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Contents

	<u>Page</u>
1. IN DEFENSE OF PROLETARIAN DEMOCRACY By Tim Wohlforth	1
2. THE CUBAN REVOLUTION AND ITS STATE AND GOVERNMENT By Gaylord McDowell	11
3. STATEMENT OF CLARIFICATION By Fred Mazelis	15
4. THE LEADERSHIP IN CUBA By Fred Halstead	17
5. ON VIEWING CONTRADICTIONS IN THE CUBAN STATE By Rosemary Stone	23

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IN DEFENSE OF PROLETARIAN DEMOCRACY

By Tim Wohlforth

The present discussion on Cuba in the party has taken place within the context of the general rise in tempo and leftward motion of the Cuban Revolution. Our party has been isolated from revolutionary developments for many years and it is therefore quite natural that revolutionary events as momentous as those in Cuba should have a powerful positive impact on all the comrades. Under such conditions individual excesses in evaluation of the Cuban events are to be expected and, if properly countered by a level-headed leadership, should not be cause of great alarm.

At present, with the defeat of the counterrevolutionary invasion, the pendulum of revolution has swung very far to the left. It is inevitable that the pendulum will in due time swing in the other direction in lieu of the deepening of the revolution internally through the formation of a revolutionary Marxist party and the establishment of workers power and the spread of the revolution externally. As this occurs it is hoped the party comrades will be forced to reevaluate the Cuban events and many of the excesses will be reconsidered.

There remains, however, a very serious danger that while the party may pull back from what will soon be an indefensible political line, some of our most principled political theories will remain severely damaged by what has become more than simply individual excesses. For what seems to be emerging from this discussion is a pattern of revisions of the fundamentals of our movement. In my article "On the Revolutionary Party," I dealt with what amounts to a basic revision of the orthodox Trotskyist conception of the party. In this article, I will treat what is assuming the proportions of a wholesale revision of our essential conceptions of workers power and workers democracy.

Bourgeois Democracy and Workers Democracy

As Leninists we reject out of hand any conception of "democracy in general." This favorite concept of the social democracy has been proven decisively by history to be nothing but a sham and a cover for the reformist's fear of a revolutionary overturn of the capitalist system. Democracy as an abstraction is meaningless. Democracy always has a class content -- in this period in history, it is either bourgeois democracy or workers democracy.

The party has correctly, and effectively, exposed the real meaning of the hue and cry of the imperialists and their apologists, ranging from the younger Schlesinger through Theodore Draper and the social democrats, for "democracy" in Cuba. These elements are in reality only giving an ideological cover to attempts of U.S. imperialism to restore its antidemocratic domination over the Cuban people. This is an essential task of our party to perform but it is not its only task. In combatting any demands for the restoration of capitalist democracy in Cuba we must counterpose to these demands more than a simple apologia for what exists in Cuba today -- we must call for the deepening of the revolution through the establishment of workers democracy, of real workers power, in Cuba today.

This, quite frankly, the party has utterly failed to do. The majority "Theses," noting that Cuba lacks "as yet the forms of democratic proletarian rule," goes on to advocate "the early creation of proletarian democratic forms adapted to Cuba's own needs." Joe Hansen motivates this in his presentation to

the plenum, stating: "First, that we follow a policy aimed at expanding and developing proletarian democracy. That's our Number One." All very well and good as far as it goes. But the bare truth is, in the three and a half months since our National Committee passed this "Theses" as the basis of all party work and propaganda, 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. Why is there this reticence to carry out this essential Trotskyist task? I think I know the reason why. The comrades of the majority, as I explained in my article on the revolutionary party, have been functioning on the basis of a political line of uncritical support to the Castro regime. Since Castro, to them, is doing everything that it is necessary to do in Cuba today, and furthermore, the implication is he will continue to do what is needed, the comrades really feel that the democratic control of the workers and peasants over the governmental apparatus is either superfluous because Castro "instinctively" carries out the needs of the workers and peasants, or it already exists in an "indirect" way. Thus our advocacy of such forms would be as diversionary (perhaps counterrevolutionary?) as these comrades feel the creation of a revolutionary Marxist party would be.

Workers States and Deformed or Degenerated Workers States

Because of the growth of Stalinism, its expansion in the postwar period, and the failure of genuine workers revolutions along the lines of the Russian Revolution since 1917, there has grown up a dangerous tendency within the Trotskyist movement of late to confuse workers states with deformed or degenerated workers states. This has gone the furthest among the Pabloites who under all circumstances refer to the existent deformed and degenerated workers states simply as "the Workers States" making no terminological distinction between these states and workers states in the tradition of the Paris Commune and the early Russian state. Thus, when Cuba came along, it, too, was lumped together with all the other Workers States" (sometimes they add the adjective "peculiar" and as a workers state Cuba certainly is "peculiar"). This tendency has now become quite prevalent within the SWP.

Shane Mage in his article "The Nature of the State in Cuba" clearly distinguishes between the norms for classifying a workers state during the ascendancy of the revolution and those for classifying a deformed or degenerated workers state during the descendency or thermidorian period of the revolution. It is "only" the difference between revolution and counterrevolution (political counterrevolution).

To put it more graphically: in order to get from one to the other a political revolution is necessary! It may also be apropos for the comrades to remember that by political revolution our movement means the organization of a Trotskyist party which, basing itself on a mass upheaval, destroys the bureaucratic apparatus reinstating the rule of genuine workers councils (see: "USSR Since the Twentieth Congress," resolution of the SLL reprinted in the April International Information Bulletin). Thus, what is involved is a qualitative political transformation so profound that in order to proceed from one form to the other a revolution is necessary.

The comrades of the majority slur over these not so minor differences by utilizing the criteria evolved by the Trotskyist movement for designating a deformed or degenerated workers state in order to classify Cuba -- not as a deformed workers state -- but as a workers state (though of course lacking

proletarian democratic forms and thus, to use the Pabloites' phrase, being a bit "peculiar"). The comrades classify Cuba as a workers state because of the extensive nationalization of industry. Workers power is to be added later. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky saw it the other way around. Workers power would be established first and nationalization is to be added later.

This slurring over is no minor matter. It leads to the very destruction of our whole theoretical conception of the state. By thus labelling Cuba a workers state utilizing only the criteria established for deformed or degenerated workers states one eats away at the essentials of the Leninist conception of a workers state. This concept, which is spelled out in the utmost clarity in "State and Revolution" and in "Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky," sees a workers state as being formed through the establishment of workers and peasants councils or soviets as the state power. A revolutionary Marxist party is essential to this process and nothing else but all power to the workers and peasants councils is to be pawned off as a healthy workers state.

It is therefore quite clear that the lack of concern of the party majority with the deepening of the revolution through the establishment of real workers power has its roots in this central theoretical error of confusing two quite oppositional forms of workers states. It is for this reason that we of the minority feel that if the party majority had simply stated that Cuba was a deformed workers state we would have a difference -- but largely a difference in judgment of tempo and over the objective relationship of Cuba to the world capitalist market and to the Soviet Orbit.* However, the present party theory represents a fundamental break with the very essentials of Trotskyist theory and consequently our differences are very deep indeed.

Kautskyst Conceptions of Workers Democracy

Flowing from this basic theoretical error, the comrades have proceeded to begin to develop certain revisionist concepts of workers power which have their historical roots in Kautsky's theories rather than Lenin's. Essentially the party majority states that Cuba is a workers state because of the extensive nationalizations (a criteria for a deformed workers state) and at the moment, it lacks the proletarian democratic forms we have historically associated with workers states. The question then arises as to how do these forms get established (that is, how do you tack them on to the already existent non-deformed workers state)?

