the most radical step which enabled his cadre to move ahead a step further toward the expropriation of private property -- away from capitalism. The old officer core and army was completely destroyed and replaced by the rebel army and militia. The agrarian reform was carried out over the opposition of the liberal bourgeoisie, President Urrutia and Company.

### Leadership Was Present

At every stage of struggle leadership is put to a test. It is an unsolved problem of the working class of the entire world. This unsolved problem of leadership is what is meant by "the question of the party." This problem is the only obstruction between the world working class and socialism. It is the working class that must solve the problem of both leadership and party.

A leadership grew in Cuba corresponding to the demands of the revolution. In the process of struggle the classes create many organs which play a very important and independent role and are subject to deformation. This also provides the basis for the role of personalities in history. The appearance of leaders during a revolution is necessary in order to mobilize the vanguard which in turn will rally the working class as well as the urban proletariat in Cuba.

The rural population, campesinos, were the vanguard in the revolution. A small proportion of the campesinos were individual cultivators of any kind and of these cultivators only a fraction held title to the plots of land that they farmed. The rest were sharecroppers, tenants, etc. The majority of rural Cuba were agricultural workers in sugar mills, tobacco and coffee plantations. They were alienated from their means of production and subsistence and had only their labor power to sell. They had a working-class ideology and did not demand of



the revolution ownership of the soil they tilled but full employment and higher wages. They worked in highly mechanized plants, and had a long record of unionism and militant action. They were by far the most revolutionary. The city proletariat supported and aided the revolutionary forces of the countryside in their underground operations.

The role of political leadership in critical moments of historical events can be a decisive factor. "History is not an automatic process. Otherwise, why leaders? why parties? why programs? why theoretical struggles?" (N.I. December 1940, "The Class, The Party and The Leadership," by Leon Trotsky.) Leadership is shaped in the process of clashes between the different classes or the struggle within the different layers within a given class. The consciousness of this class will directly determine the course of the revolution. Once arisen, the leadership will invariably move ahead of its class.

The Bolshevik party in March 1917 was supported by a small minority of the working class; and furthermore there was discord within the party itself. An overwhelming majority of the workers supported either the Mensheviks or the Social-Democrats. Lenin's political conception corresponded to the actual development of the revolution and his political theory was reinforced by each stage of development. As the course of the revolution quickly moved ahead the party was able to align its policy accordingly.

The Castro leadership was able to mobilize a cadre that rallied the masses to the banner of the revolution. It is through these cadres that the slogans and program found their way to the masses. This was the living revolution. "To cancel these elements from one's calculations is simply to ignore the living revolution, to substitute for it an abstraction, the 'relationship of forces,' because the development of the revolution precisely consists of this, that the relationship of forces keeps incessantly and rapidly changing under the impact of the changes in the consciousness of the proletariat..." (N.I. December 1940, "The Class, The Party and The Leadership," by Leon Trotsky.) This continual change in the living revolution is the process by which the backward layers are continually being attracted to the more advanced layers and their continual reassurance of strength. The leadership plays a tremendous role.

The next step, to win victory -- the revolutionary leadership must utilize the most favorable conditions of a revolutionary crisis in order to mobilize the masses; they must be propelled forward; they must be taught that the enemy is not at all omnipotent, that the enemy is torn by contradictions and panic prevails. Thus we have before us the developments as they occurred in the Cuban Revolution. Once master of the situation, the revolutionary government was compelled by the very logic of its situation to organize national economy under the management of the state.

#### Leading Cadres United on a Program

Leadership is not the only problem of building a party. A revolutionary party cannot be built without a program. And in time the program will create the party. This is the process developing in Cuba today. The program today of the revolutionary government is a class-struggle program.

The 26th of July Movement first proclaimed its program at the Moncada Trial, October 1953. In his speech "History Will Absolve Me," Castro clearly stated their program. It was a liberal bourgeois program, limited, since it did not call for the complete expropriation of private property. But since that

time this original program has been abandoned for one that propels the entire country in the direction of revolutionary Marxism. Are they not traveling in the right direction? Absolutely! And with every step to the left isn't imperialism defied and set back? Who controls Cuba now -- private property interests or public property interests? The urban proletariat and rural population control Cuba today.

Given the program, the construction of leading cadres is the key to the building of a revolutionary party. The 26th of July Movement is united on a program that is revolutionary socialist in its essence. And its doors are open for the assimilation and development of others. Our conception of the leadership is that of a leading cadre, united on a program. The building of a party is difficult and complicated. The task of the 26th of July Movement is to crystallize itself into a united organization which would serve as a regular functioning link between the broad masses of the working people and their government.

