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## WHAT THE DISCUSSION ON CUBA IS ABOUT

By Joseph Hansen

It can scarcely escape anyone who has been closely following the development of the discussion on the Cuban question that it has sharpened considerably since it began. Most, although not all, of this sharpness is to be found on the minority side. The tone of their documents, the unbridled accusations and provocative language they employ have not been seen in our party for a good many years. The reasons for this, however, remain obscure.

It is possible that this way of arguing was learned in the Shachtmanite school of polemics and is not easily unlearned by the comrades who became accustomed to its use and really intend no more harm by it than a seaman stating his frank opinions in a waterfront bar. It is also possible that the minority is caught up in the momentum of a somewhat factional position and does not know how to disengage.

Still we cannot be certain of such surmises and it would be a political mistake not to notice that the increase in sharpness has paralleled the increase of imperialist pressure on Cuba on the one hand and the deepening of the revolution on the other. We cannot forget for one moment that every bourgeois propaganda medium in the country is pounding day in and day out against the "menace" of the Cuban revolution. The party membership, like everyone else, is subjected to this incessant barrage of lies. Despite their best intentions, those who live in petty-bourgeois circles, or who have not been steeled by going through similar campaigns in the past, or who have lost their tempering, can begin to entertain doubts, to give a little, to feel that there is some, if not much, truth in the avalanche of filth. The feeling can grow that something about the Cuban revolution should give us pause in approaching it; that it might be advisable to pull away from it a bit. These hesitations and doubts can be transformed into hesitations and doubts about the wisdom of the positive course the party has been following toward the Cuban revolution. Rationalization can then convert all this into its opposite -- that everyone is softening up except the doubters and skeptics.

One wonders if there is not something of this in the rather shrill accusations voiced by the minority that the leadership has brushed aside the importance of proletarian democracy, has given up the concept of the need for building a Leninist party, is conceding to "Pabloism," to "Kautskyism," to "Stalinism," even to "bourgeois nationalism"; in brief, is "betraying" Trotskyism.

If such social pressures are operating, then it will be more difficult for the minority to reconsider the untenable position they find themselves in. If the pressure of bourgeois public opinion is not involved, many of us hope that the minority leaders, in case of future differences, will carefully assess the bad impression made by the tone and style of polemics they have indulged in.

## How the Discussion Began

So far as the record reads in the Discussion Bulletin, the differences began over the "Draft Theses on the Cuban Revolution" submitted by the Political Committee. These are dated December 23, 1960, and were approved by the Plenum of the National Committee January 14, 1961. The ostensible answer to this document is "The Cuban Revolution and Marxist Theory" submitted by Shane Mage, Tim Wohlforth and James Robertson. This is dated August 17, 1960.

Evidently something is askew. In what crystal ball was Comrade Shane Mage, the main author, able to read and criticize the "Draft Theses" five months before they were written? Even more remarkable -- read and criticize them before the particular events in Cuba which caused them to be written? The fact is that these three comrades make no claim to such prescience. Their article was a reply to a piece I wrote in July, "The Character of the New Cuban Government," which I submitted for the consideration of the National Committee.\* Apparently the three authors considered their reply to this analysis of the character of the government so much to the point and so solid that it was also an adequate reply to the subsequent analysis in the "Draft Theses" of the character of the state -- after it had changed qualitatively.

Let us consider a little more closely the differences as they stood last August, almost a year ago. Cuba did not yet have a workers state. But it did have the Castro government, a government that emerged with the disintegration of the coalition government that had been brought to power by the revolution after Batista fled. The Castro government was of extraordinary interest from the viewpoint of Marxist theory. It was clearly a petty-bourgeois government but it was carrying out measures which affected the structure of the state, such as smashing the old army and police force, and which, if continued, would inevitably lead to a qualitative change -- the displacement of the capitalist state by a workers state.

This government, only ninety miles from Florida, and inviting inspection by anyone interested, was available for first-hand study. The fact that it was not headed by either a revolutionary-socialist or a Stalinist party made it all the more important, for it provided, if that is possible, a virtually pure case of this kind of government as a type. Any interested Marxist theoretician could have analyzed it from a strictly empirical basis. We did this; but we also checked the records to see whether anywhere in Marxist literature this type, as a type, had been anticipated. We found such an anticipation in the documents of the first four congresses of the Communist International, which Trotsky included as part of the programmatic foundation of our movement.

The aim of this research work was not only to arrive at a correct understanding of the nature of the Castro government but

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\*For the information of comrades who may be interested, I am appending the article I wrote in July; also the accompanying material, "Workers and Farmers Governments," indicating the historical origin of the concepts in the article.

also to provide a sound theoretical base for a political approach to it. This was especially necessary, for there was no way of knowing in advance how far the Castro government would go in changing the character of the state nor at what pace. The correct transitional slogans applicable to such a government had to be selected. Not much original work was required for this; they had been outlined in the main by the Bolsheviks at the Fourth Congress, as the attached material proves, and indicated again in the 1938 Transitional Program.

In view of some of the misapprehensions that have appeared in the subsequent discussion, I want to call sharp attention to the fact that in analyzing the character of the Castro government, I abstracted from the character of the state. Obviously a contradiction existed between this government and the state structure it then rested on. Our main problem, however, was not simply to analyze this contradiction but to determine what political attitude to take toward the government to help resolve the contradiction in the favorable direction of establishment of a workers state. The contradiction was resolved at breakneck speed, thanks to the help of American imperialism, and sooner than we might have expected we were able to analyze the development after it occurred and with the mighty assistance of empiric facts.

Turn now to the reaction of Comrades Mage, Wohlforth and Robertson and note how ill-considered their August 17 response was. They attempted to analyze the character of the state, which I had not brought up; but on the character of the government, excepting for the label, they agreed!

This is easily proved. "By recognizing the new Cuban government as a 'Workers and Farmers Government,'" I wrote in my July article, "we indicate its radical petty-bourgeois background and composition and its origin in a popular mass movement, its tendency to respond to popular pressures for action against the bourgeoisie and their agents, and its capacity, for whatever immediate reasons and with whatever hesitancy, to undertake measures against bourgeois political power and against bourgeois property relations." The government is specified as "petty-bourgeois" with descriptive particularizations. A month later Mage-Wohlforth-Robertson wrote: "The Cuban government is a democratic middle-class regime basing itself on, and under continual pressure from, the workers and peasants." They specify "middle-class," noting it is under continual popular pressure.

Having agreed in essence, the authors berate the label used by the Bolsheviks for this type of government. "Is this self-evident description," they say, referring to the sentence quoted above about a middle-class regime, "any less useful than the abstract, arbitrary and false label 'workers' and farmers' government'?" With this keynote, they have been delivering moralistic lectures ever since on the evils of a fetishistic attitude toward labels. Perhaps this freedom from fetishism in such matters will permit them eventually to compromise and accept the label used by

the Cubans: "Revolutionary Government."\*

### What Kind of State?

So much for the preliminary discussion on the character of the government which involved but a single aspect of the revolution although one of considerable importance at the time. The basic document of the minority was completed on the eve of a truly immense event. The increasingly heavy blows which American imperialism dealt the small republic were answered by a series of counterblows that toppled capitalist property relations both foreign and domestic in the commanding sectors of industry in August-October 1960. There could be no doubt about it. Cuba had become a workers state.

The minority comrades, however, scarcely raised their eyebrows. They evidently felt that they had anticipated this with the arguments they had advanced in their August 17 document. It is true, I admit, that they did include a discussion of the character of the state in Cuba. It is also true that since they had not distinguished carefully between state and government in their analysis, what they had said about the state as it existed before the overturns could be stretched to fit the state that came into being after the overturns. Although they were talking about the state as it existed before August, and not after October, it was all one and the same thing so far as they were concerned.

Even under prodding from the majority, the minority comrades did not shift on this. Comrade Mage in fact sought to bolster the August 17 document by further arguments in "The Nature of the State in Cuba," an article dated April 14-18, 1961. He affirms, "We have thus termed the Cuban state neither a capitalist state nor yet a workers state, but call it a transitional state." (Previously the adjective was "developing.") This novel type of state can shift towards either a capitalist state or a workers state without a civil war, the minority comrades inform us. It can become a workers state through institutionalizing workers democracy. On the other hand capitalism can be restored in various ways, Comrade Mage holds. He seems most intrigued by the possibility that the

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\*A real curiosity is Comrade Wohlforth's later intimation, on reading Trent Hutter's contribution, that the designation "workers state" -- leaving aside the difference he would still hold on "tempo" and all that -- would not be too bad if the right adjective could be found to put in front of the noun on the label. "Deformed" is not quite right because it has been used to specify Stalinist domination and that "degree of Stalinist influence" doesn't exist in Cuba. This tempts one to call attention to the solution suggested by the majority in the "Draft Theses" -- a workers state "lacking as yet the forms of democratic proletarian rule." However, Comrade Wohlforth has reminded us a sufficient number of times that he finds this unacceptable. Shall we conclude that he really wants a "self-evident" label not a useless "abstract, arbitrary and false" description?

Castro government might restore capitalism without denationalizing a single peso of state property. As he visualizes it, through "large annual dollar payments for 'compensation,' 'interest' and 'debt amortization,' state property would in essence constitute a means for the extraction of surplus value from the Cuban proletariat and peasantry and its transfer to U.S. capitalists." Comrade Mage declares that this would make it a "capitalist state."

It would be bizarre to debate today whether surplus value extracted at gun point from this hypothetical state would make it capitalist. On such grounds it can be argued that the Soviet bureaucracy is capitalist because it robs the Soviet workers or because the Soviet Union in some fields has an unfavorable relation with the world market. Meanwhile we are faced with the real question: what is the character of the state in Cuba today?

"Developing" or "transitional," responds Comrade Mage. "The answer will not be found in Cuba," the August 17 document emphatically declares. "It is clearly too early to answer in terms of finished categories, for the nature of the Cuban Revolution itself is not yet decided by history," the same document continues just as emphatically. Comrade Mage affirms this once more just as emphatically in his April 14-18 article: "the nature of the Cuban state is not yet determined by history."

With such labels and such arguments the minority leaders evade the problem of characterizing the state in Cuba. The state is quite real and must serve definite class interests, but our minority leave it floating above classes in defiance of everything taught by Marxism.

The neatest evasion is to refuse to consider the state in relation to the economic base on which it rests and to demand that it meet a political criterion. Proletarian democracy, they contend; more specifically the organization of workers councils as the basis of control over the government, or the institutionalization of proletarian democracy, must appear before the state in Cuba can be characterized as "workers."

No real political difference exists in the party over the necessity of jelling proletarian democracy in Cuba in institutional form -- despite the highly articulate doubts of the minority on this point. Disagreement exists only over how to go about it tactically. But there is a difference, and a big one, over whether or not proletarian democracy is decisive in determining the character of the state.

What the minority seeks to do is chop off Cuba from all linkage with China, Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union of today; that is, all linkage with the criteria used by the Trotskyist movement in determining the character of these workers states as they exist. Here is how Comrade Wohlforth breaks the linkage in his article "In Defense of Proletarian Democracy":

"Workers power is not something that evolves -- you've either got it or you don't. There's dialectics! It is not something

that is tacked on to the state at a later date by bits and pieces. There is no such thing as a worker's state where there does not already exist a form of proletarian democratic rule and it is impossible to establish a form of proletarian democratic rule without the vanguard role of the Marxist party. To say otherwise is to destroy the whole theoretical system of Trotskyism. /Wohlforth's emphasis helps distract attention from the very next sentence where he is forced to contradict at least half of his underlined assertion./ There is of course such a thing as a deformed-degenerated workers state but this concept has been so far used by our movement only to apply to the Stalinist thermidor and the extensions of this thermidor into Eastern Europe and parts of Asia." /The "parts of Asia" includes China with its almost 700,000,000 people./

Comrade Mage makes the same point more clearly in his article "The Nature of the State in Cuba." It is worth quoting at length, for it constitutes the main pillar of the minority position:

"Originally Marxists identified a workers state as the political instrumentality of the democratic rule of the proletariat subsequent to the smashing of the capitalist state apparatus. It involved three main points: replacement of the army and police by the armed workers; all officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall at any time; salaries of officials reduced to the level of worker's wages. 'Workers state' was simply another name for 'workers democracy.'

"However, of the several existing countries that the Marxist movement considers to be 'workers states,' not one conforms in any way to the original criteria established by Marx and Lenin. The degeneration of the Russian revolution, followed by the extension of that revolution in deformed guise throughout Eastern Europe, China, and parts of Vietnam and Korea, forced us to develop a new theoretical category -- that of the 'degenerated' or 'deformed' workers state.

"To this new category corresponded a new norm: in the absence of workers' democracy these states are, for us, defined as deformed workers states by their basic property forms. Nationalization of industry, economic planning, the state monopoly of foreign trade -- these economic institutions were established by the October revolution, and their survival and extension indicate the survival and extension of the state created by the October Revolution.