* For instance, Trent Hutter's otherwise quite good article, "Danger Signs in Cuba," tends to exaggerate the degree of Stalinist influence in Cuba. If his picture is accurate, which, on the basis of the information available to me, I cannot say, then he can make at least some sort of case for viewing Cuba as a deformed workers state -- that is, by claiming that the thermidorean process has already set in deeply. This is a difference essential to evaluating the tempo of the revolutionary process and its relations with the Soviet orbit. For a further consideration of the possibility of capitalist restoration in a country whose economy is essentially nationalized without overt counterrevolution. I refer interested comrades to Shane Mage's "The Hungarian Revolution," Young Socialist Educational Bulletin No. 1.

The "Theses" itself is rather vague on exactly how these forms are to be brought into being. Will Castro institute them from on top? Will the masses throw them up automatically and Castro accede to them? Will these forms gradually evolve? Do they already partially exist? Or perhaps we still hold the "narrow" view that a revolutionary Marxist vanguard party is essential to the process of establishing workers power (it is least likely that this is what is meant)? The "Theses" only notes that the revolution is "democratic in tendency" (bourgeois democratic? proletarian democratic?).

Joe Hansen's presentation to the plenum is a little more, but not much more, explicit. He states: "Finally, I think everybody will agree that the Cuban Revolution has displayed strong democratic and socialist tendencies, moving in that direction. It's much more democratic than anything we've seen in a long time." He ends his speech with a number of questions including: "Exactly how does the political life of that country occur? We know they've got a lot of democracy there. We know there's a lot of discussion. But what are the forms exactly in which that is occurring down there?" Not very precise, not very clear -- but the implication is that the forms of workers power partially exist in Cuba today and that Cuba will gradually evolve in the direction of full proletarian democracy.

What remains implicit and ambiguously expressed in Hansen's statement is presented with greater clarity when we come to the floor discussion at the plenum. Fred Halstead expresses a concept with the least amount of ambiguity which runs like a thread through much of the discussion:

"I have a question to ask Joe. I support obviously the resolution that Joe reported on. But I have this question in the key paragraph. It says: 'Cuba entered the transitional stage of a workers state, although one lacking as yet the forms of democratic proletarian rule.'

"Well, is there any essence without some kind of form or manifestation? I think that there are certain manifestations of democratic-proletarian rule in Cuba. Perhaps this should be changed, to be really accurate methodologically, to something like 'one lacking complete forms, or legal forms,' -- there are certain forms of democratic rule, democratic proletarian rule in Cuba, specifically the right which is not legally recognized, is not formally recognized -- the right to recall leaders of militia units, the right to recall appointed officials of collective farms and so forth.

"Now it's true this is not legal but that is a manifestation of democracy and just a methodological point -- is this wording -- are there certain manifestations of democratic-proletarian rule, that have not been codified, nailed down, given completeness? I would like Joe to comment on that." Comrade Hansen states in the summary that he does not have time to answer this question. It has been three months now since it was originally asked. Perhaps Comrade Hansen will be willing to answer it now. I would be very interested in his answer. We already have a hint of what his answer will be. In his recent series on Theodore Draper, Comrade Hansen refers to the "beginnings of proletarian democracy in Cuba." Along the same line more recently Arthur Phelps jumps in where theoreticians fear to tread and flatly refers in his article "Comments on 'The Conscious Element in Social Process'" to "the 26th of July Movement, the militia, the trade unions and other organs of workers and peasants power today."

Essentially the theory which we have traced the evolution of among the majority comrades is a new conception of the state totally unrelated to Lenin's

o Trotsky's work. A workers state is established by the simple act of nationalizing property and then slowly, gradually, indirectly proletarian democracy evolves -- expressed here through the militia, there through the 26th of July Movement, or here again through the trade unions.

The historical origins of the methodology involved are, as I mentioned earlier, with Kautsky. He too favored the development of soviets here, trade unions there, etc. But he would have none of Lenin's concept of transforming "the Soviets from a combat organization of one class, as they had been till then into a state organization." (Kautsky as quoted by Lenin in "Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky.")

Workers power is not something that evolves -- you've either got it or you don't. 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 workers 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. There is of course such a thing as 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.

What many comrades have done is to confuse democratic organizations of the working class and peasantry with organs of workers power (or state organizations). This is an extreme error for even under capitalism there exist a number of different types of workers organizations, including under revolutionary conditions, soviets. Leninists have always sharply distinguished between even the most democratic workers organizations under capitalism and soviets as organs of workers power following a revolutionary overturn. Once this distinction breaks down the method of Kautsky replaces the method of Lenin.

Comrade Deck's School of Vulgar Marxism

We now must turn from those timid souls who see only "a bit" of workers power in Cuba to the "special" position of Comrade Deck. Comrade Deck is no piker -- he does things in a big way. No holding back, no standing aside for this comrade. He sees complete workers power in Cuba, and he sees it established not last fall as our conservative leadership states -- but in October of 1959.

Comrade Deck's position, despite its patent political absurdity, does represent, in part, a theoretical advance over that of the rest of the majority. Comrade Deck at least clearly distinguishes between the norms of a workers state and those of a deformed workers state. Thus, he feels Cuba brings "to the fore again what Marxism discovered in the Paris Commune and in the Russian Revolution (and in my opinion it has appeared on a broader scale than even the Russian Revolution)." Ah, yes, "on a broader scale than even the Russian Revolution" -- I told you this comrade was no piker! You see he feels Cuba became a workers state (unsullied by deformity or even the intimation of deformity involved in utilizing norms we have applied to Stalinist countries) in October 1959 because at that time "the forms of rule" of the working class were clearly established.

Let us now look at how Comrade Deck conceives of these "forms of rule" for here we have a difference. "Marxism discovered in life," this comrade informs us, "the special new form of working-class rule which was required by the

working class in the transitional period between capitalism and socialism. While the class struggle continues the working class needs a very simple thing: the armed people themselves, the armed working class." Very, very simple indeed! But we must protest, for our enthusiastic comrade is being too modest -- he is attributing what he, himself, "discovered in life" to Marxism which discovered no such thing. Marx said, Engels said, Lenin said, Trotsky said -- you need something in addition to an armed militia. You need representative organs of workers control over the administration of the state and a revolutionary Marxist party at the helm of the state.

Comrade Deck has since expanded his system of vulgar Marxism. He has informed us in the New York branch discussion that the Paris Commune "proves" that you can establish workers power without a revolutionary party. Trotsky in "Lessons of October" came to quite the opposite conclusion basing himself on both the French and Russian experiences. He said that, under certain conditions, workers power can be established and survive for a while without soviets as long as there is a revolutionary Marxist party at the head of the state. Conversely, without a revolutionary party, workers power cannot survive at all. The reasoning behind this modification of Trotsky's is quite clear and quite unrelated to the thinking of the party majority. The seizing of power by the revolutionary party without broader representative forms signals the rule of the vanguard of the working class by itself. However, broader forms of democratic rule are needed in order to bring into the governmental process all layers of the working class including the most backward as well as the peasantry. This is far preferable to a situation which could lead to the isolation of the vanguard from the rest of the class.

The party majority, however, is far more reticent in calling for a vanguard party to take over the government than it is about calling for broader forms for the expression of workers power. In fact it is only now talking of the formation of a revolutionary party in Cuba in the future some six months after Cuba became a workers state according to the majority of the majority or a year and a half after this event according to the minority of the majority.

It is quite shocking that such a vulgarized notion of Marxist fundamentals could be put forward by anyone in our movement today. Lenin and Trotsky struggled so hard for so many years against opportunists who wished to distort precisely this essential Marxist concept of the state that we had hoped that no one in our movement, at least, would play around with these conceptions. It seems that certain theoretical disputes must be fought over and over again in the agonizing process of creating the Leninist party.

Does Cuba Really Need Proletarian Democracy?

One comrade stated recently during the New York branch discussion that we would have a lot of nerve to call for proletarian democracy in Cuba today. Why, to paraphrase the comrade, Cuba is under attack and certainly is doing a fine job. This concept also seems to be implied in the way in which Comrade Hansen handles his argumentation against Draper (very little is ever said in an article by Hansen but quite a bit is always implied). He, also, seems to excuse the lack of proletarian democracy because Cuba is today under tremendous pressure from imperialism. Implied in such an approach is the assumption that proletarian democracy will weaken rather than strengthen Cuba in its fight against imperialism. This is a Stalinist, not a Trotskyist position.