The building of a party proceeds through many stages of evolution and development as a continuous process of selection, attracting new forces and discarding others -- from the construction of a program to the organization of solid cadres to the building of a mass party. The struggle to build a revolutionary party in Cuba is a continual process and one aspect (leadership, program, etc.) cannot make the party without all of the others.

#### Have We Put Forth A Marxist Program?

Since the revolution started in Cuba the Militant has put forth a revolutionary Marxist program directed towards the building of a revolutionary Marxist party. We have criticized where it was necessary and have given support in its struggle to eliminate imperialism.

For example: In the April 13, 1959 Militant, in reference to the coalition government, we said, "The Castro government is far from having acquired a working-class base and a socialist program. Nor has it closed the door to making a deal with U.S. imperialism. It is obviously jockeying between the contradictory class pressures at home and abroad."

Another issue of the Militant, November 2, 1959, we criticized the government in their slowness to carry out the various reforms. "How far Castro is prepared to go to mobilize popular forces remains to be seen. The indicated course is to carry through the scheduled major reforms without further delay... But Castro like many a nationalist before him hesitates at unleashing forces that could take Cuba down the road to a socialist government."

In an editorial titled "Cuba at the Crossroads" in the January 18, 1960 issue, the Militant stated, "The main danger to the Cuban revolution is in its own leadership. The class background of the Castro forces is petty bourgeois... Their aims were nationalist and equalitarian -- independence from foreign domination, an end to government corruption, reduction of special privileges, improvements for the poor...they failed to consider such fundamental measures as nationalization of industry, government monopoly of foreign trade, and the expropriation of the capitalists...The result was a relative decline in Castro's strength and popularity...the bourgeois wing...began to differentiate a rightward position...Castro turned leftward...agrarian reforms were speeded up... These measures...were not foreseen, still less included in the program of the Castro leadership which spoke only vaguely of nationalizing the electric and

telephone companies... To consolidate the revolution, no choice is open but to take the road of nationalizing the key industries, instituting socialist property forms, constructing a planned economy and undertaking an active policy for a similar course throughout Latin America..."

Probably the most important articles yet to be published in the Militant were the three by Joseph Hansen, "In Defense of the Cuban Revolution," an answer to the State Department and Theodore Draper. The third article which appeared in the April 24, 1961 issue clearly applies the theory of "permanent revolution" to the Cuban revolution. The result of these and many other articles (in the ISR and Militant) has been a process of educating both the government and people of Cuba on the necessity to build a revolutionary party.

In order for us (SWP) to thoroughly analyze, discuss and give aid to the building of a Marxist party in Cuba we must look at the entire world situation of today and the relationship that Cuba and all of the colonial countries have with the working class of the most advanced countries. Cuba stands in the center of a vast amount of small powers in Latin America, who are calling for an end to Western imperialism. The example set by Cuba is an example for the rest of Latin America, the building of a vanguard party that can and will lead the workers and peasants in a revolution that will overthrow imperialism.

Therefore, in what sense is the Cuban revolution "permanent"? The Cuban revolution made no compromise with any form of class rule, did not stop at the democratic stage, but went over to socialist measures and to war against reaction from without, that is, a revolution whose every next stage is anchored in the preceding one. And the final outcome is the complete liquidation of all class society. This is the danger that faces imperialism today in every country.

In conclusion, Cuba has once again overthrown imperialism (invasion by CIA and Cuban mercenaries April 17). How many times does the Cuban government and its people have to overthrow imperialism before the minority will see that the character of its leadership is no longer liberal bourgeoisie?

May 8, 1961

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The following article ("An Answer to the Kennedy-Schlesinger-Draper Thesis") was rejected for publication in the May 1961 issue of the Young Socialist at the meeting of the National Executive Committee of the YSA of May 2 by the current majority in the NEC, which forms the leading body of the minority in the SWP on the Cuban question. The comrades of the NEC majority refused to publish the following article for political reasons. The article is now submitted both for the information of the comrades and as a contribution to the current discussion of the Cuban question.