"Thus we have two norms, and the distinction between them should be kept clear. One applies to the victory of the socialist revolution, the other to its degeneration or extension in distorted form. Our primary norm, the norm for a revolutionary workers state, is and must remain proletarian democracy as set forth in 'State and Revolution.' Nationalized property is the norm for the degeneration of the revolution, the norm that tells us that despite Stalinist totalitarianism the major historical conquest of the October Revolution continues to exist and therefore the state remains a workers state, bureaucratically degenerated.

"In stating that Cuba became a workers state with the nationalization of industry in August-October 1960, the draft theses make the mistake of mechanically applying the criterion for the degeneration of the revolution to a revolution still in its ascending phase. This, to be sure, is a very easy mistake to make -- why, after all, should we have much more rigorous standards for Cuba than for China, say, or Albania?"

Two things leap out. (1) If the Stalinists had been thrust into power in Cuba, Comrade Mage, making obeisance to the label "deformed," would be forced, if he went by his criteria, to recognize Cuba as a workers state. This is the Marcyite position: Stalinism in power = a workers state. (2) Both Comrade Wohlforth and Comrade Mage, by attempting to use different criteria in Cuba from those used in the other workers states, compel us to re-examine our previous positions.\* The reason for this is that the Cuban leadership did not find their ideas in a patch of royal palms. They drew from the world in which Cuba exists. They themselves state their awareness of the example of those "parts of Asia" known as China and Indochina. If we are using the wrong criteria in Cuba then we must ascertain whether they were not wrong for related parts of the world where similar phenomena occurred.

The minority comrades themselves in their own way recognize the intimate connection between Cuba and the other workers states when they argue: "Look how long it took the SWP to recognize China as a workers state. Surely we can afford to wait similarly in the case of Cuba."

The delay was not felt at the time as a virtue. It was occasioned in part by precisely the same consideration that Comrade Mage raises in the case of Cuba. Is it correct to use the same criteria for an "ascending" revolution as one in decline? Isn't there a qualitative difference? If we recognize China as a workers state doesn't that "destroy the whole theoretical system of Trotskyism"? It is an amazing fact -- in Cuba, some of the comrades are in reality feeling for the first time the impact of China. This seems particularly true of those in Britain who are looking aghast at the Cuban revolution.

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\*At the opening of the discussion in the New York Local, I observed in passing that this would occur if the discussion went deep enough. Other comrades of the majority made the same forecast. Evidently mis-hearing what I said, Comrade Martha Curti wrote in "Stalinism and the Cuban Revolution" that "Comrade Hansen said that in the course of the discussion now unfolding it would be necessary for the party to reassess its whole attitude toward China, Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union itself. Let us hope that this reassessment will lead to a reaffirmation of the present position of the SWP as put forth in the 1953 plenum resolution, 'Against Pabloist Revisionism'. . . ." This would not be worth mentioning were it not that some of the comrades in Britain took the report, along with its somewhat dim hope about my getting straightened out on Pabloism, as accurate.



## Why We Went Slow

If ever there was a revolution that called for the category of "ascending" it was the Chinese. A quarter of the human race participated in it. The element of direct Russian participation, which loomed large in Eastern Europe, was relatively minor in China. It involved turning over captured arms to the Chinese armies. True, Russian forces were in occupation in Northeast China but they did not oversee an upset in property relations as they did in Eastern Europe. Instead they carted off a good deal of equipment, including entire factories, as was the case in the first stage in the occupation of Eastern Europe. An indication of the difference in the setting was the ultimate withdrawal of Russian forces from China, something that has not yet occurred in Eastern Europe. The scope of the forces, the depth of the revolution, its relative independence -- all were in striking contrast to Eastern Europe. It was completely clear to us at the time that so far as "rise" or "decline" was concerned, the Chinese Revolution came much closer to the 1917 upheaval in Czarist Russia than it did to the overturn in Eastern Europe.

While defending this revolution to the best of our ability and resources inside the United States, we watched its development on the Chinese mainland with the most absorbed attention. The character of the Mao leadership was no mystery -- petty-bourgeois, Stalinist variety. The formation of a coalition government with the bourgeois-democratic elements came as no surprise. The proclamations promising to preserve capitalist property relations were not unexpected. Neither the promulgation of the "four-bloc" theory nor the overtures toward American imperialism astounded anyone.

Then Truman took a hand. He not only spurned the overtures, he plunged the United States into Korea and American troops went up to the Yalu. Truman ordered a tight economic and diplomatic blockade and stationed the Seventh Fleet in the Formosa Strait.

The People's Republic of China responded with counterblows. These included not only military measures, but the toppling of capitalist economic relations in China. The petty-bourgeois government power set up a qualitatively different state structure based on the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the institution of planned economy.

Did we automatically slap a label on that? We are not fetishists about nomenclature but we hesitated. This petty-bourgeois government had come to power at the head of an insurgent peasantry through the medium of peasant armies that surrounded the cities and took them like fortresses. Neither the working class nor a revolutionary-socialist party stood at the head of the revolution. It was an ascending revolution, not one in decline. It was bound to have immense repercussions, not only indirectly by altering the world relation of forces, but directly as an example. By labeling this a workers state not only were we faced with the problem of seeing how it fit in with Trotskyist theory, we were faced with the problem of whether it might not be repeated to one degree or another.

But not to call it a workers state offered no satisfying solution. If we left the label "capitalist" on it, we had to admit that it was certainly a faded and badly tattered bit of paper. It left us with the question whether or not this type of capitalist state was an advance over the old type and whether or not we would defend it against all efforts to replace it with the old type. We did not have that much concern over retaining a label. We decided that it was better to recognize the reality and call it a workers state. To indicate that it was dominated by Stalinists, we used the same qualification as in Eastern Europe, "deformed." This was not a too satisfactory adjective but no one came up with a better one. Whatever credit is to be granted for first using it goes, I think, to Pablo although he was not the first to designate the Eastern European countries as workers states.

And how was such a turn in history to be accounted for? By the international setting in which the Chinese Revolution occurred -- the decline of world capitalism, the victory of the Soviet Union in World War II, its influence over the Chinese leadership, and the blows dealt by American imperialism which, by arousing counterblows, forced through the far-reaching changes.

Having taken our time on China, any need for delay in the case of Cuba was eliminated. The main problem was already solved. If the great big pill of China tasted bitter to anyone, Cuba should have proved a welcome chaser. It not only confirmed our analysis of China, but Cuba contrasted most favorably in many respects, not least of all in the sincerity, honesty and humanism of the Castro leadership. Despite the strong centralism of its underground organization and its extreme reliance on the will of a single leader, its innate tendency has been demonstrably democratic.

The effort of Comrades Wohlforth and Mage to save their position in Cuba by breaking its continuity with the postwar revolutions elsewhere and by forcing an unbridgeable gap between a "rising" and a "declining" revolution does not even hold in the case of Eastern Europe. As we discovered in analyzing Yugoslavia closely, a revolutionary movement existed. A revolution occurred. Peasant forces, mainly guerrillas, were very prominent, and the leadership was petty-bourgeois, again of the Stalinist variety although with sufficient difference -- perhaps due to the strength of the revolution itself -- to avoid the fate of Rajk and the other victims of Stalin and to strike an independent course when Moscow attempted a crackdown.

Even in the bureaucratically managed overturns in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, etc., the revolutionary element, although highly distorted by the Kremlin's direct control, could be traced.

For that matter the smashing of the cordon sanitaire in Eastern Europe was never regarded by us as a mere extension of the counterrevolutionary Soviet bureaucracy. The extension also brought with it Soviet property forms. Their extension constituted not a decline but a rise in the revolution both in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union.

In all these cases, the criteria that guided us was (1) the smashing of bourgeois property relations, (2) the nationalization of economy, (3) the establishment of a monopoly of foreign trade, (4) the establishment of planned economy, (5) the establishment of a state committed to the preservation of these gains.

Although the minority persistently leave out the first criterion in discussing this question, I rather think that they will give up trying to saddle the majority with the simplistic position of standing on nationalizations alone as the decisive criterion for a workers state and grant that the smashing of bourgeois property relations is the primary criterion in determining the character of the state in every instance.

But this combination was also decisive in the Bolshevik Revolution in determining the character of the state. It was contained in the program of the Bolsheviks and if Russia was called a workers state in 1917 it was because everyone knew that the contradiction between the government power and the capitalist state it took over would be resolved by the establishment of a new state structure conforming to the Bolshevik program. Let us not fail to observe, however, that the promissory note did not in itself wipe out the contradiction. This was only resolved in life itself as Trotsky was to point out when he came to study the contradiction between the petty-bourgeois Stalinist power and the workers state it rested on.

### Back to Cuba

What was it that Comrade Mage said? "Thus we have two norms, and the distinction between them should be kept clear. One applies to the victory of the socialist revolution, the other to its degeneration or extension in distorted form." Note what happens now under this artificial double standard: "Our primary norm, the norm for a revolutionary workers state, is and must remain proletarian democracy as set forth in 'State and Revolution.' Nationalized property is the norm for the degeneration of the revolution . . ." (That emphasis is Comrade Mage's.) All our analyses of China, Yugoslavia and the rest of Eastern Europe are held useless in the case of Cuba. All Trotsky's contributions in connection with the degenerated workers state, the great contributions that made possible our analyses in the postwar revolutionary period are likewise held useless. The board is wiped clean.

That's not all. Our theoreticians have us setting up "norms" for a socialist revolution in degeneration or extension. What we have actually done in Trotskyist analysis up to now, however, is to ascertain what socialist-type institutions were detectable in the degeneration or extension of a socialist revolution. (To call them "workers states," we have demanded more than nationalized property, as I have indicated above.) And these institutions are not different in principle from those of a socialist revolution in its rise. They are less or more healthy or strong, but not different in principle.\*

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\*Lest some comrade of the minority mis-hear me, let me add that I agree that "the norm of a revolutionary Meaning healthy, I take it, workers state, is and must remain proletarian democracy."

As an exercise in the practical application of theory, let's go to Cuba and try out the simplistic norm which the minority leaders insist upon, leaving aside all we have learned in analyzing the other workers states. A quick check reveals no workers councils in Cuba, in fact no institutionalized forms at all of workers democracy. Therefore, in accordance with this method of analysis, we are forced to conclude that no workers state exists in Cuba.

It didn't take us long, did it? Short, sweet, and not very wordy. No dangers either. No danger of conceding to Pabloism, or Kautskyism, or Stalinism or bourgeois nationalism. Not much need to study either. Just bone up on the text of State and Revolution, a short pamphlet, and you've got it. And not much need to follow events closely. They took over a couple of billion dollars of capitalist property? So what? They didn't set up Soviets. Let that August 17 reply to Hansen stand. And Comrade Robertson, giving the comrades of the New York Local the benefit of his familiarity with obscure texts, adds: The stuff about a workers and farmers government is "irrelevant" -- a misapplication of some weird discussion or other at the Fourth Congress way back when in 1922. . .

Unfortunately for this peaceful world of the doctrinaire, Cuba still exists -- and only ninety miles from Florida. Tell us, please, do bourgeois property relations still exist in the key sectors of Cuban economy? Yes or no? Have the property holdings of the big capitalists and landlords been nationalized? Yes or no? Has a monopoly of foreign trade been established? Yes or no? Has planned economy been instituted? Yes or no?

We shouldn't bother you with questions like this about the real world of today? Why not? Can't you find something on them in at least a footnote in the text of State and Revolution?

And what about the Revolutionary Government in Cuba deciding after considerable delay that the revolution is socialist in character? Does this have no meaning? No connection with the tremendous revolutionary changes in Cuba? No connection with the other workers states? No relation to the increasing number of articles about Marxism and socialism, about the achievements of China and the Soviet Union appearing in the Cuban press?

Please, comrades, tell us what we are to think of all this, what we are to say about it to the rest of the world, how we are to answer the charge of Wall Street that Cuba has gone Communist, of other radicals that it has gone Stalinist, of the belief of the leaders of the Cuban revolution that it has gone socialist? Above all, tell us where we may find the criteria that will enable us to deal with this strange phenomena unprovided for in the text of State and Revolution.

We have not yet finished. If workers councils were set up -- and we know this is possible even where a relatively strong capitalist state exists -- what program would you suggest that they carry out to establish a workers state? Smash the capitalist army and police? Already done. Nationalize the holdings of the big capitalists and landlords? Already done. Set up a monopoly of

foreign trade? Already done. Establish a planned economy? Already done. We know there are tremendous political tasks for workers councils in Cuba, but just what would you propose they do on these social and economic questions? When the workers councils appear, how do you propose to explain that the key tasks they would normally assume in establishing a workers state were performed before they appeared? How explain this inversion of sequence?