We call for proletarian democracy in Cuba because we feel it will strengthen not weaken Cuba in the face of imperialist attack. We feel that the best defense of the Cuban Revolution lies in the working class of Cuba and of the whole world. The workers can better defend the revolution the more they control it -- the more it is theirs. It can only be truly theirs when the state power is under their democratic control. Proletarian democracy must be looked upon as an actual weapon for the defense of Cuba -- and as a weapon it is like an H-bomb when compared to a rifle. The appeal of the Cuban Revolution would be a thousand times, a thousand, thousand times what it is today if it were a real workers state with a proletarian party at its helm. Such an event would open up a whole stage in the world revolution -- such a revolution could never be crushed.

There is no more important task that we Trotskyists can perform in defense of the Cuban Revolution than to offer to the Cuban workers and peasants this precious idea we learned from Trotsky who in turn learned it from Marx and Lenin. 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.

But the comrades may say: "This is all well and good but why should we call for it now? If Castro should move to the right or if a degenerative process should set in, as the minority says it will, then we will call for proletarian democracy." Then it may very well be too late. The time when it is easiest to establish workers power is precisely during the ascendancy of the revolution -- not once thermidor sets in. Now is precisely the time to struggle for workers power, precisely when Castro is pushed furthest to the left, precisely when the democratic organizations of the working class are the strongest. The existence of workers power, as the Russian Revolution amply illustrates, is not in itself a guarantee against deformation. However, it puts the working class in the best of all possible positions to counter deformation -- it puts the workers in power. Therefore, it is essential to establish workers power now so as to put the workers in the best possible position to fight deformation later.

The declaration of Castro on May Day is of the utmost significance. The complete defeat of the imperialist counterrevolution by the workers and peasants of Cuba raised the revolutionary tide in Cuba to its highest level. At this precise moment when it was the most propitious to establish workers power, at this precise moment Castro announces -- there will be no more elections!

As an ultimate rejection of the reinstatement of bourgeois democracy, we hail this statement. As an ultimate rejection of the establishment of proletarian democracy we condemn this statement. The Militant simply reports it!

Does Castro Have Any Interests Separate From the Workers?

As I mentioned in my article on the revolutionary party, an understanding of the Cuban events starts: "with a recognition that there exists in Cuba a governmental apparatus separate from and, in part, having interests different from the working class and peasantry of Cuba." I further pointed out that all Trotskyists throughout the world, including the Pabloites and their "peculiar" theory, recognize this reality -- all, that is, except for the SWP. It is difficult to understand how our empirical worshippers of the facts, just

the facts, comrades, fail to see this most blatant aspect of the Cuban political landscape. Perhaps they do not want to see it as it might get in the way of their apologetics for Castro.

The comrades of the majority have made no efforts to explain with Marxist theory exactly how it came to be that a governmental apparatus grew up in a backward country where no proletarian democratic forms exist and no revolutionary party exists -- how in such a country we find a selfless governmental apparatus which has no interests separate from the workers and peasants and which acts in the interests of these workers and peasants intuitively? There is a good question for Comrade Hansen.

We, however, hold that this apparatus exists and that it, in part, reflects petty-bourgeois pressures and behind these pressures the influence of world imperialism itself. Any stratum which seeks to substitute itself for the workers, which makes decisions for them, which limits the fullest democratic expression of the workers is a petty-bourgeois stratum and is at least indirectly reflecting bourgeois pressure.

We do not feel that Castro's help to the Stalinists, who, according to the Cuban Pabloites, have bureaucratically taken over the trade-union movement in Cuba has helped the working class. We do not feel that Castro's failure to turn the 26th of July Movement into a functioning political movement independent of the Stalinists, and, further, his merging of the Rebel Youth with the Stalinist youth has helped the working class. We do not feel that his maintenance of control from the top of the nationalized industries and of INRA and the cooperatives has helped the workers and peasants. We do not feel Castro's failure to appeal directly to the world working class and base his policy on the strategy of world revolution has helped the working class.

Some comrades may question this approach. They may point to the destruction of the old state apparatus and the old army. This new apparatus must, they may say, be a workers apparatus and represent the interests of the working class. We again answer yes and no -- in part this apparatus does represent the workers and in part it does not. For the state apparatus in Cuba is a transitional one. It represents a definite break from the old Batista capitalist apparatus but it is not yet a workers apparatus and certainly not yet subordinated to the democratic will of the working class. It has been recruited almost entirely, from the petty bourgeoisie rather than from the ranks of the workers themselves.

What should be the attitude of Leninists towards such a formation? Lenin stated in "Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky" in reference to the Russian workers: "their Soviets have replaced the bureaucrats, or their Soviets have been placed in control of the bureaucrats." This is precisely what has not been done as yet in Cuba.

Lenin gives us this picture of a workers state apparatus in his article, "Will the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?":

"The Soviets are the new state apparatus, which in the first place, represents the armed force of the workers and peasants, a force that is not divorced from the people, as was the force of the old standing army, but is bound up with them as closely as possible. (Hold it Comrade Deck, there is a little more to Lenin's view, if not to yours -- T.W.). In a military sense this force is incomparably more mighty than the former; in relation to the

revolution it is second to none. Secondly, this apparatus represents a connection with the masses, with the majority of the people, that is so intimate, so indissoluble, so readily verifiable and renewable, that nothing like it was even approached in the former state. Thirdly, this apparatus because it is elective and its personnel is subject to recall in accordance with the will of the people without any bureaucratic formalities, is far more democratic than were the former ones. Fourthly, it represents a firm connection with the most diverse occupations, thus facilitating all sorts of most radical reforms without any bureaucracy. Fifthly, it represents a form of organization of the vanguard, i.e., the most class-conscious, most energetic, most progressive section of the oppressed classes, of the workers and peasants, and is thus an apparatus whereby the vanguard of the oppressed classes can elevate, educate, and lead in its train the whole gigantic mass of those classes which until now have stood absolutely outside all political life, outside history. Sixthly, it makes it possible to combine the advantages of parliamentarism with the advantages of immediate and direct democracy, i.e., to unite in the persons of elected representatives of the people both legislative and executive functions. Compared with bourgeois parliamentarism, this is a step forward in the development of democracy which has an historical world significance."

Is this a picture of Cuba today? Obviously not. What is essential is: (1) that the present transitional administrative apparatus be subordinated to the representative organs of the workers and peasants; and (2) that the present apparatus be infused with the best of the workers and peasants rather than being in large part the exclusive province of the petty bourgeoisie. (See the resolution of the Latin-American IC sections on Cuba printed in the April International Information Bulletin).

Is not the move of Castro establishing technical advisory councils in the nationalized industries such a subordination of the administrative apparatus to workers control? This was a fine move and we hail it. We hail it just as we hailed the formation of workers councils under Gomulka and their preservation in at least some limited form to this day. We hail it just as we hailed the formation of workers councils in Yugoslavia, councils which have considerable influence over local economic questions. We hail these developments for they give the workers another potentially powerful form of organization -- a form of organization which can be transformed, under proper conditions, into actual organs of workers power. But while we hail these developments we must make clear that these are quite limited economic bodies and they are in each country mentioned specifically excluded from exercising real political power. And it is only through the working class exercising political power that the state apparatus can be subordinated to the working class.

This distinction between the political and economic functions of these councils is made quite clear by Castro himself in his speech to the First National Assembly of Delegates of the Technical Advisory Councils given on February 11, 1961. He states: "This meeting is a gathering of workers, but not of workers as representatives of a class..." But it is precisely the organization of workers "as a class" so that they can "as a class" exercise their political rights that is needed in Cuba today.