Nora Roberts  
May 4, 1961

AN ANSWER TO THE KENNEDY-SCHLESINGER-DRAPER THESIS

by Nora Roberts

The cry that the Cuban Revolution was "betrayed" by Fidel Castro provided the cover under which lay hidden training camps for Cuban counterrevolutionaries, bought and paid for by the CIA in Florida, New Orleans, Guatemala, Nicaragua; uniforms, U.S. training officers, guns, munitions, tanks, jet bombers and all the materiel necessary for the arming and training of a band of mercenaries. With the cry "betrayal" bombs were dropped on Havana department stores; bombs that were bought and paid for by State Department finances, dropped by agents likewise bought and paid for. Under that cover some 1500 mercenaries landed on Cuban shores with the purpose of reclaiming Cuba for U.S. investment.

The cry of "betrayal" was raised by Batista's ambassador to Canada three months after the victory of the 26th of July Movement in January 1959. It was echoed by the droves of Cuban businessmen and landlords who stood by helpless as their property was nationalized and given over to the workers and peasants as well as by the doctors who faced socialized medicine. It was chanted by the professors who had gotten their positions by graft and were expelled by the revolutionary student federation which took over the university; by lawyers and court officials who saw the old juridical system which protected Batista, U.S. investments and the Cuban upper and middle classes destroyed and replaced by revolutionary justice, protecting the interests of the Cuban workers and poor peasants. These elements which had not fared too badly under Batista's Cuba came rushing to the open arms of the CIA and the U.S. State Department which fed them, armed them and prepared them for an invasion.

The cry of "betrayal" was the central theme of President Kennedy and his brain trustee, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in their "white paper" published when the State Department found it necessary to explain why millions of American dollars are being used to finance the Cuban counterrevolutionaries. This cover was given a veneer for consumption among left-wing circles by Theodore Draper in his article in the New Leader of March 27 entitled "Castro's Cuba--A Revolution Betrayed?"

The Kennedy-Schlesinger-Draper thesis, as Max Lerner labeled it in the New York Post, holds that "the Cuban revolution was essentially a middle-class revolution which has been used to destroy the middle class." According to them, "Castro promised one kind of revolution and made another. The revolution Castro promised was unquestionably betrayed."

That the aims of the revolution were not clearly spelled out before it proved victorious over Batista's henchmen cannot be disputed.

Each class of Cuban society was dissatisfied with the Batista regime for its own reasons and had its own alternatives to it. Castro and his closest followers were driven to the revolutionary cause because, as Draper says, "The crying poverty, illiteracy, disease and primitivism of the outcast peasants appalled the young city-bred ex-students. Out of this experience, partly practical, and partly emotional, came a determination to revolutionize Cuban society by raising the lowest and most neglected sector to a civilized level of well-being and human dignity."

It was this misery and squalor in both the rural and urban areas and the hope which Fidel Castro inspired for its irradiation which drove thousands of peasants and impoverished agricultural workers to support the revolutionary

cause both directly and indirectly. In the cities likewise, thousands of workers, held in tight bonds by the Batista-controlled unions, unable to win any of their demands and unable even to put them forward, supported the revolution.

The members of the Cuban middle class and upper class had their own reasons for wanting the end of Batista. The fantastic sums of money involved in graft and corruption shocked even the representatives of the parasitic capitalist class, especially those who could find no means of cutting themselves in on the pie. These elements, however, put forward no answer to the problems of the poor and hungry people of Cuba, nor did they show much real concern for them.

Thus, the toppling of Batista in January 1959 did not answer all the pressing social needs of the majority of the Cuban people. The victory against the tyranny marked the beginning of the revolutionary process and not the end. For the Cuban workers and peasants, the revolution opened a big door. In the rural areas, peasants and agricultural workers began seizing land. In factories throughout the island workers went on strike, presenting their employers with demands which had been piling up for years. Faced with demands for from 40 to 100 per cent increases in wages, shorter hours and the reinstatement of all fired workers, many companies closed down all operations. Some employers fled the country, many were forcibly ejected by the revolutionary workers who had been repressed for so long.

Faced with this revolutionary wave throughout the island, the new government, composed of businessmen and professionals, but with Fidel Castro and his revolutionary armed forces having the final decision, had to make a choice. On the one hand the government could side with the workers and peasants. This would mean recognizing and furthering the process of redistribution of the land among the poverty stricken rural elements and nationalizing the shut-down industries, granting the workers demands, and operating them through a form of workers control, with the profits being used for the benefit of all of society. This was clearly the only way to solve the problems of the impoverished workers and peasants.

To preserve capitalism would have meant that Castro would have had to use the rebel army to protect the profits of the latifundists on the land and of the industrialists in the cities. The workers would have to be forced to end their strikes and go back to work with few if any of their demands granted so that U.S. and Cuban businessmen could run the island on a profit-making basis.