Of course there is an alternative. You may hold that since a discussion of such unheard of things is not to be found in the text of State and Revolution, the doctrine gives us no choice but to conclude that the tasks normally assumed by workers councils have all been carried out by petty-bourgeois democrats on the basis of a capitalist state. But if this is so, shouldn't we write Castro and tell him he is wrong in calling the Cuban revolution "socialist"? Perhaps we should add a P.S. admonishing him for light-mindedness and undue haste in such matters, a particularly reprehensible weakness when it can all be done under a capitalist label.

### Can You Compare Cuba?

At this point let me consider one of the most forceful arguments advanced by Comrade Mage in behalf of his neither-here-nor-there state. "Is the idea of a 'transitional state' something hitherto unheard of in history and Marxist theory?" he asks. "Not as far as our movement is concerned, at any rate, even if we haven't specifically used the term. We have adopted the position that China became a workers state sometime between 1951 and 1953. But the Chinese state was definitively established in 1949, and had in essence existed for 18 years before then. What was the Chinese state before it became a workers state, if not a transitional state? For that matter all participants in the present discussion on Cuba use this category, at least implicitly. The Draft Theses place the origin of the Cuban workers state in August-October 1960. Other comrades prefer the date of October 1959. But the violent revolution that established the Cuban state was victorious in January 1959. Unless one maintains the completely anti-Leninist position that what was established in Cuba, China, and Eastern Europe were capitalist states which were converted into workers states by gradual reforms, one must recognize that they were transitional states, at least for a certain time." ("The Nature of the State in Cuba.")

Has Comrade Mage forgotten? Only three pages previously in the same article he advanced the powerful argument that the Trotskyist movement has "two norms," one for a revolution in degeneration or extension and the other for an "ascending" revolution. He insisted that "the distinction between them should be kept clear." By not doing this, "the draft theses make the mistake of mechanically applying. . . ." Remember? It is instructive to see how mechanical Comrade Mage's two-norm machine proves to be. In order to try to maintain his case about a "transitional state" he finds himself compelled to illustrate what he means in Cuba by turning to China and Eastern Europe.

Thus he himself joins us in demonstrating that the mechanism of "two norms" doesn't work. Instead of coming under a qualitatively different set of criteria, making it impossible to compare Cuba with the other workers states, Cuba can be understood only by using the same criteria. But if the case of Cuba is comparable to the cases of China and Eastern Europe, as Comrade Mage surely must agree at this point since he compares them, he has no alternative but to conclude that Cuba, like the states in those areas, is a workers state. By attempting to illustrate what he means by his "transitional state," he proves that his basic methodological approach, his artificial division of criteria into two sets, is untenable.

However, let us consider the comparison made by Comrade Mage still further so as to explore at least tentatively as many of the relevant points raised by him as possible. "We have adopted the position that China became a workers state sometime between 1951 and 1953. But the Chinese state was definitively established in 1949, and had in essence existed for 18 years before then. What was the Chinese state before it became a workers state, if not a transitional state?" To make the analogy accurate, let's put these statements in a setting of royal palms and malanga fields. "We have adopted the position that Cuba became a workers state sometime between August and October 1960. But the Cuban state was definitively established January 1, 1959 and had in essence existed three years before then. What was the Cuban state before it became a workers state, if not a transitional state?"

In their basic document, dated August 17, 1960, Comrades Mage, Wohlforth and Robertson told us that the "Cuban state is a developing state, scarcely more than a year old. . . ." Now the age has been abruptly changed and we discover that this prodigious infant was born in December 1956 when twelve men unfurled the flag of revolt on the Sierra Maestra.

All right, it's Comrade Mage's argument by analogy. By "transitional state" in Cuba, he means, obviously, a state that included both the capitalist state headed by Fulgencio Batista and the whatchumacallit state on the Sierra Maestra headed by Fidel Castro. In brief, his "transitional state" is broad enough to include a civil war of several years duration between a dictator and a popular political force. It is also broad enough to cover the downfall of the dictator, the smashing of his army and police and the toppling of the property relations which the dictator was defending. Since this "transitional state" still exists today in 1961, according to Comrade Mage, it is not only five years old but has maybe years to go yet. God knows what new developments it is broad enough to cover.

What Comrade Mage has done here is commit the methodological error of dissolving the concrete into the abstract. His "transitional state" has become a meaningless label. The confusion all this engenders is not indescribable but I don't think I care to meet the challenge. Among other things dual power is reduced to a hash along with governments and states. However, from the viewpoint of methodology it is a rather elegant error and I have marked

it for inclusion in a textbook I hope eventually to write, Logic and How to Avoid It.

One final observation: Comrade Mage asked us, "Is the idea of a 'transitional state' something hitherto unheard of in history and Marxist theory?" The correct answer is, "No, it is not something hitherto unheard of in history and Marxist theory. Still more it is not just an idea. We have been living with a real one for more than four decades and a series of them have appeared since the end of World War II."

What label do we put on such a state to indicate that it has a definite class character as well as a condition of flux? "Workers state." We are so well aware of its transitional character that we noted it in the "Draft Theses." If you will read Thesis No. 10 carefully, you will observe that it says, "Cuba entered the transitional phase of a workers state. . . ."

Do you like that word "transitional"? Do you insist on it? Then you can vote for the "Draft Theses" with a perfectly easy conscience.

#### The Politics of the Two Positions

In his article "The Nature of the State in Cuba," Comrade Mage lists what he considers to be the seven "basic contradictions determining the shape that the Cuban revolution has taken, the concrete forms in which we see it today. Analyzing these during the discussion in the New York Local, Comrade Rosemary Stone made some cogent criticisms.

Comrade Mage, she pointed out, does not weight the two sides of the various contradictions, indicating which is the more decisive. Still worse, he gives no indication of the development of the contradictions, their movement in one direction or the other. Thus, in reading "The Nature of the State in Cuba," we are left in the dark as to the general trend. This criticism is, in my opinion, completely valid. Comrade Mage's theoretical position collapses at the first touch of dialectical logic. Trying to maintain that the Cuban state is like a weathervane, he cannot proceed with the contradictions he lists and follow their development in the Cuban reality.

Comrade Mage does not maintain that his list is exhaustive but he does believe it "sets forth at least the most essential points on which our analysis of the Cuban state should be based." It is with some surprise, consequently, that we note he does not include as an essential point the contradiction between the state and the government in Cuba. Is it because such a contradiction does not exist? But obviously the Castro leadership found itself in contradiction with Batista's army and police. It smashed them. In coalition with the representatives of the former bourgeois-democratic parties, it found itself in contradiction with a state structure that resisted the agrarian and urban reforms. A major step was to bring the coalition to an end. The Castro government, which succeeded the coalition, continued making deep inroads in the state

structure. Between ousters and defections, the personnel of the civil service, of the foreign service, of the judiciary was altered beyond recognition. The old commitment of the state to preserve bourgeois private property was shattered through a series of steps: "intervention" (a form of control) of ranches, businesses and industries; nationalizations and outright expropriations; workers management. The emerging new state rested on the unions, co-operatives, INRA, and finally became committed to putting up the structure of planned economy. To repress the old ruling classes and defend the new property relations it relied on the Rebel Army; the Revolutionary Police; the militia; G-2, the secret service; and a renovated judiciary.

It was in relation to the development of this contradiction that all political currents, whatever their views, took their primary positions. Necessarily so because in this contradiction was expressed the heart of the revolution -- property relations and political power.

The fact that the minority could overlook this contradiction tells us many things about their politics; above all, their inadequacy in orienting themselves in the Cuban reality.

The majority began by following the events with the utmost attention, gathering facts from all the sources at our disposal, including following at least one of the major Havana dailies obtainable by airmail in New York. We thus assembled the major facts now at the disposal of both sides in the internal dispute in the party. The minority, perhaps because they are somewhat disdainful of "empiricism," contributed little in this.

At first, basing ourselves on declarations by the revolutionary leadership about maintaining private property, we followed a quite critical approach, although we hailed the Cuban revolution with great enthusiasm. As it became clear that the Castro tendency was prepared to follow through to the end, no matter how this disrupted their previous ideology, we adopted a more and more friendly attitude. There was nothing particularly noteworthy about this shift on our part; it was nothing but the application of the ABC's of politics, particularly as we have learned them in the school of Trotsky. In the rich experience of the Socialist Workers party, it has been applied again and again in relation to tendencies moving in a radical direction.

The political approach of the minority was quite different. During the first stages when we were judging Castro in the light of his declarations about private property, they remained silent. We were doing all right, apparently. But as the revolutionary forces began differentiating out and Castro took the road toward extreme radicalization of the revolution, the minority started to voice doubts, hesitations and criticisms of the tactics being followed by the party leadership.

This was their democratic right, of course. We do not dispute that. In fact we welcome criticisms and discussion on this as all other questions involving the life of the party. But a critic must



be prepared to face criticism of his criticisms. Are they right or are they wrong?

In this case the criticisms were dead wrong. The political course of the majority was to accept the Cuban revolution as it is, plunge in fully and completely, attempt to form relations with the revolutionaries and cement those relations if possible. The minority line, if adopted, would have kept us at arm's length from the Cuban revolutionaries and by flinging doctrines and texts at them without regard for tactical considerations, we would have driven a wedge deeper and deeper between us and the revolution as it was actually developing. The Socialist Labor party followed a doctrinaire course like that. The results were disastrous -- for the SLP.

A striking example of Comrade Wohlforth's doctrinaire approach is available in his article, "In Defense of Proletarian Democracy." As he sees it, "in the three and a half months" since the National Committee approved the general line of the "Draft Theses," the Militant has "not once called for the deepening of the revolution through the establishment of 'the forms of democratic proletarian rule.' I want the comrades to explain why this decision of the party has not been carried out." He continues with a passionate defense of proletarian democracy and ends up: "The failure of the Militant to campaign for proletarian democracy in Cuba is a criminal act of sabotage against this revolution -- and it will be so recorded in the history of our movement."

Have a glass of ice water, Comrade Wohlforth. What was happening in the past "three and a half months"? Nothing less than a counterrevolutionary invasion of Cuba. By whom? The most colossal military power on earth, the most colossal the world has ever seen. And against a tiny country it could crush with a twist of the thumb. What was the main cry of the counterrevolution? The imperative need for democracy in Cuba. And what was the main need of the defense? Maximum centralism. That military giant needed the sensation of having put his thumb on a tack.

Had the Militant opened a "campaign" for proletarian democracy at that precise time it would not only have made it difficult for us to differentiate our position from that of the counterrevolution, it would have facilitated the slanderous charge that we were acting as a "left cover" for the counterrevolution; and, as a matter of fact, in view of the need for centralism in facing the attack, the Cuban workers would have had good cause to consider such a campaign at that precise time as a "criminal act of sabotage against this revolution." They would have been doubly convinced of this, I am afraid, on reading the translations of the slogans which Comrade Wohlforth insists we should have campaigned for in New York: No "uncritical apologia." "In the present fluid situation the middle-class leadership of the Revolution presents the greatest internal danger to the advance of the revolution." "Supplant the present petty-bourgeois leadership with a true working-class leadership." "Prepare for the next revolutionary wave." "Now is precisely the time to struggle for workers power."

Our task was to demonstrate our capacity, a genuine capacity, to participate smoothly in a centralized defense. In the Cuban revolution, military necessity for the time being took precedence over all other considerations. To anyone inclined to mis-hear, the word was "precedence."

That is the way we have sought to proceed from the beginning -- to seek in Cuban events themselves the points where our program, our politics, our methods are applicable and understandable; and to show that we are willing to learn from others and to act in concert in a disciplined way. We considered it better to say nothing when the facts were not clear or the time not right than to make the gross error of injecting doctrinaire slogans or making doctrinaire explanations.

For some comrades this amounts to intolerable restraint. After all, what did they buy a typewriter for and why did they train themselves in oratory? They are like badly trained medical students who want to brush the surgeon aside during a delicate and critical operation. "Let me at that patient. Nurse, forceps. . . scalpel. . . No, make that a bread knife."

That Comrade Wohlforth can even entertain the line of thought he argues for demonstrates lack of touch with political realities. That he could display some emotion over the party's refusal to follow such a suicidal course indicates a certain responsiveness to the pressure of the Social Democracy.

No, I am not giving way to the pressure to use an epithet. Read the following footnote by Comrade Wohlforth in his article "On the Revolutionary Party":

"It is sad to see the anti-Marxist Draper so effectively destroy with Marxist methodology the arguments of the purported Marxists Huberman and Sweezy and to do so in the interests of imperialism. What makes it even sadder is that so many of our comrades are so enamored with Huberman and Sweezy. For instance, Draper notes Castro's Electrical Workers speech in which he urged the workers to take political power. He then queries as to why it was necessary for Castro to urge the workers to take power if Cuba was already a workers state? The majority comrades could do well to think that one over. Interested comrades should read this latest Draper article which can be found in the March Encounter or the March 21 New Leader under the title 'Castro's Cuba -- A Revolution Betrayed?'"