The great failure of the Militant is that it simply reported the formation of these councils. It has so far refrained from calling for the extension of these councils into the political arena -- their transformation into actual organs of proletarian power.

Comrades, let's not "junk the old Trotskyism." It is a very precious possession for the world itself will perish without it. We must keep it, nurture it, develop it. Not lightly chuck it out. That is what you are doing, comrades, when you begin to play around with the concept of the vanguard party -- when you attack our traditional concept of the party as being "narrow." That is what you are doing when you "put on the shelf" our concept of workers power and proletarian democracy. Are the gains of the moment worth such heavy sacrifices of our essential theories that we have preserved and developed with such effort over the years? Perhaps Castro will tell you "flattery will get you nowhere" and then where will you be?

May 16, 1961

THE CUBAN REVOLUTION AND ITS STATE AND GOVERNMENT

By Gaylord McDowell

Although the party has arrived at a position on Cuba which I believe to be essentially correct, it appears that the question has not been dealt with in as exhaustive a way as it should be. We recognized Cuba as a workers state after the facts of the situation did not give us much choice (although a few comrades, just as the majority of the Chinese Trotskyists as late as 1952 did not recognize Mao's revolution as the Third Chinese Revolution, are still not convinced that the proletarian revolution has taken place in Cuba). Nevertheless, the Cuban revolution took us greatly by surprise because it did not follow the traditional pattern which we had envisioned, and it took us a dangerously long time to characterize it. Furthermore, we have not even now, in my opinion, arrived at a precise understanding of the various stages through which this revolution developed.

Only casual references have been made in the Cuban discussion to relate it to the previous discussion which the party conducted on China and the East European buffer states, and comparisons have been with Bolivia in such a way as to gloss over differences which should be obvious. The Chinese revolution would seem to offer the best basis for comparison because of its similarity as a popular movement with the peasantry as its primary social base.

The 1952 Germain resolution, the general line of which was accepted by the SWP (International Information Bulletin, December 1952), recognized the government of China as a workers and peasants government upon the proclamation of the Peoples' Republic in 1949. This characterization was based on an analysis of the CCP as a working-class party and a recognition of its dominant role in the government. However, we refrained from calling China a workers state until 1953, since the new government had not until then liquidated the bourgeois state apparatus on a nation-wide scale -- the Kuomintang ministers still sat in the central government and controlled local politics in the cities and villages of the South. In this area the civil war was still going on between the people and the old political power. Only in 1953, when the bourgeois forces made an all-out assault on the new regime, was the state apparatus destroyed in the southern provinces, making China a full-fledged proletarian dictatorship.

One point was made at that time which has not fully been grasped in either the majority or the minority resolutions on Cuba. This is the point that Marxism teaches us to judge people and movements not by what they say or think they are, but by what they objectively are. On the basis of this, certain criteria were enumerated for determining the class character of a party, and the conclusion was drawn that the Chinese CP was a working-class party, although its social base was primarily the peasantry. The important consideration was that the peasants joined this party because they were revolutionary and tended to accept the proletarian point of view on private property, in addition to the fact that it was loyal to the Soviet Union. Such a party could collaborate with the bourgeoisie but could never become a political representative of bourgeois interests. It was a true workers and peasants party and not a phoney "workers and peasants party," which is really dominated by the bourgeoisie. A government of this party was therefore a workers and peasants government.

Now in Cuba the movement which took power on January 1, 1959 was primarily military in orientation -- the rebel army led by Fidel Castro. The social base of this army was the peasantry, although it had "hangers-on" among the

bourgeoisie who were not aware at first of the real nature of the movement. Some comrades still question whether this peasantry was working-class. Fred Halstead has said a great deal on this already. Huberman and Sweezy can be cited as an authority. They point out: (1) that the bulk of the Cuban peasants were wage workers, and (2) that there was a highly developed industrial proletariat in the countryside in the form of workers in the sugar mills which are located in the middle of cane-growing areas all over the island. These workers bore such a close relationship to the agricultural workers that statistical sources giving the total number of sugar workers failed to distinguish between the two categories. Fidel Castro, in drafting the Agrarian Reform Law, insisted on a provision establishing cooperatives wherever possible, realizing that the Cuban peasants were ready for them, despite apparent lessons of history to the contrary. All the experience of the Cuban revolution thus far has demonstrated a complete unity of purpose between urban workers and agricultural workers. In fact, where there were any disputes, as with the electrical workers the sugar workers were farther left. We can safely say that any denationalization or compensation for property taken would hurt peasants and industrial workers alike. To say that the unity which has existed thus far between workers and peasants is some sort of compromise based on shaky foundations would be a complete denial of reality.

It is important to understand that when the revolutionary army took power in Cuba, it was not only the sole military power, but the sole political power as well. "In the circumstances of the time, the distinction between political activity and military activity was completely dissolved...As long as the civil war lasted...the rebel army was a government, a military force, and a political party all wrapped up in one." (Huberman and Sweezy. "Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution," page 83.) It should be borne in mind, therefore, that the defeat of Batista was accompanied by a dissolution of the whole military and political structure of the old Cuba. The Castro army was in fact the embryo of a new state.

Of course, none of the participants realized this at the time. They were committed in advance to a sweeping agrarian reform program, nationalization of some of the most atrocious monopolies, and other "reforms" which were objectively anticapitalist in content. But they thought these things could be brought about within the framework of a "democratic republic" similar to the United States. The proletarian dictatorship existed in fact on January 1, 1959, but it was not exercised to the extent of establishing a workers and peasants government because of the lack of Marxist consciousness. The revolutionaries did, however, have a very advanced understanding of what their specific problems were and how to begin dealing with them, and they began the social transformation even during the coalition period.

Thinking in terms of bourgeois democracy, the victorious movement set up a cabinet government to which it appointed a handful of bourgeois politicians to fill the posts. These men were chosen because they were considered "honest," and because they had no part in Batista's regime. That they represented social interests hostile to the revolutionary class was not understood until they began to perform their duties. Then it gradually became clear that no one with property interests to defend could escape becoming corrupt. This government, although it had all the outward appearances of the familiar form of coalition government, controlled by the bourgeoisie, was in fact different from any coalition government which had hitherto existed -- different in that it was created by a popular army which pulled the strings behind it all the time. Nothing important could be decided without the approval of Castro and his

associates, who had the full backing of the army and peasantry, and later of the urban workers. They began to pass laws of a revolutionary nature and sloughed off the bourgeois personnel from the government in the process. Whenever there was a disagreement between Castro and the cabinet, Castro always got his way, and the minister directly involved would simply be forced to resign. The fact is that the coalition government was only a facade all along. It never had any real power. The real power was the rebel army, and Castro risked being deposed by this army if he didn't carry out its wishes.

It is therefore proper to speak of Cuba as a workers state -- one whose class character was greatly obscured and whose power to be exercised as such was greatly limited by the lack of Marxist consciousness, but nevertheless a workers state -- as soon as the rebel army took control of the country on New Year's Day, 1959. Cuba did not, however, have a workers and peasants government until the important bourgeois officials were replaced by revolutionaries. Huberman and Sweezy declare the end of this process to have taken place with the resignation of Lopez Fresquet as Minister of Finance, and his replacement in that post by Diaz Astarian, in March 1960, although they foresaw further defections of government leaders even from the revolutionary camp. The majority resolution, with as much justification, regards this turning point to have taken place with the formal end of the coalition in the fall of 1959.

We cannot consider the acts of nationalizing industries and establishing a monopoly of foreign trade as representing in themselves a change in the nature of the state. The economic and social revolution and the political revolution are separate things, the latter being a prerequisite for the former. The formation of the workers militia was indeed an important milestone in the advance of the revolution, but that also did not represent an overturn in state power. The only time a conquest of state power occurred was when the rebel army defeated Batista.