Every modern revolution must proceed along one of those two paths. Cuba itself had come to this same crossroads once before in its history. The coup d'etat which resulted in the ousting of the Machado dictatorship in 1933 unleashed the previously pent up social forces embodied in the workers and peasants, threatening the very existence of capitalism in Cuba. At that point, Batista, then an army sergeant with a following of armed students came onto the scene and took power, breaking up massive workers demonstrations as he went, with the assistance of the State Department backed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The businessman wing of the 1959 coalition, for its part, was quite willing to follow the suggestions of the Wall Street Journal in the footsteps of its predecessor, Fulgencio Batista. If that step had been taken by Fidel Castro and his movement, you can be sure there would not be one Cuban businessman who would cry "betrayal" nor would the Kennedy Administration have found it necessary to issue a white paper on the subject. There would be no C<sup>A</sup>-financed invasion

crew and no bombs dropped on Havana department stores by "the cream of Cuba's society." Theodore Draper could rest quiet in the knowledge that Fidel Castro "had put forward no original economic or political ideas and had stayed well within the limits of traditional democratic reform and idiom in Cuba." Castro then would only have betrayed the majority of the people of Cuba, all those who, with him, had "a determination to revolutionize Cuban society by raising the lowest and most neglected sector to a civilized level of well-being and human dignity."

Thus it was that, as Castro explained to an Italian interviewer: "Not only did we destroy a tyrannical system, we also destroyed the philoimperialistic bourgeois state apparatus, the bureaucracy, the police and a mercenary army. We abolished privileges, annihilated the great landowners, threw out foreign monopolies for good, nationalized almost every industry, and collectivized the land. We are fighting now to liquidate once and for all the exploitation of man over man, and to build a completely new society, with a new class content."

"All Cubans, all without exception, were invited to help this revolutionary process. Those who failed to do so did not fail because the opportunity was lacking, they did so because they did not want to help..." said Castro at a banquet for Revolucion. This rule held also for the Cuban Communist Party. It had as much right to defend the revolutionary process as had the middle class elements. The Communists, however, chose to participate in the revolution. The middle class elements showed themselves to be more interested in fighting Communists than in fighting poverty, illiteracy, and coupled their anti-communist cries with their flight from the revolution.

But does this constitute "betrayal" of the revolution by Castro? No. As he himself explains: "A revolutionary process cannot stop at some point a priori... To hold back a revolutionary process would be to betray the revolution; to set limits in the midst of a revolutionary process is to betray the revolution; to set limits to the forward leap of a people in history is to betray that people, it is like putting brakes on a people that is marching rapidly toward the future."

While defending the real betrayers of the revolution, the middle class elements who ran away, rather than give up their privileges, Draper uses much of his thesis to knock down the arguments of C. Wright Mills, Huberman and Sweezy, Jean Paul Sartre and others of the left who have put forward their defense of the Cuban revolution. This, however, cannot be viewed as a friendly debate among the various circles of the left of all persuasions, as Draper would present it. To recall the speech of Che Guevara of March 28: "We have to remind ourselves... that we are in a war, a cold war as they call it; a war where there is no front line, where there are no continuous bombardments, but where the two adversaries, this tiny champion of the Caribbean, and the immense imperialist hyena are face to fact, are aware that one of the two is going to end up dead in the fight."

Mills, Sartre, Huberman and Sweezy have taken a courageous stand in defense of a courageous people, fighting to preserve their independence and their better life from a voracious American imperialism. Draper, by completely ignoring the war drive of U.S. big business against Cuba and by giving a full rationale for the arguments which cover that war drive, holds up a mask in front of one of the dirtiest, ugliest aggressive acts in this hemisphere.

ON A REVOLUTIONARY CRITICISM OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

By Judy McGill

It has been argued, in the course of the discussion in the party, that "criticism" of the Cuban government by our press would be poorly received in Cuba, not because the regime considers itself above criticism, but because we are citizens of the country which had for so long sucked their blood, and which, frustrated thus far in its efforts to crush their revolution, continues its unremitting campaign to strangle it.

Another, and different argument, has been made by several people, most clearly by Joe Hansen in his speech at the plenum: "We don't go there to tell them how to make a revolution. We don't have one behind us and they have one. You're at a disadvantage."