What is sad is that Comrade Wohlforth thought Draper scored a point. Apparently he accepted Draper's interpretation without bothering to check the text of Castro's speech. But that speech excludes Draper's anti-Marxist interpretation. Castro was explaining to a group of backward workers that they should subordinate immediate material interests which could be improved only at the expense of lower-paid fellow workers. He sought to give them a broad vision and an understanding of the meaning of and need for workers power. And he cited as a model example of this understanding the members of Cuba's most powerful working-class organization,

the Sugar Workers union. Comrade Wohlforth could do well to think that one over.

Let me add again to avoid any mis-hearing: I do not think that Comrade Wohlforth is "betraying" by displaying a bit of softness toward Draper. He just didn't think. So far as Comrade Wohlforth thinks things through I am sure he seeks a policy of unyielding opposition to the Social Democracy.

We come to the clamor about the leadership of the SWP buckling to "Pabloism," "Kautskyism," "Stalinism," and "bourgeois nationalism."

Only once since 1935 have charges so fantastically at variance from reality been heard in the party. This was during the recent regroupment period. An Oehlerite rejoined after some twenty-three years brooding on the side lines. For several months he maintained a tactful silence. Then as the Marcyites began orating on the "implications" of our regroupment policy, he pulled the Oehlerite banner out of his underwear and unfurled it on high. "Cannon is betraying. Cannon has given up the Leninist concept of building an independent combat party." It was a historic occasion that will long be remembered by the New York Local. This political coelacanth thereupon joined with the Marcyites in a bit of Oehlerite action to save the concept of the party; namely, walking out, and is now back again brooding on the side lines. I suppose he undertook all this effort to prove that revolutionary politics is not without its comic relief.

As for debating these wild accusations of the minority, I move instead that they be recorded in history as nonsense. Do I hear a second?

### Danger Signals in Trent Hutter

Let me turn now to a different variant of opposition to the majority line.

Comrade Trent Hutter's contribution to the discussion, "Danger Signals in Cuba," has aroused concern among those who know him. For some years he has faithfully sought by precept and example to teach the American Trotskyists a Marxist appreciation of bourgeois culture and, in passing, the need for amiability and good manners toward opponents, no matter what their failings. To this not small chore he has now added the aim of instructing them on the need to defend proletarian democracy. Can one man really hope to carry two burdens of such weight? Particularly if in assuming this new task he finds himself no longer able to set an example in the first?

There is not a milligram of independent or original thought in Comrade Hutter's arguments. Here is a typical example: "And I wonder whether Fidel or Che will take the time to study the classics of Marxism. I am not under the impression that they will do so. They are no theoreticians. Their theoretical thinking is confused. And Fidel's willingness to learn has gradually been replaced by megalomania. A man who regularly engages in three- and four-hour speeches is not a man who will patiently listen and study."

This judgment reveals a good deal more about Comrade Hutter's state of mind than it does Castro's. Whoever has patiently listened to or read Castro's speeches and studied their role in the Cuban revolution will find anything in them but megalomania (or "ranting and raving" as the bourgeois commentators put it). Each speech serves a definite political purpose connected always with mobilizing support for the defense or deepening of the revolution. Each point in each speech is logically placed. Every explanation and every illustration is admirably chosen to drive the points home. The appeal is to the best emotions, not the worst, and the predominant relation between the speaker and audience is intellectual.

Among other things, the role of Castro's speeches is of enormous interest for what it reveals of the power of a new medium of communication in a revolution -- television. This is part of the explanation for Castro's ability to concentrate such great political weight in so few organized forces. Through the TV screen, the revolution's most attractive and able spokesman can step personally into homes throughout Cuba whenever necessary to explain the latest developments, where they fit in with the aims of the revolution, and what must be done about them. Castro does this in a way that stirs the most illiterate and backward, awakening them to political consciousness and bringing them into participation in the great world issues of our time. That's why even grandmothers in Cuba, devoutly religious homebodies all these years, suddenly display clear comprehension of the role of American imperialism in the economies of Latin America and voice decided opinions as to what should be done about it. Hutter, searching in his own way to understand the significance of all this, and not to be left behind by the grandmothers, gives us his decision -- the man is off his rocker. . . .

Let us take another argument: that the "giant mass meetings and four-hour television speeches" do not constitute workers democracy. Instead of explaining the very useful role that the speeches and rallies do play, and continuing from there to indicate their relation to the Trotskyist norms of proletarian democracy, Comrade Hutter equates them with something qualitatively different. "It corresponds," he tells us, "to the classical methods of demagogic dictatorships." According to him, "these propaganda tactics were used by Dr. Goebbels in his speech at the Berlin Sports Palace after Stalingrad to rekindle German morale. . . ." Comrade Hutter recognizes that the great majority of the Cuban people support Castro. "That does not mean his regime is democratic." And then he informs us that "Hitler also used the argument: 'What regime could be more democratic than mine, since the overwhelming majority of the German people are behind me?'"

What a cesspool Comrade Hutter finds himself in. The argument is lifted with little change from such "theoreticians" as Theodore Draper and the authors of the State Department White Paper on Cuba. It is based on pure sophistry. The fascist Hitler, who sought to preserve capitalism, crush the first workers state and obliterate everything even vaguely associated with socialism, used mass rallies and claimed he had majority support. The revolutionist Castro, who

led the Cuban workers and peasants in overthrowing capitalism and founding a workers state and who has declared for the socialist revolution, uses mass rallies and claims he has majority support. Therefore, Castro = Hitler. What a truly vile slander! What could have brought Trent Hutter to such a state of mind that it becomes necessary to remind him that a reciprocal relationship exists between ends and means and that it is logically impermissible to equate means without consideration of the ends they serve?

"The case of Commander William Morgan, the handling of 'revolutionary justice' in Cuba clearly are symptoms of beginning degeneration," Comrade Hutter affirms, "and I refuse to go along with the Militant's policy of either endorsing unreservedly the Castro propaganda line or refraining from comment. The Militant reads on the Cuban question like a New York edition of *Revolucion*." Of everything he finds bad in the Cuban revolution, and that's quite a bit, the fate of Morgan disturbs Comrade Hutter the most. "If there still existed doubt as to the Castro regime's moving toward Stalinism, the frame-up trial and execution of Commander William Morgan ought to have dispelled it. For a frame-up trial it was: Not a shred of convincing evidence was offered by the prosecution."

Perhaps Comrade Hutter is right in this. However, he is not really sure. "It is very probable that Morgan never supplied anti-Castro rebels with arms or anything else." In addition to the "very probable," Comrade Hutter argues that Morgan could scarcely have been so unrealistic as to believe he could succeed at helping the counterrevolutionaries. Moreover, "why should he have wished to help overthrow a regime in which he had so big a stake?"

This scarcely constitutes evidence of a frame-up. The Militant -- in my opinion at least -- could not take the responsibility of asserting on the basis of such probabilities and deductions that a frame-up had occurred. On the other hand, it is true that the press accounts of the trial did not give a clear picture of the evidence on which the court's verdict was based and Morgan did assert his innocence to the very end.

If this was a case of grave injustice, we should of course expose it. But before leaping to premature conclusions about the Morgan case or making a sweeping judgment about Cuban justice in general and what it might have to do with Stalinism, we should be clear about Morgan's background and the political circumstances in which the execution occurred, neither of which is mentioned by Comrade Hutter.

Morgan was an adventurer, a former paratrooper. He is said to have joined in the fight against Batista out of motives of revenge over the death of a friend. He did not fight in the Sierra Maestra with the forces of Fidel Castro but with one of the small bands in the Escambray Mountains. His social consciousness went as far as unionism but in politics he was primarily anti-Communist -- not anti-Stalinist but anti-Communist. In belief he was a devout Catholic. The Escambray Front did not play a big role in the struggle against Batista; in fact it proved troublesome due to its lack of social consciousness, as Che Guevara has explained. When

the counterrevolution sought to establish guerrilla forces inside Cuba around July 1960, the Central Intelligence Agency selected the Escambray Mountains as the main base of operations.

Did Morgan with his rabid anti-Communist bias and his close relationship with Catholic priests, who constitute part of the counterrevolution in Cuba, see that he had such a big stake in the regime that he deliberately refused to help the counterrevolutionaries? I would not condemn him without tangible evidence; yet it seems to me hazardous at the very least to give a person of such doubtful views a vote of confidence on the clarity of his vision.

With the establishment of the Escambray base of operations in the countryside, the CIA also began supplying counterrevolutionaries with explosives and incendiary mechanisms to be used in the big cities. By November popular anger was so high over the arson, bombings and indiscriminate killings that the government, which had abolished the death penalty, felt forced to reinstitute it. The organization of an effective secret police -- about which Comrade Hutter displays such indignation and alarm -- was another consequence of the terrorism waged under Washington's auspices.

Whether innocently or otherwise, Morgan fell victim in these developments. Comrade Hutter concludes that this is evidence of the degeneration of the Cuban revolution and its succumbing to Stalinism. Whatever gains Stalinist elements may have made temporarily, the real guilt lies with American imperialism. It is sad that Trent Hutter displays a certain blindness in this direction.

What is really eating Comrade Hutter? Is he developing unhappy doubts? Talking about the danger of bureaucratization in Cuba, he declares: "There are other forms of corruption than material corruption, and it is above all those other forms that I am thinking at this moment." He then refers cryptically to Lord Acton's aphorism: "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." This is followed by a dark thought: "-- and I am afraid that Fidel, Paul and Che Guevara are becoming somewhat power-drunk."

Comrade Hutter falls prey to such gnawing suspicions while the youthful leaders of the Cuban revolution are moving heaven and earth to prepare their country for an attack plotted by imperialist rulers who hold the most absolute power on earth. (By ironic coincidence, "Danger Signals in Cuba" is dated April 17, the day of the invasion.) Lord Acton, who was a political adviser of Prime Minister Gladstone, undoubtedly had an unusual opportunity to observe tendencies that led him to make his famous comment about the power of power. But how much is there to it from the Marxist point of view, which relates the exercise of power to social and economic forces? Or from the psychoanalytical point of view which finds deeper sources for the corruption of the human mind than the wielding of power? Perhaps Comrade Hutter will choose to enlighten us further.

It is possible that something different is involved. This may be alluded to in the following remarks: "When I wrote for our magazine an article on Puerto Rico's economic, social and political

situation based on personal experience and a lot of research, it was rejected because it did not fit into the preconceived patterns of those who prefer to believe Revolution rather than a comrade who, after all, can speak of Puerto Rico with a certain amount of authority, knowing that island probably a little better than our Cuba specialists know Cuba. Unfortunately, the irrefutable facts I told about Puerto Rico displeased some comrades: The facts did not fit into their mental image based on a situation that actually existed twenty or fifteen years ago. Nor did they fit into the Fidelista propaganda stories. Hence those comrades did not even care to discuss my article with me. It was simply buried."

Not buried. The first word was right -- rejected. Comrade Hutter's article was very disappointing. A Marxist analysis of Puerto Rico today would be extremely valuable, since the State Department is displaying the captive island as the alternative to revolutionary Cuba, and Luis Muñoz Marin is among the foremost in the pack baying at Castro. But Comrade Hutter sought to prove the alleged exceptionality of Puerto Rico. His warm appreciation of what has been accomplished under the puppet government of Muñoz Marin stands in perfect symmetry to his coolness toward the revolutionary example of Cuba under the socialist-minded government of Fidel Castro. It would have been a scandal, if not worse, to print such an article as a Trotskyist view. The editor, no matter how much he appreciated the contributions Comrade Hutter has made on other topics, had no choice in this case but to make the unpleasant decision of declining it as politically unacceptable.

Instead of reconsidering his position on Puerto Rico or presenting his view in the Discussion Bulletin for study by the membership or simply forgetting his venture into Caribbean politics, Comrade Hutter let it rankle. This is not a very auspicious sign.

Another inauspicious sign is Comrade Wohlforth's praise of this unfortunate article as "quite good." Hutter agrees that Cuba is a workers state. Wohlforth is in principle opposed to this view. Nevertheless, cutting across the disagreement in basic principle, he searches for common political ground. If the Cuban revolution were sufficiently degenerated; that is, had fallen under Stalinist control to the degree that Hutter believes it has, then Hutter could "make at least some sort of case for viewing Cuba as a deformed workers state." Wohlforth thinks Hutter "tends to exaggerate the degree of Stalinist influence"; therefore, in his view, Cuba is in healthier condition than Hutter maintains. So -- according to this tortured reasoning -- it isn't a workers state at all and Hutter and Wohlforth have a lot in common!

Since agreement on the question of principle is excluded, what makes Wohlforth think Hutter's article is "quite good"? What is the source of attraction? What does Wohlforth really have in common with Hutter? It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion: responsiveness to the bourgeois clamor for "democracy" in Cuba.

In October 1959?

It is with relief that I turn from Comrade Hutter's poorly conceived arguments to Comrade Bert Deck's discussion of the pro-

blem of dating the origin of the workers state in Cuba. (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 1-5.) Here we have the pleasure of working out a difference with a comrade who is in solid agreement on the need for a vigorously positive attitude toward the Cuban revolution.