When we speak of a workers state or a bourgeois state, we mean which class controls the state apparatus and is able to use it to further its own social interests. History has provided us with many examples to confirm Marx' and Lenin's prognosis that the working class cannot use a bourgeois state apparatus to serve its own interests. Bolivia is indeed an example which we would do well to bear in mind. In that instance a left-wing government, resting on the same old bourgeois state, was supported from without by a proletarian military force. This left the bourgeoisie with a free hand politically, and it was even able partially to restore the old army. In Cuba, however, the state was controlled from within by the revolutionary army and the 26th of July Movement. The official government was bourgeois at first, but when this government attempted to use the state in its own interests, it ran against a brick wall. The government was simply thrown out from within. This could not even be said of China from 1949 to 1953. There, the relationship between government and state was reversed: The official government was that of the CCP -- a workers and peasants government; but the state, in many parts of the country, was still controlled by the Kuomintang, which used it in its interests until it had to be forcibly destroyed.

The lack of formal democratic channels of control in Cuba has puzzled many of us. The reason for this, of course, was the merging of the military with the political struggle, and the predominance of the army in the conquest of power. We can no doubt look for more revolutions of this type in the smaller and primarily agricultural countries of Latin America, especially Central America and the Caribbean islands. In these countries agricultural

workers form the bulk of the revolutionary class; therefore, a guerrilla struggle beginning in the countryside is likely to be the main driving force of the revolution. Also, the owning class does not have very firmly rooted political institutions in these countries, its main support coming from the army.

In the larger, more industrialized countries, however, such as Venezuela and Argentina, the separate political struggle will be indispensable. In Venezuela, especially, there is a great danger of a repetition of Bolivia. The URD party, whose main support comes from the native bourgeoisie, has been moving steadily farther to the left, and we can expect it to be the chief contender for power in a revolution by pro-Castro forces against Betancourt, particularly since Larrazabal, who headed the military junta prior to Betancourt's election is associated with this party. But make no mistake about it, the URD will rest on the bourgeois state and defend it.

We must understand, however, that in Cuba the rebel army, despite its inadequacy as a permanent organ of workers' control, played the same role in the struggle for power that the soviets played in Russia. Would anyone doubt that if the soviets, when still under control of the Mensheviks and SR's, had taken power, Russia would still have been a workers state -- even if, let us say, the Mensheviks and SR's had invited capitalist politicians to participate in the soviets and renamed them "workers, peasants, and capitalists soviets" (a situation comparable to the coalition period in Cuba)? Even in this case, the soviets would still have been working-class organizations, and if they had been the state, the country would have been a workers state. We can also say with assurance that the capitalists would not have been able to do much within the soviets and they would eventually have been simply thrown out.

Of course, the question of whether to support the regime is another thing altogether. When Lenin urged the soviets controlled by the compromise parties to take power, he went no further toward offering support to these parties than to pledge that the Bolsheviks would not call for an insurrection as long as they, the Bolsheviks, were allowed democratic rights. There was no reason to orient ourselves any differently toward Castro when he first took power. However, after observing him for a little while, a keen mind, which paid more attention to analyzing the situation at hand than to fitting norms of past events into a new groove, could have sensed that Castro tended to base himself on the initiative of the masses rather than keeping within the confines of established law, and this would have given us a clue that he might turn out to be a real Marxist. In the same way we might have expected Lumumba to have learned something from experience too, who, unlike Nkrumah and Sekou Toure, was beginning to arouse the people to independent action. Castro, however, had the advantage that his power to begin with rested on a popular army and not on a bourgeois state apparatus.

This is not to suggest that our tactical approach was inadequate at any time. To be sure, it was easier to arrive at a correct tactical orientation than to characterize the stages through which the revolution passed, which indicates, if anything, that we have more of Lenin's assets than of Trotsky's. We had the advantage, however, of being able to keep in close touch with the Cuban revolution at all times, something which is not the case with respect to China and which was not the case with the British comrades with respect to Cuba.

May 22, 1961
Chicago

STATEMENT OF CLARIFICATION

By Fred Mazelis

In an introductory note to her article, "An Answer to the Kennedy-Schlesinger-Draper Thesis," in the Discussion Bulletin No. 10, Comrade Nora Roberts states that this article had been rejected "on political grounds" by the YSA National Executive Committee for publication in the May issue of the Young Socialist. It would be hard to conceive of a statement which had less basis in fact. Since this question has been raised, I feel it would be helpful to print, for the information of the comrades, the extract of the minutes of the YSA NEC meeting of May 2, 1961, on this point. The discussion under Young Socialist dealt with two points and only the point dealing with the questions which Nora raised is here quoted in full:

* * *

Point 5. YOUNG SOCIALIST

Meeting recessed to read material to be discussed.

Tim reported that the Editorial Board had considered three major pieces dealing with the Cuban invasion: an editorial attacking State Department-CIA; an article on Cuba defense demonstrations in U.S.; and an attack on those liberals and radicals who refuse to defend the Cuban Revolution. The editorial by Sherry, was approved unanimously by the board. However the board had differences over the other two pieces which necessitates bringing them before the NEC: (1) Tim and Martha felt that the article dealing with those who refuse to defend the Cuban Revolution should concentrate its attack on the YPSL-SP-SDF. Nora disagreed with this approach and did not wish to incorporate it into her article. Thus we have two alternative articles to consider.

Nora's article had been read by those present. Martha summarized orally the contents of her article.

Motion by Tim: To print Martha's article.

Counter-Motion by Nora: To print article based on general line of Nora's article.

Discussion: Nora, Martha, Jim R., Shane, Fred, Art, Tim.

Tim withdrew his motion with the suggestion that the YS article concentrate on YPSL-SP-SDF in its treatment.

Motion by Arthur: In view of the fact that the only article which the NEC as a whole has read at this point is the Nora Roberts article, I propose that any article which is subject to amendment be that which Nora has submitted, especially considering that no political differences concerning it have been expressed.

Motion by Tim: The meeting be recessed to give comrades the chance to read the Curti article. Passed unanimously.

Motion by Arthur withdrawn.

Meeting reconvened at 11:03 P.M.

Discussion: Jim L., Sherry, Barbara.

Motion by Tim: That second round be limited to three minutes per speaker. Passed Unanimously

Discussion: Jim R., Nora, Tim, Arthur, Shane, Martha.

Motion by Tim: The YS article combine the basic line of the Roberts article on White Paper-Theodore Draper and the basic line of the Curti article on SP-YPSL. That the Editorial Board be assigned to implementing this task.

Vote on Nora's motion: For: Jim L., Nora, Arthur, Sherry.
Against: Shane, Martha, Tim, Fred, Jim R.
Consultative: Barbara for.

Motion failed.

Vote on Tim's motion: For: Tim, Jim R., Martha, Shane, Fred.
Against: Sherry, Nora, Jim L., Arthur.
Consultative: Barbara against.

Motion carried.

Statement by Nora: In reference to Tim's motion, no part of the Roberts article may be used in connection with an article whose line is counterposed to the basic line of the Roberts article.

* * *

From the above, it is clear that the Roberts article was rejected only in Comrade Nora's mind. Especially important are Comrade Arthur's correct statement that no political differences with Nora's article had been expressed. Comrade Tim's motion (which carried) that the YS article combine the basic line of the Roberts article on the White Paper-Draper Thesis and the basic line of the Curti article on SP-YPSL, and Comrade Nora's concluding statement that no part of the Roberts article may be used in connection with an article whose line is counterposed (!) to the basic line of the Roberts article.

In deference to Nora, her article was not used in connection with the article attacking YPSL in the May YS. The NEC voted unanimously at its meeting of May 22 to print Nora's article in the Summer YS, on a motion by Tim which included this proposal. It is obvious from the above that at no time was Nora's article rejected, let alone on political grounds. From the record as cited above, it is clear that the NEC majority has not attempted to present its line on the Cuban question in the Young Socialist, although accusations to that effect have been made. More accusations of this nature can be expected in the future, no matter how little connection they have with the reality. When these sort of accusations are raised, they should simply be checked by consulting the record.