All that can be said with certainty is that any criticism must be presented intelligently, without arrogance, without a patronizing "Here is the Truth" attitude. But this should always be our approach. It is vital that in the case of Cuba, we not feel any guilt complex in relation to the schemes of that government which is our worst enemy, and which the Cubans know is our worst enemy. Just recall that brief but insightful little article that Bohemia ran during the election campaign, entitled "Dos Contra Uno" -- Two Against One, in which they noted that only Farrell Dobbs supports their revolution. We have established our credentials with the Cubans; they know we are not simply Yanquis, but socialists and internationalists.

There is a dual contribution our party can make to the Cuban revolution. On the one hand we can organize its defense in the United States. We can be proud of the way we have been doing just that, with results far out of proportion to our numbers.

But there is a second contribution, that of our theoretical insights, developed out of thirty years of the Trotskyist movement and out of the Marxist movement since its inception, and advanced with the purpose of assisting in the conscious theoretical development of both the present Cuban leadership and of those forces in Cuba having the potential to bring about the formation of a genuine Marxist party of the masses. We have spoken much of that section of the 26th of July Movement that is supposed to be moving in the direction of a Marxist understanding of society. But we also know that at present the ideological influence of the Stalinists is increasing, the more so that the Soviet Union takes on increasingly the role of sole protector of the revolution. For us, the single greatest theoretical contribution that we can make to the Cubans is the product of our unique heritage: our understanding of Stalinism, of the Stalinist degeneration of a workers state and of the Stalinist corruption of the concept of socialism.

In my opinion, we have not been making this contribution as we might.

Comrade Hansen, speaking at the Plenum, created an absurd, totally imaginary "quote" which is by implication supposed to represent the minority's notion of how to speak to the Cubans: "Now watch out! You've got a revolution in Cuba! Trouble, trouble, trouble! Beware of Castro! He's a bourgeois. His following is petty-bourgeois."



I would like to indicate in this article how our comrades in Cuba are actually speaking, in what manner they are presenting this theoretical heritage. Since I have been able to obtain copies of Frente Obrero, it will also be possible to examine the approach of the Uruguayan Trotskyists. I should like to call the comrades' attention not only to the content but to the style of criticism, which may not be a perfect model but on the whole gives an excellent example of what constructive criticism looks like. Above all, it is necessary to make clear at every point our realization that the Cubans have made a revolution and a profound one. But as Frente Obrero emphasizes: "Precisely because it is a profound revolution, the support to it, to the extent that it is thorough, should be more critical. In Cuba and everywhere this is the only constructive attitude."

Under the heading "Deepen the Revolution in Cuba" the same issue (January 12, 1961) of Frente Obrero points out that "Our enthusiastic support to the measures of expropriation carried forward by the government of Fidel Castro does not obscure our affirmation that this alone is insufficient, does not obscure our affirming -- with the same force that we defend the conquests already realized -- the necessity for the fullest expression of the tendencies that defend the revolution and its conquests. Our defense includes the idea of not idealizing the revolution."

The following paragraph, from the same issue, expresses a crucial idea which at no time have I seen stated in our press, and not only our public press but in our internal documents and the speeches supporting them.

"Internally the Cuban revolution has the indispensable need, in order to develop and deepen and defend itself, of a much more profound participation of the masses. The masses can be maintained in the greatest revolutionary tension for a whole period, but only on condition that they feel themselves participating and constructing. To center this tension in the purely military and defensive aspects can also be a form of avoiding the 'contact of the people with politics.' We support Che Guevara when he defends by means of this formula -- 'contact of the people with politics' -- the constant participation of the masses in all problems, but this formula has in life its concrete expressions, which are: factory committees, block and neighborhood committees, militia committees, massive armament of the working class under the control of the unions, life in the CTC (Cuban Trade Union federation) controlled from below, recognition of the right of tendencies, strengthening of the unions, independence of the CTC and the unions from the State; and construction of a political organism that leads the process with a program toward socialism, the party of the Cuban Revolution, which in this stage already has a base in the unions from which it will develop as the workers party, affirming internally the proletarian tendency that, founded in the masses, will carry the revolutionary process to its culmination." (Emphasis added, J.M.)