The gist of Comrade Deck's position is that the formation of the militia marked the qualitative change making Cuba a workers state. I take it, although he is not explicit about this, that he is not utilizing by way of analogy our position on China where none of us took formation of a people's militia as the decisive point. Consequently, he must view the Cuban revolution as qualitatively different from the Chinese revolution; and, even more clearly, qualitatively different from the other workers states.

If this qualitative difference exists, why should October 1959 be taken as the date? Why not January 1, 1959, when the Rebel Army won its victory? The Rebel Army, constituting at that point the "bodies of armed men, a special repressive force," which is advanced by Comrade Deck as his criterion, was sufficient to oust Batista.

An even stronger case can be made for fixing the date as January 1, 1959, if to the criterion of "bodies of armed men" representing the people, is added the criterion -- crushing of the special repressive force of the capitalist class. As all of us are aware, both the army and the police representing the capitalist interests in Cuba were smashed long before October 1959.

The reason Comrade Deck does not take January 1, 1959, is that the revolution at that time lacked socialist consciousness. It was thus not qualitatively different from the Chinese revolution in that respect. The absence of socialist consciousness made it impossible to call Cuba a workers state on January 1, 1959, even though "bodies of armed men, a special repressive force" did exist then.

If we consider the "bodies of armed men" in the relation of means and ends, which is how they should be considered, it is even clearer how incorrect it would be to take January 1, 1959, as the decisive date. The Rebel Army at that point served three conscious ends, predominantly political in nature: (1) to topple Batista, (2) to prevent a Guatemala-type counterrevolution, (3) to defend the coalition government, which was committed to safeguarding private property (with redistribution of land and rectification of abuses in other fields). It remained to be seen how the deepening of the revolution would alter these aims. To take a different view would force us into such misjudgments as Comrade Deck's conclusion that a "terrible backsliding" occurred with the victory when the fact is that the victory, marking a certain level of development, made possible a surprisingly swift advance.\*

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\*The April 2, 1961, Bohemia quotes the following interesting observation by Fidel Castro on this point: "The revolution was not sectarian; if the revolution had been sectarian, it would never have put into the ranks of the government such gentlemen as Rufo López Fresquet, Miro' Cardona or Mr. Justo Carrillo and some others of



Once we are forced by the reality itself to reject January 1, 1959, as the point of qualitative change, we are compelled to await either the appearance of socialist consciousness or of economic institutions that in and of themselves are socialist in principle. Neither of these had appeared by October 1959. What did appear was a quantitative increase in the "bodies of armed men"; that is, the extension of the Rebel Army, so to speak, on a wider and more popular basis. The formation of militias was very important, a development which we warmly greeted, but in itself it was not qualitatively different from the "bodies of armed men" already existing in the Rebel Army and the Revolutionary Police.

To my way of thinking, this is sufficient to invalidate October 1959 as the date of qualitative change. I do not see that this conclusion can be escaped unless the quantitative increase of the "bodies of armed men" can be equated to a qualitative difference. This would make the mere quantitative difference equivalent to the appearance of socialist consciousness or of economic institutions that are socialist in principle. Does a solution exist along these lines? Comrade Frances James, seeking a theoretical foundation for Comrade Deck's position, offers an attempt in her article "The Question of Criteria and the Cuban Revolution":

"True," she writes, "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 Oct. 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."

This suggestion, if adopted, would certainly rescue Comrade Deck. You want to make it come out October 1959 in Cuba? It's simple. Change the criteria for that country.

Is that date that important? Why not change the criteria to make it come out January 1, 1959? It at least has the advantage of being an easier date to remember -- and to celebrate.

Comrade James' proposal really gives us something to ponder. By what criteria do you change the criteria? In other words, how

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that kind. We knew how those gentlemen thought; we knew they were men of plenty conservative mentality. But the fact is that the government itself of the republic, in the first days of the triumph, was not in the hands of the revolutionaries; the government itself of the republic was not in the hands of the men who had spent many years struggling and sacrificing; it was not in the hands of the men who had been in prisons and had fought in the mountains; it was not in the hands of the men who lit that revolutionary spark and knew how, even in the moments of greatest uncertainty and skepticism, to carry aloft the banner of the revolution, and with that the faith of the people, to bring them to the triumph."

do you tell when and where to use one set of criteria and when and where to use a different set?

It is plain that both Comrade Deck and Comrade James approached the criteria as a series of items, some of which can be put to use or left on the shelf, according to the occasion. But they leave us with no criteria whatsoever to determine the occasion. The error in methodology is precisely the same as that made by Comrades Mage and Wohlforth when they break the criteria into two sets of norms and arbitrarily assign one set to "ascending" revolutions and the other set to the extension of degenerated or deformed revolutions. The criteria, handled in this unscientific way, become disconnected, losing their own interrelations and therefore their reliability. This will become clearer, I hope, if we consider our criteria in their historical development.

State and Revolution, excellent as it is in bringing together the teachings of Marx and Engels as the foundation for everything that followed, does not contain the final word on how to determine the character of a state. It lacks the refinements introduced as a result of subsequent experience and subsequent development of Marxist theory. Written in August-September, 1917, it lacks in particular a consideration of what the Bolsheviks discovered in life after they came to power. It tells us nothing, for instance, about the experience of the Bolsheviks in facing the contradiction between government and state and resolving it. Not a word appears in it about the contradiction between government and state in the case of degeneration of workers power. We need not lament this limitation in Lenin's famous pamphlet. Trotsky brought the criteria presented in State and Revolution up to date as he followed the development of the first workers state. In fact everything Trotsky wrote in relation to the character of the workers state is built on the foundation of those teachings. Built on.

It was on the basis of this amplified and enriched body of theory that we were able, following World War II, to analyze the deformed workers states as they appeared and characterize them successfully. No doubt Comrade Mage and Comrade Wohlforth, as well as Comrade Deck and Comrade James, will grant that it would have been impossible to reach correct conclusions about the deformed workers states by simply using State and Revolution. We had to use the refinements of the criteria which had been developed by Trotsky for the Soviet Union.

We were on our own, of course, because this was new phenomena and Trotsky was no longer with us to offer guidance. Yugoslavia was the most difficult from the theoretical point of view because it had more that was new than the others. But Yugoslavia was only a foretaste of China. As we noted earlier, China presented much that was unexpected and completely new and the implications were far more sweeping. But by relying on the criteria as they had been refined in applying them to Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia, we succeeded in handling the case of China. Our success in the truly difficult case of China, let me repeat, enabled us to approach Cuba with relative ease. From the point of view of the historical development of the theory of the state, the greatest importance of

Cuba was the confirmation it offered of our analysis of China. Cuba proved that China like Yugoslavia was not an exception, not a freak case. Or, looked at from the level of methodology, China proved once again that there are no exceptions; the so-called exception signals the appearance of new phenomena that requires further refinement of already discovered basic laws.

At this point I see the alert finger of Comrade Wohlforth: "But you labeled China a 'deformed' workers state like Yugoslavia; and you didn't put that label on Cuba."

True. An accurate observation. But then we try not to make a fetish of labels.

Besides, Cuba has something new to offer. Something different from China, different from Yugoslavia, from Czechoslovakia, from Bulgaria and the Soviet Union. Stalinists do not head the Cuban revolution. They were bypassed. This newness and this difference require recognition. This is registered in a refinement in the qualification of the characterization "workers state."

This brings us back to the difference in results flowing from the difference in Comrade Deck's method and ours. Comrade Deck gets the date October 1959. We get August-October 1960. Perhaps more careful analysis would also reveal that Comrade Deck puts no (or exceedingly minute) qualification on the characterization "workers state" while we qualify it as "one lacking as yet the forms of democratic proletarian rule," meaning that while it is not "deformed" in the sense of having Stalinists in power, the state is not under the democratic control of the workers and peasants (but may develop such forms with relative ease).

A not unimportant additional difference flowing from this is that Comrade Deck, to find empirical confirmation for his way of determining that Cuba is a workers state, is compelled to make out that forms of proletarian democracy already exist in Cuba. This leads him to some idealization of the reality which in turn points to political difficulties. What does he propose that is qualitatively different from the forms he already sees in existence?

The majority position, on the other hand, is able to see a workers state in Cuba without the existence, as yet, of formal institutions embodying workers democracy. This is an accurate reflection of the reality. As a consequence our theoretical appraisal offers firm support for a Marxist political line in Cuba.

Comrade Deck, I am afraid, has to see more than actually exists in Cuba today and perhaps credit the revolutionary leadership with more revolutionary-socialist consciousness than it has yet exhibited. Objectivity requires us to note, I think, that the minority, despite their exaggeration, scored a telling point against Comrade Deck on this.

From the methodological viewpoint it is quite instructive to see how the same fundamental error in using criteria leads to symmetrically opposing positions under the influence of political

considerations. The negative attitude of Comrades Wohlforth, Mage and Robertson led them to underrate the consciousness of the Castro leadership and the amount of democracy in Cuba. The positive attitude of Comrades Deck and James led them to overrate both. The two attitudes, of course, are not politically equivalent. A negative attitude today is dangerous and could be suicidal. But the opposite position, if carried out logically, could be troublesome in the stage ahead.

The difference in dates seems minor -- a bit of hairsplitting -- but in one case it represents the application of an entire body of historically developed, interrelated criteria and in the other a reversion to the theory as it stood before October 1917.

The Cuban revolution, I submit, is occurring in the context of the world situation of today and under the influence not only of imperialism and the colonial revolution of today but of the other workers states of today. It is not possible to tear the Cuban revolution out of this context which has shaped it, attempt to measure it by a pre-October 1917 yardstick, and expect to come up with fully accurate results. To cope with the complexities of this ultramodern event with the utmost precision we need the theory of the state as developed in all its power by our movement.

May 25, 1961.

THE CHARACTER OF THE NEW CUBAN GOVERNMENT

The Cuban revolution has proved to be deep-going. Beginning with the simple political objective of overthrowing Batista's army-police dictatorship, it rapidly disclosed its tendency to revolutionize economic and social relations and to extend its influence throughout Latin America and beyond.

The main force opposing the logical development of the Cuban revolution is American imperialism. But the measures it has taken in attempting to stem the revolution and eventually suffocate it have had the opposite effect of spurring it forward.

The new Cuban government that took power in January 1959 has played a positive role up to now in the development of the revolution. First it secured its governing position by smashing the old armed forces and the police. It supplanted these with the rebel army, a new police largely recruited from the ranks of the revolutionary fighters, and later it set up a people's militia almost entirely proletarian and peasant in composition. It rapidly undertook a radical agrarian reform. This has two forms: (1) division of the land among the peasants on a limited private ownership basis (the land cannot be sold or mortgaged); (2) co-operatives closely tied to government planning. The emphasis has been on the side of the co-operatives. By last fall the government initiated planning of industry and control of foreign trade. A new stage was opened with the expropriation of land held by the sugar interests. Most recently, under the pressure of American imperialism, measures of expropriation have been extended to important foreign industrial holdings (principally American) and a virtual monopoly of foreign trade has been instituted.

A significant indication of the direction of movement of the Castro government is its tendency to establish friendly relations not only with the so-called "neutral" powers but with the Soviet bloc. This includes trade pacts that cut across the long-established trade pattern with the U.S. More important, however, is the tendency to emulate the planned economic structure of the Soviet countries.

The Castro government has proved that its responses to the mass revolutionary movement in Cuba and to the counterpressure from the U.S. are not simply passive. The new government has courageously defied American imperialism, resisting blandishments, threats and reprisals. On the domestic side, it has repeatedly mobilized the Cuban workers and peasants in political demonstrations, in taking over landlord and capitalist holdings, in disarming the forces of the old regime and in arming the people.

The direction of development on the political side has been demonstrated in the series of crises surmounted by the government since it took power. At first it put bourgeois democratic figures in key positions (finances, foreign trade, diplomacy, even the presidency). With each crisis induced by the interaction of imperialist and revolutionary pressures, these figures either turned against the government or were pushed out, being replaced by active participants in the preceding civil war, however youthful and inexperienced in their new duties.

The bourgeois outposts in such fields as the press, radio and TV have suffered a parallel liquidation. On the other hand, workers and peasant organizations, including political tendencies, have been granted freedom of expression on the one condition that they support the revolutionary measures taken by the new government.

The Castro leadership began in 1952-53 as a radical petty-bourgeois movement, but one that took its revolutionary language seriously. It organized and led an insurrection. In power it sought (a) to bring the various revolutionary tendencies together in a common front by giving them due representation in government offices and by opposing any witch-hunting, (b) to form a coalition with the remnants of the bourgeois-democratic movements that had survived the Batista dictatorship. The coalition, in which these elements were a minority unable to set policy, proved to be unstable. The defection of Miro Cardona a few weeks after being appointed ambassador to the United States epitomized the instability of the coalition at the same time that it appears to have marked its end.