May 25, 1961

THE LEADERSHIP IN CUBA

By Fred Halstead

"Castro told me the other day that he was a professional revolutionary, and when I asked him what he meant by that he said, 'I can't stand injustice.'" -- "Sartre on Cuba," page 44.

"The forms of the bourgeois States are exceedingly various, but their substance is the same and in the last analysis inevitably the Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to communism will certainly bring a great variety and abundance of political forms, but the substance will inevitably be: The Dictatorship of the Proletariat." -- Lenin, "State and Revolution."

Like any new event, the Cuban Revolution presents difficult problems of analysis. Two of these, highlighted by the minority, are the question of the revolutionary party and the forms of workers power. They deserve serious attention.

The minority claims that no matter what economic and social measures the Cuban Revolution has taken it cannot yet have reached the stage of workers power because the Cubans didn't have a real revolutionary party to lead this process, and because certain classic forms of workers power, namely soviets or workers councils, don't exist there. They also say that if we recognize Cuba as a workers state in spite of this, we are calling into question the need for a revolutionary party in Cuba, and perhaps in general.

This is the wrong way to go about trying to wrap your brain around the Cuban Revolution -- or anything else for that matter. Our theories -- even those which are abstracted from so many and such important experiences as to have reached the level of principle -- do not have a life of their own.

They are tools of thought which help us to understand and participate in new events. They don't substitute for thought. And they don't come before the new facts, except as guides in approaching them. The facts come first. That is where we got our theories and principles in the first place -- particularly these two -- by studying concrete revolutionary situations and workers organizations.

Our theory of the decisive importance of consciousness in the proletarian revolution does not tell us to assume that this element does not exist in a particular movement because we are not in correspondence with its leaders, or that a particular group of revolutionists is not capable of learning Marxism because they are not affiliated with us.

No, our theory tells us that consciousness is indispensable, that it has to be infused into the mass movement by a cadre capable of becoming the leaders of the mass movement, that wherever we are we must build such a cadre. When we face the facts and see that a dictatorship of the general poor over the privileged has been established in Cuba, we are not thereby denigrating the importance of the revolutionary Marxist cadre or the conscious element generally. On the contrary, our theory points to the conclusion that a conscious revolutionary leadership of very high quality does exist in Cuba even though it is not affiliated with the world Trotskyist movement. We need not rely on

deduction alone. We already have available considerable supporting evidence, some of which is presented below.

Of course, this does not insure that the quality of the leadership and the cadre, its consciousness included, is sufficient to carry the revolution the rest of the way, only that it was adequate to the qualitative point of achieving a proletarian dictatorship. That is quite a bit, and a leadership that has passed that test will probably pass others.

Nor does this bolster in any way the idea that the attempt to build a world Trotskyist cadre is not necessary, or that it is not necessary to build a revolutionary party, infusing into it the maximum possible Marxist thought in any country whatsoever. We have no reason to assume that the Cuban revolutionists themselves do not need the addition of Trotskyist theory as such, if they are not already getting it (and I say that advisedly). Nor do we have any reason to assume that other revolutionary cadres are going to be built in other parts of the world out of some spontaneous process because of the mounting objective pressures favoring proletarian revolutionary developments. Why not? Because Fidel Castro was just as indispensable to the success of the Cuban Revolution as Lenin was to the Russian, and such leaders are exceedingly rare.

And I hope nobody will interpret this as my saying that Fidel Castro is another Lenin. I don't think he is -- because for one thing, if he hadn't read Lenin, he wouldn't have been able to do what he did in Cuba. (See "Fidel Castro," by Jules Dubois, page 45, for mention of book by Lenin found on Castro's second in command at the Moncada attack in 1953 and Castro's statement to the prosecutor: "Anyone who was never interested in socialist literature is an ignoramus.")

On Castro's Cadre

When Castro first came to our attention -- we read about his landing in Oriente in December 1956 -- we applied our theories to the few facts available and weren't very excited with the results. We thought to ourselves, "Probably another adventure like so many others that lead to nothing." But we didn't put that in the paper because we knew we were pretty ignorant of the facts of Cuban politics and we don't like to go on record unless we know what we are talking about.

We know now (see Dubois) that at that time Castro had already been a professional revolutionary for eight years. That he had been involved in at least three previous armed revolutionary attempts in as many countries in Latin America (Cuba, Panama and Colombia -- briefly in the latter two, but an indicator of his interest in the Latin-American revolution generally). That he was a well-known figure in Cuba. That he had already broken with the reformist parties there. That he had built a cadre of followers with whom he had earned tremendous authority by his deeds, ability and character. That in this cadre were men who had participated in and studied the Bolivian revolution and the Guatemalan tragedy. That waiting by prearrangement to join them in Oriente were a number of revolutionary peasants, who had themselves experienced struggle and gained a certain respect from the poor people there. That Castro's cadre started its guerrilla war in the mountains by shooting a crooked landlord and distributing the land.

Had we known all this we'd have paid more attention, but we'd still have been skeptical because we'd also have known from reading "History Will Absolve Me," (1953) that Castro's program was contradictory. He was for the poor and the humble but he wasn't four-square against "free enterprise" and as Marxists we know that no honest man can reconcile those two things -- unless he just hasn't learned this yet.

We'd have pointed out that anyone seriously out to make a land reform in Cuba would run smack up against capitalism just as surely and as quickly as if he tried it in Texas. Most Cuban agriculture was capitalist, and four out of five of those hungry peasants weren't really peasants at all but wage workers on big capitalist farms-- a major social difference being that in Cuba, they had their shacks on the side of the road and around the cities, while in Texas they sleep without shacks in the dry gulches and get chased across the border after the crop is in so you don't even know they are there.

But until they won the war, Castro's cadre was apparently not heavily involved with the agricultural proletariat, for the simple reason that the guerrillas operated in the mountains where the plots were small, not in the areas of large-scale capitalist agriculture.

We now know, from the "Manual of Civic Opportunity" -- published in 1960 by the Cuban Ministry of Education, widely distributed, and still being supplemented by inserts in a popular magazine -- that a school for political training was established in the mountains in November 1957 for guerrillas. The introduction to the manual says: "In a place known as Tumbasieta, by the waters of the rio Mayari, not far from the tributaries of the Sierra Cristal, was founded a school for teachers of the rebel troops. It was called "Jose Marti" because the essence of the doctrine imparted there was his... The first course had only 13 participants. The second 32, the third 58. The study, the lively discussions on the problems of the Cuban Revolution held there were intense, more than 12 hours a day. They were interrupted only when airplanes bombed and strafed the zone. From there went out several platoons of revolutionary teachers, to the most remote places of the Second Oriental Front "Frank Pais" to spread the program of the revolution. The boys, who when they came to the school expressed dissatisfaction because for 15 days they would not be able to participate in combat, became interested by study in the development of the course and at the end they were seized with great enthusiasm for the educational task. They went out to fulfill the slogan which comandante Raul Castro had given them: 'Convert the rebels into conscious revolutionaries.'"

Further down, the introduction says: "The 'Jose Marti' school was fulfilled in this sense in other fronts of the Revolutionary War; in the eighth column, Ciro Redondo, Las Villas, and in the Sierra Maestra." (All translations by F.H.)

And anyone laboring under the illusion that Jose Marti was a bourgeois liberal had better read his stuff. But get it from a library, not from the distorted handouts of the U.S. State Department.

This, then, was Castro's cadre when he took power: Several thousand tested, disciplined people, with a leadership that knew the value of theoretical work, had studied Latin-American revolutions, had studied their own country's economic and social problems in the most concrete detail, and were determined to develop its potentialities against all obstacles. Their social

base at this time appears to have been the Cuban peasantry. This cadre, in turn, had authority over the two other sections of the 26th of July Movement. These were the underground in the towns -- the largest and most amorphous of the three sections -- and the 26ers in exile who were largely urban working-class people who couldn't make a living in Cuba under the old regime.