It is the argument of the minority that the majority has treated the formation of workers councils as a desirable step forward, but not a critical one for the revolution. Most of you have probably by now seen Fidel's speech to the Technical Advisory Councils: it is an eloquent, revolutionary speech, but not yet a Marxist speech, for it does not clearly call for the transformation of the "Advisory Councils" into elected workers councils with full powers. It speaks of the participation these councils can make in the gathering of information necessary to formulating a plan, but it does not accord to the working class, organized in councils, the power to make the basic decisions on a plan. In the March 1961 issue of Voz Proletaria, Cuban Trotskyist paper,

the article, "What Should the Technical Advisory Councils Be?" praises the establishment of the councils, but calls on the working class to "with all its revolutionary impetus, convert the Technical Advisory Councils into true organs of discussion, planification and administration, by means of a free deliberation under the union agreements...with all guaranties, as without the political autonomy of the unions, these measures would be controlled by the state." The article goes on to call for the establishment of district councils of delegates from factory councils, and finally, a superior council, or soviet, elected from below.

In publishing Fidel's speech we should take the opportunity to make clear our concept of these Advisory Councils as only a first step which should be followed without delay by genuine workers councils. On this, as on most other occasions, our criticism need not be an "attack" on something that has been said or done by the leaders of the revolution, but rather an explicit indication of where it is necessary to go further. This is a pattern that can be followed in full sincerity; the Cuban revolution is still in its ascendant phase, the achievements have been great ones, and we can feel wholehearted in our praise of its leaders, their integrity and their courage.

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Although we denounce the Stalinist Peaceful Coexistence line, our press has been deficient in applying this to the case of Cuba. In the Voz Proletaria of January-February 1961, a four-page article headlined "The Cuban Revolution and Peaceful Coexistence," analyzes the line of the Soviet bureaucracy at the time of Kennedy's inauguration, and then says: "The propagation of the illusions about Kennedy, the conference of the Communist Parties at Moscow, the intensification of the 'struggle for peace' as the 'primary task' was something in harmony with the whole tradition and conservative politics of the bureaucratic caste that governs the USSR and the Communist Parties. But what is new, and at the same time a danger for our Colonial Revolution, was that the lulling and confusing effects of these politics reached even to the leaders of the Cuban revolution, who up to that time had been interpreting the desires and will of the popular masses, fully launched on the road of permanent revolution, and had not shown indecisions, lack of realism, or confusion."

"Now the speeches and periodicals [in Cuba] spoke of 'peace,' spoke of prudence, of common sense, of the supposed rectifications of Kennedy, attributed everything to the 'Government of Eisenhower,' etc., and although they also mentioned that they are 'without illusions' and 'not to lower the guard' the certainty is that they created illusions, and one sector of the people received that change with a certain confused relaxation of the combative spirit, although the most conscious censured the naivete of the leaders of the revolution."

"All this illusionism, all the propaganda of 'hope' has the enormous importance of showing how a conservative, conciliating politics can influence a dynamic and audacious revolutionary movement, the latter being outside of the control of the masses; and the lack of a leadership consciously revolutionary-Marxist, gives this conservative influence the possibility of concretizing itself in deeds that hamper the revolution and lay the bases for a future stagnation, even up to a defeat."

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Both the Militant and ISR gave over considerable space to covering the "Latin-American Conference for National Sovereignty, Economic Emancipation and Peace." Granted that the conference was important, and granted that the political divergences of the delegates prevented them from arriving at any concrete proposals for ways to defend the Cuban Revolution. But wasn't this then our opportunity to clearly state in our press and at meetings on this conference, what we consider a meaningful defense of Cuba to be in Latin America? Angry demonstrators heaving stones at American embassies and USIA centers are not sufficient; plate glass replacements are certainly one of the accepted yearly expense items in the State Department budget. The proposals of Frente Obrero, December 22, 1960, on this matter deserve repetition in our press: "The best defense of the Cuban revolution -- the only effective one -- does not consist in the abstract solidarity 'with Cuba' that often joins with political opportunism or pure demagogy, but in concrete anti-imperialist action, in manifestations, work stoppages, strikes and mobilizations, that weaken and break the Yankee positions and bases in each country."

"In the same way that the Cuban masses understand that the best defense of their Revolution is to deepen it and extend its influence and the support that it counts on among the masses of the whole world, it is necessary to understand that it is not possible to wait for new imperialist provocations or even open aggression to confront these tasks. The Trotskyists call on all anti-imperialist militants and organizations to prepare immediately a great Congress of defense and support to the Cuban Revolution and for the expulsion of imperialism from the continent."

Obviously the SWP is not handing out leaflets to the workers of Chile, Venezuela, Argentina... but this has never been a criterion for deciding what we say about any given situation anywhere in the world.