The Castro leadership has shown awareness of its own origin and its own leftward evolution, including the stages through which it has developed. What is remarkable is its acceptance of this development and its repeated declarations to follow through to the end, "no matter what," and despite its own surprise at the turns that open up. The constantly emphasized concept of the Cuban revolution as an "example" for Latin America, as the first link in a new chain of revolutions in Latin America against Wall Street's domination, is especially to be noted as an indication of awareness that the leadership of the Cuban revolution faces great historic responsibilities.

The dynamic rather than static character of the Castro leadership, of extraordinary interest to the revolutionary-socialist movement, is undoubtedly ascribable in large part to the world setting in which the Cuban revolution occurs. It has the examples of the Soviet Union, China and Yugoslavia as well as the examples of colonial insurgency in a series of countries. These examples, plus the material aid and moral encouragement to be obtained from such sources, plus the feeling of participating in a world-wide revolutionary upsurge, have had a powerful effect on the outlook of the Castro leadership.

In addition, this leadership is close to the mass movement of both the peasants and workers, who have solidly and militantly supported each revolutionary measure and inspired their leaders to go further. The popular response throughout Latin America has had a further effect in the same direction.

All this points to the conclusion that the new Cuban government is a "Workers and Farmers Government" of the kind defined in our Transition Program as "a government independent of the bourgeoisie."

This does not signify that a workers state has been established in Cuba. What has been established is a highly contradictory and highly unstable regime, subject to pressures and impulses that can move it forward or backward. Enjoying the support of the workers and peasants, having led them in a political revolution, faced with the imperative need to carry the revolution forward to its culmina-

tion by toppling bourgeois economic and social relations and extending the revolution throughout Latin America and into the United States, the regime lacks the socialist consciousness (program) to accomplish this. Even if it carries out extensive expropriations, these, precisely because of the lack of socialist consciousness, are not so assured as to be considered a permanent foundation of the state. In its bourgeois consciousness, the regime falls short of the objective needs of the revolution. (Whether the decay of capitalism and the example and influence of planned economies elsewhere in the world can make up for this lack -- and to what extent -- need not concern us here.)

Insofar as such a government takes practical measures against the bourgeoisie; that is, begins to resolve its contradictory position in the direction of socialism, it warrants support. And insofar as it grants democratic rights to revolutionary socialism, it warrants a fraternal attitude. Against imperialism, it must, of course, be supported unconditionally.

Whether the Castro regime, or a section of it will evolve until it achieves socialist consciousness remains to be seen. As a petty-bourgeois formation it can retrogress. Its direction of evolution, however, has certainly been encouraging up to now.

By recognizing the new Cuban government as a "Workers and Farmers Government," we indicate its radical petty-bourgeois background and composition and its origin in a popular mass movement, its tendency to respond to popular pressures for action against the bourgeoisie and their agents, and its capacity, for whatever immediate reasons and with whatever hesitancy, to undertake measures against bourgeois political power and against bourgeois property relations. The extent of these measures is not decisive in determining the nature of the regime. What is decisive is the capacity and the tendency.

#### The Fourth Congress Discussion

The concept "Workers and Farmers Government" is not at all a new one. At the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1922, it was discussed at some length. (See attached material.) In view of the encouraging prospects then facing the Third International and the known characteristics of such formations as the Mensheviks, the possibility was not considered great that a petty-bourgeois government in opposition to the bourgeoisie would actually appear. But it was considered a possibility and some of its characteristics were delineated. These offer us criteria by which to measure the new Cuban government. For instance, the "Theses on Tactics" declares:

"The overriding tasks of the workers' government must be to arm the proletariat, to disarm bourgeois counter-revolutionary organizations, to introduce the control of production, to transfer the main burden of taxation to the rich, and to break the resistance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie."

The document continues by declaring that "Such a workers' government is only possible if it is born out of the struggle of the

masses, is supported by workers' bodies which are capable of fighting, bodies created by the most oppressed sections of the working masses."

The new Cuban government has obviously met these criteria, even if we include an item not stated by the authors of the "Theses": the task of "resolutely opposing imperialist rule."

It is true that the Bolsheviks had before them the petty-bourgeois organizations of their time and not a government formed by something as revolutionary-minded as the July 26 Movement; but then in discussing possible forms of a "Workers and Farmers Government" they left room for variants which they could not predict and which it was fruitless to speculate about.

The main value to be derived from thus classifying the new Cuban government is not simply to be able to use a correct designation but in the possibility it opens -- from the viewpoint of consistent theory -- to apply the politics suggested by the Fourth Congress and by our Transition Program in relation to such governments.

### Trotsky's Position in 1938

Trotsky was one of the guiding, if not the chief guiding spirit at the Fourth Congress in 1922. He considered its main documents, like those of the previous three congresses, as part of the programmatic foundation of the Fourth International. He clearly had the discussion at the Fourth Congress in mind when he wrote the section on "Workers and Farmers Government" in the Transition Program in 1938. This section, consequently, becomes much richer in content and implication if the previous discussion in 1922 is borne in mind.

Trotsky repeats one of the main points -- that one of the uses of the formula of "Workers and Farmers Government" was as a pseudonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat, first in the agitation of the Bolsheviks in preparing to take power, later as a popular designation for the proletarian dictatorship that was established. Trotsky emphasizes this in order to contrast what Stalinism did with the pseudonym after usurping power. Comparing what Trotsky says with the declarations of the "Theses on Tactics" adopted at the Fourth Congress, we see that Stalinism supported those types of "workers" governments opposed by the Bolsheviks as masked forms of bourgeois power. In this way, Trotsky brings the "Theses on Tactics" up to date on this point by including the historic experience with Stalinism in relation to the concept of "Workers and Farmers Government."

As for a different use of the formula "Workers and Farmers Government" -- the one that concerns us here -- to designate a regime that is neither bourgeois nor proletarian but something in between, he generalizes the entire experience since 1917 in an exceedingly condensed sentence: "The experience of Russia demonstrated and the experience of Spain and France once again confirms that even under very favorable conditions the parties of the petty-bourgeois democracy (S.R.'s, Social-Democrats, Stalinists, Anarchists) are incapable of creating a government of workers and peasants, that is, a government independent of the bourgeoisie."



This appears to rule out the "possibility," discussed at the Fourth Congress, of the actual formation of such governments. However, Trotsky refused to make an absolute out of his generalization of some twenty years of historic experience. Instead he affirms the position of the Fourth Congress in the following well-known paragraph:

"Is the creation of such a government by the traditional workers organizations possible? Past experience shows, as has already been stated, that this is to say the least highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.) the petty-bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists, may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie. In any case one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere at some time becomes a reality and the 'Workers and Farmers Government,' in the above-mentioned sense, is established in fact, it would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat."

In explaining the political value of the formula as a slogan, aside from the question of its actual historical realization, Trotsky stands on the position of the Fourth Congress: (1) It is an extremely important weapon for exposing the treacherous character of the old petty-bourgeois leaderships. (2) It has tremendous educational value, for it "proceeds entirely along the line of the political development of our epoch (the bankruptcy and decomposition of the old petty-bourgeois parties, the downfall of democracy, the growth of fascism, the accelerated drive of the workers toward more active and aggressive politics)."

Trotsky does no more than suggest the historic conditions that might convert the possibility of a Workers and Farmers Government ("a government independent of the bourgeoisie") from something "highly improbable" into something quite probable and even into a reality. Some twenty years later we can see that the main historic conditions turned out to be the continued crisis in the leadership of the proletariat (the long default, due to Stalinism, in taking advantage of revolutionary opportunities) coupled with the continued decay of capitalism and the mounting pressure of popular movements seeking a way out, plus the survival of the Soviet Union in World War II and the subsequent strengthening of its world position.

Trotsky did not deal with the tactical problems that would face our movement should such a government actually be formed. The reasons for this are clear enough: (1) On the eve of World War II the possibility of such a government actually appearing was remote. (2) The basic strategy from which to derive tactics was well known, involving no more than the application of the Leninist attitude toward petty-bourgeois formations in the two possible variants of their development -- toward or away from Marxism. (3) The Fourth Congress in its "Theses on Tactics" had already specified the conditions under which such a government would be supported or opposed. (4) The main issues confronting such a possible government would be the same in general as those for which key transitional slogans were proposed;

these could be modified to fit whatever specific case might arise.

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In conclusion, whatever the particular circumstances were that gave rise to a government of the type now seen in Cuba, the possibility of the appearance of such a government was foreseen long ago by the Bolsheviks, its relation to the world revolutionary process was anticipated, and a general concept of how to approach it was worked out even down to specific slogans. In the abstract form of a transitional slogan we are, in fact, thoroughly familiar with it.

Its appearance in the form of a living reality does not overthrow our theory. On the contrary, the actual appearance of a government like the one in Cuba would seem to offer a most brilliant confirmation of the lucidity of Marxist thought and its power to forecast. It would also seem to constitute the most heartening evidence of the grand possibilities now opening up for revolutionary socialism and the party that has kept its theoretical heritage alive.

Joseph Hansen

July 1960

WORKERS AND FARMERS GOVERNMENTSExtracts from Documents  
of the Fourth Congress of the Comintern (1922)From the "Theses on Tactics" Adopted by the Congress:

The slogan of a workers' government (or a workers' and peasants' government) can be used practically everywhere as a general propaganda slogan. But as a topical political slogan it is of the greatest importance in those countries where bourgeois society is particularly unstable, where the relation of forces between the workers' parties and the bourgeoisie is such that the decision of the question, who shall form the government, becomes one of immediate practical necessity. In these countries the slogan of a workers' government follows inevitably from the entire united-front tactic.

The parties of the Second International are trying to "save" the situation in these countries by advocating and forming a coalition government of bourgeois and social-democratic parties. The most recent attempts made by certain parties of the Second International (for example in Germany), while refusing to participate openly in such a coalition government only at the same time to carry it out in disguised form, are nothing but a maneuver aimed at lulling the masses protesting against such coalitions and a subtle duping of the working masses. To this open or concealed bourgeois-social-democratic coalition the communists oppose the united front of all workers and a coalition of all workers' parties in the economic and the political field for the fight against the bourgeois power and its eventual overthrow. In the united struggle of all workers against the bourgeoisie the entire State apparatus must be taken over by the workers' government, and thus the working class's positions of power strengthened.

The overriding tasks of the workers' government must be to arm the proletariat, to disarm bourgeois, counter-revolutionary organizations, to introduce the control of production, to transfer the main burden of taxation to the rich, and to break the resistance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

Such a workers' government is only possible if it is born out of the struggle of the masses, is supported by workers' bodies which are capable of fighting, bodies created by the most oppressed sections of the working masses. Even a workers' government which is created by the turn of events in parliament, which is therefore purely parliamentary in origin, may provide the occasion for invigorating the revolutionary labor movement. It is obvious that the formation of a real workers' government, and the continued existence of a government which pursues a revolutionary policy, must lead to a bitter struggle, and eventually a civil war with the bourgeoisie. The mere attempt by the proletariat to form such a workers' government will from the outset encounter the sharpest opposition of the bourgeoisie. The slogan of a workers' government is therefore suitable for concentrating the proletariat and unleashing revolutionary struggles.

In certain circumstances communists must declare themselves ready to form a workers' government with noncommunist workers' parties and workers' organizations. But they can do so only if there

are guarantees that the workers' government will really conduct a struggle against the bourgeoisie in the sense mentioned above. The conditions on which communists participate in such a government are:

1. Communists may take part in a workers' government only with the consent of the Comintern.
2. The Communist members of such a government are under the strictest control of their party.
3. The Communists chosen to take part in the workers' government must be those who have the closest contact with the revolutionary organizations of the masses.
4. The Communist party retains without any restrictions its own identity and complete independence of agitation.

With all its great advantages, the slogan of a workers' government also has its dangers, just as the united-front tactic as a whole conceals dangers. In order to avoid these dangers, the Communist parties must bear in mind that while every bourgeois government is a capitalist government, not every workers' government is a really proletarian government, that is, revolutionary instrument of power. The Communist International must consider the following possibilities:

1. Liberal workers' governments, such as there was in Australia; this is also possible in England in the near future.
2. Social-democratic workers' governments (Germany).
3. A government of workers and the poorer peasants. This is possible in the Balkans, Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc.
4. Workers' governments in which Communists participate.
5. Genuine proletarian workers' governments, which in their pure form can be created only by the Communist party.

The first two types are not revolutionary workers' governments, but in fact coalition governments of the bourgeoisie and anti-revolutionary labor leaders. Such governments are tolerated by the enfeebled bourgeoisie in critical times as a means of deceiving the proletariat about the real class character of the State, or to ward off, with the help of the corrupt workers' leaders, the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat and to gain time. Communists cannot take part in such governments. On the contrary, they must vigorously expose to the masses the real character of these pseudo-workers' governments. But in the present period of capitalist decline, when the most important task is to win the majority of the proletariat for the revolution, even such governments may objectively help to accelerate the process of disintegration of bourgeois power.