To my knowledge -- which is admittedly limited -- there have been no prominent defections from Castro's original guerrilla cadre. Remember, that in addition to Castro's groups in Oriente, there were at least three separate guerrilla groups operating in Las Villas province, only one of which was Castro's.

The Working Class Enters the Scene

Most of us remember the first weeks after Batista fled as the period of the liberal capitalist cabinet and of the destruction of the old army. It was also something else. Batista left a U.S. puppet in power. Castro, who was still in Santa Clara, and who did not militarily control the whole island, called a general strike in Havana. This lasted a week while Castro's army made its victory march across the country to the capitol. Castro says: "It was this strike, and we are able to affirm this with all the authority that having been actors in those decisive hours gives us, it was the general strike which destroyed the last manipulations of the enemies of the people; it was the general strike which delivered to us the stronghold of the capital of the Republic; and it was the general strike that gave all power to the Revolution." ("Manual" page 5.)

A new force had entered the revolution, the urban proletariat, and from that moment Castro had to reckon with it. The workers immediately began making demands. We were very critical of Castro at this time, though supporting every progressive move of the new regime. After all, he had put a bunch of liberal capitalists in the cabinet and was telling the workers to take it easy, to maintain national unity and wait at least until the sugar harvest was in.

We had heard that kind of stuff before too many times, and had good reason for skepticism. Lillian Kiezel in the January 12 Militant pointed out: "The State Department is watching the revolution with reservations. What they fear is that Castro will not be able to control the forces set loose. The youth... the peasantry and the workers, who were willing to fight for Castro's 1955 program, want more than just the ouster of Batista."

Reports the Militant of February 16, 1959:

"Nineteen sugar mills are shut down by strikes despite a decree of the Urrutia government freezing labor conditions in the mills until the present crop has been harvested. The producers claim that the 'exaggerated demands' of the workers would increase costs by 70% ... their demand for a six-hour day -- if won -- would undoubtedly relieve the unemployment situation.

"A strike at Shell Oil Company was settled this week after the workers received a wage increase of up to 100% and a promise that the company would contribute \$250,000 toward workers homes.

"The workers at the Cuban Electric Co. ... have been on a slow-down strike for a couple of weeks. They settled February 9th when the company agreed to

reinstate 80 workers who had been fired before the revolution for political reasons. In addition they received a wage increase and other benefits.

"Last week a group of these workers camped outside the Presidential Palace and declared a hunger strike. They ended this demonstration only when President Urrutia agreed to meet with them."

And in the February 23 Militant: "In a strike that closed 21 sugar mills, one owner was presented with 90 demands. 'He figures it would cost \$4 million immediately to grant what labor is asking,' the Wall Street Journal's Ed Cony reported. 'Sample: 500 men were laid off some time ago; they all must be reinstated with full back pay. 'They might as well take the mill,' says the owner.'

"Castro ordered the workers to return but they would not be persuaded until they were promised support for their demands after the sugar season was over.

"In Havana an owner decided to close two restaurants and bars. But the workers refused to quit when ordered off the job. That night, to the vast surprise of management, the workers opened up the El Caribe and the Sugar Bar. They also gave food and beverage manager orders not to set foot in the kitchen. He obeyed."

The old discipline was breaking down -- right at the point of production. The workers were refusing to accept it. Take note! From this time on, this was no longer a mere national or bourgeois revolution. Either the workers would establish a new discipline of their own incentives and in their own interests or the capitalists would restore the old discipline by blood and fire. Everything in between would be just jockeying for position. Take note also of the date, February, only one month after Batista fled. The capitalist ministers were still in power. To my knowledge no expropriations or interventions of imperialist property had yet taken place. The land reform law wasn't issued until three months later.

Castro and other revolutionary leaders have repeatedly described their leftward movement as "rebound" against blows from the imperialists and their internal allies. But this is only one side of the coin. The sabotage and pressure by the capitalists was in turn a growing reaction to the refusal of the working class to accept the old order at the point of production. The action of Castro's cadre in this process has been described as empirical. I don't buy that completely. We have known too many "people's" leaders, and some who called themselves Marxists, who reacted differently. They buckled under the capitalist pressure, making empty promises to the workers while they allowed the capitalists to mobilize forces for the death blow, or they acted indecisively, or they took the capitalists' side outright. Indeed, at that time we expected Castro to do something like that. But he didn't.

This critical period, classic in every proletarian revolution, when the old labor discipline is breaking down, and the capitalists are attempting to re-establish it, lasted for over a year, hitting one industry and area after another, spreading throughout the country. Castro was concerned with production with keeping it going, improving it. But he refused to accept the capitalists' solution. This period ended with the decisive repudiation of the capitalists' role in production in the fall of 1960. Each of the cadre's specific actions

was that of practical people concerned with production, bold improvisers, but their method was that of conscious revolutionaries: reliance on the masses. They carefully cultivated the support of the poor and the humble even when it meant alienating powerful forces, professionals and members of their own movement. They knew that for every privileged character they lost they'd win 100 laborers. They chose to give leadership to the producers. Above all, they deliberately raised the level of consciousness of the masses -- and of themselves. Castro's four-hour speeches played, and still play, a great role in this. Very few -- and in my opinion not the best -- of these have been translated into English. We can all learn a great deal about how to teach complex and profound Marxist ideas to ordinary workers from these speeches.

Forms of Workers Power

There are, to my knowledge, at this time at least four nationwide mass institutions in Cuba with policy functions, besides the militia. In addition, there are literally thousands of local organizations, which hold meetings -- and elections -- and discussions, and influence the daily lives of the people, the crops to be planted, the conditions of labor, sports, education, housing, recreation, etc.

The four are: The Technical Advisory Councils, elected on a shop and industry basis, by and from the workers, to advise management on production problems. The Trade Unions, which now include almost every worker in Cuba. They are all industrial unions, and the officers are elected and subject to recall by the members. The "Grievance Committees" formed from every place of work with 10 employees or more. These are tripartite judiciary bodies, one for each place of work. One member is elected by the workers, one by their union and one by their management. But all of them are chosen from among the workers. They arbitrate on-the-job grievances. The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. Their original function was to watch out for sabotage and arrest counterrevolutionaries, but now they do anything some other organization isn't taking care of, from cheering up sick people to holding discussion meetings on socialism.

From a distance it is difficult to tell just what the real content of these forms are. But we have some indication from a typical speech by Castro made to the Committee for Defense of the Revolution of the Havana construction workers (April 8 Revolution).

He discusses the question of social discipline and bureaucracy in the clearest terms, describing all privilege as an evil. The solution, he says, is to increase production and raise the level of consciousness of the functionaries, as well as of the masses. Remember, this is to a mass meeting of ordinary workers who are armed and have the formal right to arrest on their own initiative.

I close with a translation of the opening to a speech by Che Guevara from the May 10 Revolution, of possible interest to George Breitman:

"Before beginning these words of remembrance, I would like to apologize for making this event, which was scheduled for eight thirty, start late, because in this epoch of the Socialist Revolution, we have to give the example of punctuality, which is the example of organization guaranteeing the effective use of all the forces of labor in order to better complete our mission."

May 22, 1961

ON VIEWING CONTRADICTIONS IN THE CUBAN STATE

By Rosemary Stone

The minority seems almost willing to overlook the definition of the Cuban state if the majority, in turn, would concede that there is a real danger of the revolution moving backwards to capitalist restoration without violence or civil war. Their underestimation of the need for a definition is a key to the error of their position.

If the state is indeterminable and can go in either direction -- without a political revolution -- then there is a real danger of capitalist restoration. If it is definable as a workers state then it can only be overthrown through a violent counterrevolution and civil war. The Soviet Union has never yet sold out a workers state, that is, turned it back to capitalism. In present world conditions of colonial revolution and imperialist bankruptcy it is less capable than ever of turning back the clock on revolution, much less on an accomplished workers state. This is why a correct analysis and definition is vital.