Again, concretizing the role that the Cubans can themselves play in generating organized Latin-American solidarity, the January 12 issue of Frente Obrero says "It is necessary to break through the confusion that exists in all leaderships, which identifies the Cuban government with the Cuban working class and union organizations. The CTC can carry forward actions in all Latin America that for diplomatic reasons, etc., the Cuban government cannot do. In addition, the working class and the revolutionary movement cannot let itself at any moment be chained by the limitations of diplomatic actions or of the relations between states."

In this connection, the Frente Obrero of March 2, 1961, makes a brief statement whose accuracy is of course undeterminable by us, but which if true has very important implications for the future of the Cuban revolution. "It is necessary," they say, for Cuba "to attract the support of the proletariat of Argentina, of Brazil, that still has not given enthusiastic evidence of supporting the revolution. They defend it, but they don't feel it as their own." It is the absence of the political state power of the Cuban working class, and the absence of an effective means of communication between a Cuban working-class party and the workers organizations of these Latin-American countries, that results in this lack of complete identification.

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Currently in the American press a great to-do has been raised over Cuba's failure to hold elections. Naturally one must read with the greatest skepticism anything that appears in our Kept Press, even those items fit to print in that

citadel of honest, objective, responsible journalism, the New York Times. However, I have not been able to find anything in the Cuban press, or in any articles by foreign journalists who have interviewed Castro, that would indicate that the Cubans are considering any actual steps in the direction of elections. Now, in our press there has been an absence of any comment on the question. An obvious place to discuss this would have been Hansen's reply to Theodore Draper series in the Militant, now a pamphlet.

We certainly do not make a principal out of not holding elections in a "workers state." But if we have an alternative to the State Department's touching eagerness for American-type elections, then we should state it! Let me suggest here, by quoting at length from the Cuban Trotskyists' paper, the answer to a question raised by C. DeBruce at the plenum: "If we did attack the Castro regime /it is not "attack" we call for/ how would we make the differentiation between ourselves, the Social Democracy, the State Department?"

The April Voz Proletaria is an issue intended for the May Day celebrations, as the front-page banner headlines make clear: "FOR A SOCIALIST FIRST OF MAY: THE REVOLUTIONARY CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ... ALL POLITICAL POWER TO THE PROLETARIAT BY MEANS OF THE COUNCILS OF WORKERS AND PEASANTS (SOVIETS)... PROLETARIAN AND UNION DEMOCRACY, AGAINST BUREAUCRATIC SECTARIANISM." The article headed "For a Socialist First of May -- the Revolutionary Constituent Assembly" deserves to be printed in full in our press -- certainly nobody else is going to do so. Beginning with a discussion of how great a blow to imperialism the Cuban revolution has been, and how the defeat of the invasion staggers it even more, the article continues: "And the greatest blow to imperialism, the culmination of our revolution, can be nothing other than its most effective consolidation, with the real taking of all political power by the working class, in a regime of full revolutionary democracy through the Councils (soviets) of workers and peasants, elected by themselves.

"But the creation of this new regime, of this Government of Workers and Peasants Councils, should be the work of ourselves, of the workers, of the rebel soldiers, of the militias, of the students, of the professionals, of the revolutionary middle class, in sum, of all the Cuban people that through a 'Revolutionary Constituent Assembly' can establish the new Workers and Peasants Government and create the new legal and state structures that the social and economic conquests of the Revolution require. That is to say, that this essential culmination of our socialist revolution, this political consolidation of our workers state, in order that it be the full expression of the democratic will of the masses, should be the work of the masses, through their representatives or delegates democratically elected and gathered in the Constituent Assembly.

"This Assembly would give to the working class, to the whole people, the organized road to express and concretize their desires and revolutionary will, would give a positive outlet to the criticism and discontent against the mistakes and bureaucratic excesses in the Government, in the unions, in the planification and administration of our economy, in the control and absolutism of the press and other media of expression. At the same time that establishing the Government of Workers and Peasants Councils, with a legal base in the revolutionary conquests, would beat off the jungle of bureaucracy and political absolutism, this Constituent Assembly and the elections of delegates for it would be the revolutionary answer to the insidious complaint of Kennedy's White Paper, on the lack of democracy in Cuba: a complaint that is able to produce the desired results among certain liberal and popular elements of Latin

America and of the world, and that the reactionaries utilize in a Machiavellian way against our revolution.

"...The unique limitation in this revolutionary democracy is that there can be no participation in it by parties, groups and tendencies that do not accept and do not support the economic, social and diplomatic conquests of the revolution, and those that would not accept the new regime, the workers state and its Workers and Peasants Government.