Communists are however prepared to act together with those workers who have not yet recognized the necessity of the proletarian dictatorship, social-democrats, members of Christian parties, non-party syndicalists, etc. They are thus ready, in certain conditions and with certain guarantees, to support a workers' government that

is not communist. But the Communists must at all cost explain to the working class that its liberation cannot be assured except through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The two types numbered 3 and 4, in which Communists may take part, do not represent the dictatorship of the proletariat, they are not even a historically inevitable transition stage towards the dictatorship. But where they are formed they may become an important starting point for the fight for the dictatorship. The complete dictatorship of the proletariat is represented only by the real workers' government (the fifth on the above list) which consists of communists.

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From the Discussion on the Theses by the Comintern Delegates  
November 9-12, 1922. (Abridged report published in London.):

Zinoviev (reporting for the Executive Committee of the Communist International): . . . The watchword of the Labour Government has not yet been fully clarified. The tactics of the united front are almost universally applicable. It would be hard to find a country where the working class has attained notable proportion but where the tactics of the united front have not yet been inaugurated. They are equally applicable in America, in Bulgaria, in Italy, and in Germany. By no means can the same thing be said of the watchword of the Labour Government. This latter is far less universally applicable, and its significance is comparatively restricted. It can only be adopted in those countries where the relationships of power render its adoption opportune, where the problem of power, the problem of government, both on the parliamentary and on the extra-parliamentary field, has come to the front. Of course, even today in the United States good propaganda work can be done with the slogan of the Labour Government. We can explain to the workers "If you want to free yourselves, you must take power into your own hands." But we cannot say, in view of the present relationships of power in the United States, that the watchword of the Labour Government is applicable to an existing fight between two parties, as it has been in Czechoslovakia, as it will be perhaps in Germany, and as it was and may be again in Italy.

The watchword of the Labour Government then is not a general watchword like the tactics of the united front. The watchword "Labour Government" is a particular concrete application of the tactics of the united front under certain specific conditions. It is quite easy to make mistakes in this matter. I think we have to beware of the danger that results from an attempt to regard the stage of Labour Government as a universally necessary one. Insofar as it is safe to prophesy in such matters, I myself incline to the view that a Labour Government will only come into existence occasionally, in one country or another, where peculiar circumstances prevail. I think its occurrence will be exceptional. Besides, it is quite a mistake to suppose that the formation of a Labour Government will inaugurate a quasi-peaceful period, and that thereby we shall be saved from the burden of the struggle. The working class must be made clearly to understand that a Labour Government can only be a transitional stage. We must say in plain terms that the Labour Government will not do away with the need for fighting, will not

obviate the necessity for civil war. But as long as we recognize the dangers of this watchword, we need not hesitate to employ it. . . .

Ernest Meyer (Germany): . . . The most difficult question which we had to solve in connection with the United Front tactics -- (and which we have probably not yet solved) -- is the question of the Workers' Government. We must differentiate between social democratic governments in Germany -- in Saxony, Thuringia and formerly also in Gotha -- governments which we had to support but which have nothing in common with what we understand by Workers' Government. If we desire that the International should support the idea of the Workers' Government, and if we wish that this watchword should be adopted by the brother parties that are working approximately under similar conditions to ours, this does not mean that we expect them to aim at the establishment of social democratic governments and to participate in them, but merely that they should struggle for Workers' Governments, thus making our struggle easier. The chief difference between a workers' and a social-democratic government is -- that the former, without bearing the label of a socialist policy, is really putting socialist-communist policy into practice. Thus, the Workers' Government will not be based on parliamentary action alone, it will have to be based on the support of the wide masses, and its policy will be fundamentally different from that of the social democratic governments such as those existing in some of the countries of Germany.

Today Comrade Zinoviev made this distinction between a workers' government and proletarian dictatorship. This was never made quite clear before when this discussion was discussed. We find the following statement by Comrade Zinoviev on page 123 of the report on the session of the Enlarged Executive: --

"The workers' government is the same as the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is a pseudonym for Soviet Government. (Hear, hear.) It is more suitable for the ordinary working man, and we will therefore use it."

According to our conception this is wrong. The workers' government is not the dictatorship of the proletariat (quite so, from the German Delegation), it is only a watchword which we bring forward, in order to win over the workers and to convince them that the proletarian class must form a United Front in its struggle against the bourgeoisie. Should this watchword be followed or adopted by the majority of the working class, and should the latter take up the struggle for this aim in good earnest, it will soon become evident that the attempt to bring about this workers' government (at least in most countries with a big proletarian population) will lead either directly to the dictatorship of the proletariat or to a prolonged phase of very acute class struggles, namely, to civil war in all its forms.

In that respect we consider the slogan of the workers' government as necessary and useful to winning over the masses. It will lead to a sharper class conflict from which the Proletarian Dictatorship will finally arise. . . .

Radek: . . . With regard to the demand for a Workers' Government. A Workers' Government is not the Proletarian Dictatorship, that is

clear; it is one of the possible transitory transitional stages to the Proletarian Dictatorship. The possibility of such a transitory stage is due to the fact that the working masses in the West are not so amorphous politically as in the East. They are members of parties and they stick to their parties. In the East, in Russia, it was easier to bring them into the fold of Communism after the outbreak of the revolutionary storm. In your countries it is much more difficult. The German, Norwegian and Czechoslovakian workers will more readily declare against coalition with the bourgeoisie, preferring a coalition of labour parties which would guarantee the eight-hour day and an extra crust of bread, etc. A Workers' Party usually arises in this manner, either through preliminary struggles or on the basis of a parliamentary combination, and it would be folly to turn aside the opportunities of such a situation in stubborn doctrinaire fashion.

Now the question arises -- shall we recline upon this soft cushion and take a good rest, or shall we rather lead the masses into the fight on the basis of their own illusions for the realization of the program of a Workers' Government? If we conceive the Workers Government as a soft cushion, we are ourselves politically beaten. We would then take our place beside the social-democrats as a new type of tricksters. On the other hand, if we keep alive the consciousness of the masses that a Workers' Government is an empty shell unless it has workers behind it forging their weapons and forming their factory councils to compel it to hold on to the right track and make no compromise to the Right, making that government a starting point for the struggle for the Proletarian Dictatorship, such a Workers' Government will eventually make room for a Soviet Government and not become a soft cushion, but rather a lever for the conquest of power by revolutionary means. I believe one of the comrades has said, "The Workers' Government is not a historic necessity but a historical possibility." This is, to my mind, a correct formula. It would be absolutely wrong to assert that the development of man from the ape to a People's Commissar must necessarily pass through the phase of a Workers' Government. (Laughter.) Such a variant in history is possible, and in the first place it is possible in a number of countries having a strong proletarian and peasant movement, or where the working class overwhelmingly out-number the bourgeoisie, as is the case in England. A parliamentary labour victory in England is quite possible. It will not take place in the present elections, but it is possible in the future, and then the question will arise: What is the Labour Government? Is it no more than a new edition of the bourgeois-liberal government, or can we compel it to be something more? I believe Austen Chamberlain was right in saying, "If a Labour Government comes into power in England, it will begin with a Clynes' administration and end in a government of the Left Wing, because the latter can solve the unemployed problem."

Thus, Comrades, I believe that the Executive on the whole has taken the right attitude in this question, when on the one hand it warns against the proposition of either Soviet government or nothing, and, on the other hand, against the illusion which makes the Workers' Government a sort of parachute. . . .

Duret (France): . . . There is another side to the tactics of the United Front which, regardless of all my efforts, still passes

my understanding. I am speaking of the question of the Workers' Government.

Comrade Thalheimer has used five or six pages to explain to me what is meant by a Workers' Government. But I am hard-headed. I failed to understand. Comrade Radek has made an attempt at explaining the same subject in more ample fashion, but still I fail to understand. It seems that I will have to give it up as a bad job. . .

Bordiga (Italy): . . . As to the watchword of the Workers' Government, if we can be assured -- as was the case of the enlarged Executive of last June -- that it means nothing else but the "revolutionary mobilization of the working class for the overthrow of bourgeois domination," we find that in certain cases it might replace that of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In any case, we would not be opposed to it, unless it be used as an opportunistic attempt to veil the real nature of our program. If this watchword of the labour government were to give to the working masses the impression that the essential problem of the relations between the proletarian class and the State -- on which we based the program and the organization of the International -- can be solved by any other means than by armed struggle for power in the form of proletarian dictatorship, then we will reject this tactical method because it jeopardizes a fundamental condition of the preparation of the proletariat and of the party for the revolutionary tasks in order to achieve the doubtful success of immediate popularity. . . .

Graziadei (Italy): . . . Let us pass to the conception of the Workers' Government. It is quite possible that in a country where a large section of the working class is still imbued with bourgeois or semi-bourgeois democratic ideas, a Workers' Government may find support, for some time, in the trade unions, on the one hand, to which we must attach increasing political importance, and on a parliamentary form on the other. We cannot reject the Workers' Government because it may for a short time take a parliamentary form. This would be a great mistake. In Russia, after the March revolution, the Communists attempted to increase the political power of the Soviets in which they were still a minority, but they did not abandon Parliament when a purely social-democratic government was in power. In Germany, after the fall of the Empire, we found Parliament and the Soviets side by side.

Naturally the Communists must always teach the workers that a real workers' government can only be formed as a result of armed revolt against the bourgeoisie, and that this government must be under the control of its class organizations. They must continually teach the workers that if the dictatorship of the proletariat is not attained very soon, the workers' government will not be able to resist the assaults of the bourgeoisie. . . .

Marklevsky (Poland): . . . I would like to speak a few words on the slogan of the Workers' Government. I believe there has been too much philosophical speculation on the matter. ("Very true," from the German benches.) The criticism of this slogan is directed on three lines -- the Workers' Government is either a Scheidemann Government or a coalition government of the Communists with the social traitors. It finds support either in Parliament or in the Factory



Councils. It is either the expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or it is not. I believe that philosophical speculation is out of place -- for we have practical historical experience. What did the Bolsheviks do in 1917 before they conquered power? They demanded "All Power to the Soviets." What did this mean at that time? It meant giving power to the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries who were in the majority in the Soviets. It meant at that time a Workers' Government in which social traitors participated, and which was directed against the dictatorship of the proletariat. But this slogan was a good weapon of agitation in the hands of the Bolsheviks.

It may be that a great revolutionary movement will start at a time when we will not yet have conquered the majority of the proletariat. But when it comes the ferment will enable us to win over the majority of the proletariat much more rapidly than we can now, and the slogan we will then put forward in all probability will be essentially the slogans which the Executive, in one form or another, attempted to formulate. The government we will then demand will be essentially the Workers' Government, but based on the masses. If the Executive has failed to formulate a solution for this question it is because we have mixed our terms and have attempted to give our slogans a definite form when they are really dependent upon revolutionary circumstances. . . .

Domb sky (Poland): . . . As regards the workers' government, I was in the same boat as my friend Comrade Duret, I could not understand the meaning of workers' government in our tactics. At last I have heard a clear definition of this government. Comrade Radek has solaced me in private conversation that such a government is not contemplated for Poland. (Comrade Radek: "I never said that.") Oh, then Poland will also have to bear the punishment of this sort of government. It is thus an international problem. Comrade Radek says that the workers' government is not a necessity but a possibility, and it were folly to reject such possibilities. The question is whether if we inscribe all the possibilities on our banner we try to accelerate the realization of these possibilities. I believe that it is quite possible that at the eleventh hour a so-called workers' government should come which would not be a proletarian dictatorship. But I believe when such a government comes, it will be the resultant of various forces such as our struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, the struggle of the social-democrats against it and so forth. Is it proper to build our plans on such an assumption? I think not, because I believe that we should insist on our struggle for the proletarian dictatorship.

This does not mean to say that we ought not to make any partial demands. . . .

Kolarov (Balkan Communist Federation): . . . The problem of the workers' government does not arise in the agricultural Balkan countries, and therefore I will not dwell on it. . . .

Zinoviev (summarizing): Comrades, you will allow me to discuss in some detail the question of Workers' Government. It is not yet quite clear to me whether there are serious differences of opinion with regard to this question, whether this question has been com-

pletely ventilated, or whether a good deal of our differences were caused by variations in terminology. In the course of the Congress, and during the working out of the resolution on tactical questions, with which we shall deal after the question of the Russian Revolution, this will become clear. As far as I am concerned, the question has nothing to do with the word "pseudonym" which has been quoted here. I am quite willing under these circumstances, to give up the word. But the main thing is the significance. I think, comrades, that the question will be made clear if I express myself as follows: It is clear to us that every bourgeois government is a capitalist government. It is hard to imagine a bourgeois government -- the mule of the bourgeois class -- which is not at the same time a capitalist government. But I fear that one cannot reverse that saying. Every working class government is not a proletarian government; not every workers' government is a socialist government.