"... The elections for the Revolutionary Constituent should take place in the factories and cooperatives, in the centers of work, in the units of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, in the Universities and Centers of Higher Education; in the Professional Associations; as well as in the neighborhoods; among the housewives, the individual peasants, the self-employed, the unemployed, etc.; here, from all these strata of the masses, the delegates would be elected from among the most capable and revolutionary, as judged by their comrades and neighbors, from lists presented by all the parties, movements, groups and tendencies that accept and support the economic and social conquests of the revolution, and promise to obey the democratically arrived at decisions of the Workers and Peasants Councils that run the government and control the economic planification in its political aspects: division of income among the different sectors, fixing of prices, volume of consumer articles and housing, distribution of social services, etc."

These elections could not be run from above by means of any maneuvers or bureaucratic impositions of delegates. "Revolutionary democracy must be complete, or the Constituent Assembly and the Councils would be converted into bureaucratized caricatures, like those with which the other workers states suffer."

Compare these clear and specific proposals with the tortured "philosophical" arguments made by Sartre in Chapter 10, "Why No Elections," especially pages 86-88. In any review that we publish of "Sartre on Cuba" we should, while praising the valuable explanations of what it was the Cubans have revolted against, sharply criticize his endorsement of the classic Stalinist theory that the revolution "is necessarily its own right and its own left" and that the only possible divergence that could be expressed would be by those who want to "march more slowly."

In the absence of successful revolutionary movements in major Latin-American countries, the Cuban revolution can degenerate, and will degenerate unless a program of the sort proposed by Voz Proletaria is adopted. To the argument that things are going so well right now, and the revolution is still moving forward so swiftly that such institutions are not really necessary at present, we can only reply that it is now, while the spirit of self-sacrifice and revolutionary self-discipline is still vigorously alive in the bulk of the Cuban population, now, before a privileged caste develops to sap the idealism of the people, now, is precisely the moment for the "great leap forward" to a proletarian democracy.

It is evident from the selections quoted that the Cuban and Uruguayan Trotskyists do not hold the minority's position in regard to the present nature of the Cuban state; they accept that of the International Secretariat, the Pablo-led section of the Fourth International,\* that Cuba is a Workers State Sui Generis (of a special sort). They have termed it, literally, a "Peculiar Workers State." While I do not consider the question of the nature of the

Cuban state a matter of small importance, and agree with the minority in its analysis, I believe that the designation of the nature of the state is less essential at this juncture than one's attitude toward the immediate need for workers democracy in Cuba; for the working class to be established as the state power. I urge all comrades who read Spanish to subscribe to Voz Proletaria. The address is: Idalberto Ferrera, Monte No. 12, Apto. 11, La Habana, Cuba. Its regular publication out of Havana is important evidence that democratic rights for political tendencies still exist in Cuba.

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It would be a mistake to consider this discussion article as simply the expression of a differing tactical approach: should we criticize this, that, or the other thing; when and how should we do it; should it be in the Militant, the ISR, a pamphlet, etc.? Dismissing in this way the points raised would be neither honest nor fruitful, particularly if it is maintained that the party agrees with most of what has been quoted, but simply hasn't chosen to discuss these matters publicly. In that case, why didn't any majority document reflect such an analysis? The leaders of the SWP should not maintain a set of private political ideas; whatever they are thinking ought to be openly stated in our internal documents, one of whose primary purposes is after all, to aid in the political development of our membership.

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Our goals, then, as a Trotskyist party, should be two-fold in relation to the Cubans: to defend their revolution and extend whatever concrete aid we can; and to provide some ideological armament, which is only possible if we speak fully and honestly. But a third goal, of the utmost importance, bears on our relation to the radical public: to acquaint this public, our public, with the meaning of workers democracy; i.e., the meaning of the proletarian dictatorship. Questions that we have had such difficulty in clarifying to our audience in the United States, questions that seem so abstract here -- the place of Workers and Peasants Councils, the nature of democratic planning, the need for a revolutionary party -- all are on the agenda in Cuba, and can be posed in the clearest possible way. Our answers to them, based essentially on the answers given by our Latin-American comrades, can take us a long distance toward the proper education of a new generation of Marxists in the United States.

May 15, 1961

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\* (page 20) The position of the Latin-American Trotskyist parties affiliated to the International Committee of the Fourth International differs on the question of the state with the I.S., but fully agrees in regard to what must be done to achieve workers democracy in Cuba. Their views can be found in the April 1961 International Information Bulletin.