This contrast is radical. It reveals the fact that the bourgeoisie have their outposts within our class, but that workers have not their outposts within the capitalist class. It is impossible for us to have our outposts in the camp of the bourgeoisie.

Every bourgeois government is a capitalist government, and even many workers' governments can be bourgeois governments according to their social composition. I think that the main point is, there are workers' governments and workers' governments. I believe that one can imagine four kinds of workers' governments, and even then we will not have exhausted the possibilities. You can have a workers' government which, according to its composition, would be a Liberal workers' government, for example, the Australian Labour Government. Several of our Australian comrades say that the term workers' government is incorrect because in Australia we have had such workers' governments of a bourgeois nature. These were really workers' governments, but their composition was of a purely Liberal character. They were bourgeois workers' governments, if one may so term them.

Let us take another example: The general elections are taking place in England. It is not probable, but one may as well accept in theory, as a possibility, that a workers' government will be elected which will be similar to the Australian Labour Government, and will be of a Liberal composition. Thus Liberal workers' government in England can, under certain circumstances, constitute the starting point of revolutionizing the situation. That could well happen. But by itself, it is nothing more than a Liberal workers' government. We, the Communists, now vote in England for the Labour Party. That is the same as voting for a Liberal workers' government. The English Communists are compelled, by the existing situation, to vote for a Liberal workers' government. These are absolutely the right tactics. Why? Because this objective would be a step forward; because a Liberal government in England would disturb the equilibrium and would extend the bankruptcy of capitalism. We have seen in Russia during the Kerensky regime how the position of capitalism was smashed, despite the fact that the Liberals were the agents of capitalism. Plekhanov, in the period from February to October, 1917, called the Mensheviks semi-Bolsheviks. We say that this was an exaggeration. They were not semi-Bolsheviks, but just quarter-Bolsheviks. We said this because we were at war with them, and because we saw their

treachery to the proletariat. Objectively, Plekhanov was right. Objectively, the Menshevik government was best adapted to make a hash of capitalism, by making its position impossible. Our Party, which was then fighting the Mensheviks, would not and could not see this. The parties stood arrayed for conflict. Under such conditions, we can only see that they are traitors to the working class. They are not opponents of the bourgeoisie, but when, for a period, they hold the weapons of the bourgeoisie in their hands, they make certain steps which are objectively against the bourgeois state. Therefore, in England, we support the Liberal workers' government and the Labour Party. The English bourgeoisie are right when they say that the workers' government will start with Clynes and finish in the hands of the Left Wing.

That is the first type of a possible workers government.

The second type is that of a Socialist government. One can imagine that the United Social Democratic Party in Germany forms a purely Socialist government. That would also be a workers' government, a Socialist government, with the word -- Socialist -- of course in quotation marks. One can easily imagine a situation where we would give such a government certain conditional credit, a certain conditional support. One can imagine a Socialist government as being a first step in the revolutionizing of the situation.

A third type is the so-called Coalition government; that is, a government in which Social-Democrats, Trade Union leaders, and even perhaps Communists, take part. One can imagine such a possibility. Such a government is not yet the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it is perhaps a starting point for the dictatorship. When all goes right, we can kick one social-democrat after another out of the government until the power is in the hands of the Communists. This is a historical possibility.

Fourthly, we have a workers' government which is really a workers' government -- that is, a Communist workers' government, which is the true workers' government. I believe that this fourth possibility is a pseudonym for dictatorship of the proletariat, that it is truly a workers' government in the true sense of the word. This by no means exhausts the question. There can be a fifth or sixth type, and they can all be excellent starting points for a broader revolutionizing of the situation.

But, in order to construct a workers' government in the revolutionary sense, one must overthrow the bourgeoisie; and that is the most important. We must not forget that we have here to distinguish between two things: (1) Our methods of agitation; how we can best speak to the workers, how we can enable them best to understand the position. For that purpose, I believe the slogan of "Workers' Government" is best adapted. (2) How will events develop historically, in what concrete forms will the revolution manifest itself?

We must look at the question from all sides. It is nevertheless difficult to make any prediction. If we now look at the slogan of the workers' government from this new standpoint, as a concrete road to the realization of the proletarian revolution, we may doubt whether the world revolution must necessarily pass through the stage of the

workers' government. Our friend Radek said yesterday that the workers' government is a possible intermediary step to the dictatorship of the proletariat. I agree, it is a possibility, or more exactly an exceptional possibility. This does not mean that the slogan of the workers' government is not good. It is a good instrument of agitation where the relation of forces makes it possible. But if we put this question: is the workers' government a necessary step towards the revolution? I must answer that this is not a question that we can solve here. It is a way, but the least probable of all. In countries with a highly developed bourgeois class, the proletariat can conquer power by force alone, through civil war. In such a case an intermediary step is not to be thought of. It might take place, but it is useless to argue here about it. All that is necessary is that we see clearly all the possible ways towards the revolution. The workers' government may be nothing more than a Liberal Labour government, as it might be in England and in Australia. Such a workers' government can also be useful to the working class. The agitation for a workers' government is wise, we may gain many advantages therefrom. But in no case must we forget our revolutionary prospects. I have here a beautiful article by the Czechoslovak minister, Benisch. I will read you a passage.

The "Tschas," organ of Minister Benisch, writes, on September 18: "The Communist Party is building the United Front of the Workers on a slogan of a fight against unemployment.

"We cannot deny that the Communists are clever. They know how to present to the workers the same thing under different forms. For instance, some time ago, the Communists began a campaign for the formation of Soviets. When they saw that this campaign was unsuccessful, they stopped their agitation, but it resumed a year and a half later under the mask of United Front committees. The United Front of the proletariat might become a tremendous force if based on progressive ideas, but the ideas of Moscow are not progressive."

This bourgeois is right, I believe. We Communists who deal with the masses intellectually enslaved by the bourgeoisie, must make all efforts to enlighten our class. I have said that a workers' government might be in reality a bourgeois government. It is our duty to enlighten in all ways the more receptive sections of the working class. But the contents of our declaration must always remain the same.

Another thing, comrades, Soviet government does not always mean dictatorship of the proletariat. Far from it. A Soviet government existed for eight months in Russia parallel with the Kerensky government, but this was not a dictatorship of the proletariat. Nevertheless, we defended the slogan of the Soviet government, and only gave it up for a very short time.

This is why I believe that we can adopt the policy of the workers' government with a peaceful heart, under the only condition that we do not forget what it really amounts to. Woe to us if we ever allow the suggestion to creep up in our propaganda that the workers' government is a necessary step, to be achieved peacefully as a period of semi-organic construction which may take the place of civil war, etc. If such views exist among us, we must combat them ruthlessly; we must

educate the working class by way of telling them -- "Yes, dear friends, to establish a workers' government, the bourgeoisie must be first overthrown and defeated."

The International must adopt the right tactics, but there are no tactics by means of which we could outwit the bourgeoisie and glide smoothly into the realm of the workers' government. The important thing is that we overthrow the bourgeoisie, after which various forms of the workers' government may be established. . . .

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From the Discussion on "The Capitalist Offensive." November 11, 16 and 17, 1922.

Radek (reporting): . . . In the concluding portion of my speech, Comrades, I propose to deal briefly with the watchwords of the struggle.

Agreed, that the starting points of our activities must be the demand for higher wages, the demand for the retention of the eight-hour day, and the demand for the development of the industrial union council movement. But these demands do not suffice. Workers who belong to no political party at all can and do demand the daily wage of one thousand marks, whilst five hundred marks will not procure them the necessaries of life. But they see that to increase their wages in paper money provides no issue from their trouble. To begin with, such watchwords may suffice; but the longer the struggle lasts, the more essential does it become to proclaim political watchwords, the watchwords of social organization. When the time is ripe for the voicing of such demands, it is time to move from the defensive to the offensive. We must put forward in these circumstances the demand for the control of production and make clear to the workers that this is the only way out of economic chaos.

Now I come to a question which plays a great part in our resistance to the capitalist offensive. I refer to the question of the Labour Government. The important point for us in this connection is, rather than classification, to propound the question: What are the masses of the workers, not merely the Communists, thinking of when they speak of Labour Governments? I confine myself to countries in which these ideas have already been considered: Britain, Germany and Czechoslovakia. In England, think of the Labour Party. Communism there is not yet a mass power. In the countries where capitalism is decaying, this idea is intimately associated with that of the United Front. Just as the workers say that the meaning of the United Front is that the Communists and the Social-Democrats must make common cause in the factory when there is a strike, so for the masses of the workers the idea of a Labour Government has a similar significance. The workers are thinking of a government of all the working class parties. What does that mean for the masses practically and politically? The political decision of the question will depend upon the fact whether the social-democracy does or does not go to its doom with the bourgeoisie. Should it do so, then the Labour Government can only take the form of the dictatorship of the Communist proletariat. We cannot decide for the Social Democrats what their policy should be. What we have to decide is this. When we lead the masses

in the struggle against the capitalist offensive, are we ready to fight on behalf of such a labour coalition government? Are we or are we not ready to bring about the conditions essential to its realization?

That is a question which for the masses would only be confused by theoretical calculations. In my opinion, when we are concerned with the struggle for the United Front, we ought to say bluntly that, if the social democratic workers will force their leaders to break with the bourgeoisie, then we are ready to participate in a labour government, so long as that government is an instrument of the class struggle. I mean, if it is ready to fight beside us shoulder to shoulder.

When we are thinking of the struggle against the capitalist offensive, what we have in mind is not a parliamentary combination, but a platform for the mobilization of the masses, an arena for the struggle.

As far as we are concerned with the broad front of the proletarian struggle for freedom, the watchword of the labour government is necessary to supply us with a directive; it is a watchword that whets the edge of our political weapons. The moment when the workers find themselves simultaneously engaged in the fight for the labour government and in the fight for the control of production, will be the moment when our fundamental offensive will begin, the moment when we shall cease to content ourselves with trying to defend what we have, and shall advance to the attack on new positions. Our offensive will begin as soon as the masses of the workers are ready to fight for these two watchwords."

Ravenstein (Holland): . . . Comrade Trotsky drew attention to the danger of reformist and pacifist illusions in the Western Parties. Well, in the light of the experiences of last year, there can be no two opinions on that score. But he went on to say that the political background for such illusions would probably be extremely favourable for some time to come. This view he based on the assumption that the political developments of the Western countries will quite easily lead to a bloc, and consequently to a government of petty-bourgeois pacifist elements, a bloc of the left, so to speak, which would lay claim to the support of the Labour Parties. In such a contingency there would be considerable danger of such a bloc gaining support from Communists, or at least an inclination to such support, but I am of the opinion that the time has gone by for these blocs of the left, and they will never come back again.

Democracy is being shattered by the "right." This is the dominating factor of present-day politics in all the old bourgeois countries, like England, France, Belgium and Holland. . . .

This development of events knocks out the bottom of the labour parties and even of the reformist and pacifist bourgeois groups. . . .

In conclusion, I wish to point out that it is an altogether mistaken idea to expect either Henderson and Clynes in England or Longuet and Blum in France, to be able to form a government relying

upon the bourgeois reformist elements. The Hendersons and Clynes, Longuets, Vanderveldes and Troelstras could only serve their highest purpose as ministers in an imperialist United Front. But the imperialist United Front could certainly not be brought within the strict definition of the terms of Workers' Government.

I, therefore, come to the conclusion that the proletarian United Front is the great tactical line of guidance in all capitalist states, where the proletariat has not yet been victorious without any distinction of their respective history, culture and tradition. On the other hand, the workers' government can be considered only for special circumstances that may arise in Central Europe and perhaps in other countries. For these countries it has its greatest value. But only under the method of the United Front of the entire proletariat can the Communist International fight and win throughout the world.

Stern (Austria): . . . The slogan of the workers' government is a counter move against the slogan of a coalition government. The United Front is no longer a measure of defense, it has already become a weapon of offense.

Radek (in reply): . . . So long as we represent the weaker section of the working class movement we will have to treat with the social democrats, although we know that the leaders of the social democracy are conscious enemies of the revolution. But it may happen that the social democrats should betray the bourgeoisie instead of the working class. . . . Should the pressure of the masses force the social democrats to give up their coalition policy, we will be ready to fight our common enemy, the bourgeoisie together with them. We must not only maintain our ideological purity; we must take part in the daily struggles of the workers. . . .

How does the British Communist Party apply its United Front tactics? . . . The Executive has shown in its manifesto to the workers that the entire policy of the Labour Party is nothing but a continuous betrayal of working class interests. But the Executive also said to the workers: "If the Labour Party is victorious and forms a government, it will betray you in the end and will show to the workers that its aim is the perpetuation of capitalism. Then the workers will either desert it, or the Labour Party will be compelled to fight owing to the pressure of the workers, and in that case we shall back it. We issued a definite watchword: 'Vote for it, but prepare to struggle against it.'"

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