To the majority, the combination of factors that stamp Cuba as a workers state are not only plainly apparent. They are inescapable. How can the minority not see them? Or would seeing them destroy their theory?

Priscilla asked the minority to examine more fully the class needs, the nature of the revolutionary economy and its needs, the development of the state and of the leadership in the revolutionary process, etc. In other words, she asked the minority to open their eyes and to proceed with their analysis in the manner that Trotsky analyzed the Soviet Union in "The Revolution Betrayed."

So far I can't see that Comrade Shane or the others on the minority have come anywhere near dealing with these questions. Shane has not employed the method of historic materialism and he is therefore unable to arrive at a class understanding of the revolutionary developments in Cuba. He abstracts from the arsenal of instruments available to a Marxist dialectician one tool -- contradictions. With this one yardstick he measures everything and with this one tool he hammers out a theory.

By listing contradictions in the Cuban state, he attempts to show a schismatic personality. But actually everything in nature has a schismatic personality. By simply posing contradictions, Shane only begins the job of a Marxist. To arrive at a real analysis, it is necessary to understand not only what forces are in opposition but something about the forces themselves -- their origin, in what direction they are moving, what is the interplay of one against the other, which one is in the ascendancy, in what stage of ascendancy and so on. Simply to say, "Here is a contradiction," and then proceed to draw a conclusion has nothing in common with scientific method. Nor has the tendency to equate each contradiction as of equal importance to every other contradiction: as if symptoms of malfunction in the little toe were equal to symptoms of disease in the heart. Or as if by adding up all the symptoms of the body we could arrive at an overall, general diagnosis of the whole organism.

Let's look at Shane's contradictions and his conclusions (Bulletin No. 8, "The Nature of the State in Cuba").

1. The contradiction between the original aims of the Cuban Revolution and its immanent tendencies as a permanent revolution.

There was a "continual interaction," Shane says, between the original bourgeois-democratic program and U.S. imperialism, "in this process ... it is the counterrevolution that has played the initiating role." Regardless of what motivating forces drove the revolution farthest and fastest, one fact is unassailable: private property relations have been destroyed, workers needs and interests are being served, a qualitatively new stage has been reached. Is this the same contradiction that existed in 1959, Shane, between the bourgeois-democratic and the socialist aims? Or has one force, the revolutionary force, in all essentials of the struggle overcome the opposing reactionary force?

2. Contradiction between the middle-class nature of the leadership and the role of the workers and peasants in determining the immediate goals of the revolution.

Nowhere have I seen the minority describe the stages in the development of the leaders of the Castro government, from Fidel's "History Will Absolve Me" speech, through the years of struggle against Batista, through the early 1959 days of Urrutia and his bourgeois-democratic cabinet, through the crisis of the Agrarian Reform Law which split the government, sparked the intervention of the workers in Havana and the rural workers and peasants, thus sloughing off the conservative elements and radicalizing the 26th of July leadership. It should not be necessary to cite the sources (the Militant is one of many) where this process has been described. Either a form of blindness or a stubborn refusal to look at historic facts could lead to this statement in Shane's document: "... in decisive respects that leadership has yet to transcend its middle-class nature." A qualitative change has erased any essential contradiction that existed between the leadership and the masses. What the minority sees and calls contradictions are secondary and superficial formal differences.

3. Contradiction between the economic backwardness of Cuba and the socialist aspirations of the revolution.

"Under conditions of protracted isolation and poverty," Comrade Shane writes, "the cooperatives could very well develop in a capitalist way, in antagonism to the city workers and exerting enormous pressure for submission to U.S. capitalism as the price for return to the U.S. market."

It is interesting that Trotsky in 1905 had a similar view. He wrote that the Russian proletariat, having come to the helm and not meeting support from the West, "will come into hostile conflicts... with the broad masses of the peasantry with whose cooperation it came to power." Both Lenin and Trotsky expounded on the unreliability of the peasantry as allies. But the peasantry they mistrusted was a land-owning class. In 1906 Lenin wrote, "the small-scale commodity producers, among them the peasants, will inevitably turn against the proletarian when he goes from freedom toward socialism." But the experiences of the 1917 revolution led both men to modify their viewpoint in regard to the Russian peasantry. "We have emphasized," Lenin said, "that in Russia we have a minority of workers in industry and an enormous majority of petty land-owners. In such a country the social revolution could achieve its final success only on two conditions... its timely support by a social revolution in one or several advanced countries or ... an agreement between ... the proletariat which holds the state power and the majority of the peasant population... Only an agreement with the peasants can save the socialist revolution in Russia until the revolution begins in other countries."

Trotsky, drawing also from the lessons of 1917, wrote that the solution for unity "depends in the last analysis upon the quantitative and qualitative correlations between industry and agriculture. The peasantry will the more voluntarily and successfully take the road of collectivization the more generously the town is able to fertilize their economy and their culture."

Certainly the contradiction between the peasants and the aims of the socialist revolution in Cuba is far less than in Russia after the revolution! The majority of the Cuban peasantry was already a wage-earning, proletarianized class, collectively organized, with a long history of revolutionary struggle (especially in Oriente province). The economy is not isolated but has access to trade with a third of the world. The unity of the city workers and rural workers in Cuba has in fact proceeded exactly as Trotsky counseled it must: with the town fertilizing the economy and the culture of the peasantry.

4. Contradiction between the physical situation of Cuba and the anti-U.S. essence of the revolution.

Shane has in this instance contradicted his own contradiction and neatly devastated one of his own arguments. He says, "in the space of a few months nearly all the established trade relationships between the two countries were destroyed by the unilateral action of the U.S. government." Hasn't this negated what he calls the "necessity for a close tie between Cuba and the U.S."? Hasn't Cuba, thanks to Soviet and Eastern trade, freed herself economically from the U.S.? Isn't the contradiction resolved? (Under a new set of conditions, new contradictions may arise, but that is another question.)

5. Contradiction between the dependence of the revolution on Soviet aid and the entirely counterrevolutionary nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

I would not disagree that "Soviet foreign policy is based not on international proletarian solidarity, but on the specific interests of the parasitic caste of privileged bureaucrats" and that these interests are antagonistic to the needs of the Cuban workers. But Shane, being formalistic about his own set of contradictions, leaves out another essential contradiction. That is the contradiction between the interests of the Kremlin and the possibility of carrying out these interests in its foreign policy. Shane hasn't dealt much with this global contradiction, but it is crucial in making an assessment of the Cuban revolution. The Kremlin may want to use Cuba, as Shane fears, "to extract concessions from the U.S." To date there has been no evidence of it, and the development of world events points to less and less of a possibility of a sellout. Shane's fears stem from failure to look at the effect the Cuban Revolution and other colonial revolutionary struggles are having on the Soviet Union instead of only at the effect the Soviet Union may have on these revolutions. The fears also stem from his failure to recognize that Cuba is a workers state -- a fait accompli -- and that sellouts of workers states are an entirely different matter from sellouts during revolutionary struggles.

6. Contradiction between the extension of the revolution and the need for diplomatic support from bourgeois governments.

Shane reminds us that "the necessity for diplomatic relations with capitalist states is imposed on every revolutionary regime in a capitalist world" and that "the Bolshevik revolution had the same necessity in its early years." Trotsky, referring in "The Revolution Betrayed" to the series of treaties which

the Soviet government concluded with bourgeois governments, explained: "The fundamental line of the international policy of the Soviets rested on the fact that this or that commercial, diplomatic or military bargain of the Soviet government with the imperialists...should in no case limit or weaken the struggle of the proletariat of the corresponding capitalist country...." Isn't this the position of the Castro government? Hasn't it called for revolutions in Latin America? Hasn't it disseminated revolutionary propaganda throughout these countries? Hasn't it sent spokesmen for the revolution to propagandize throughout Latin America? Hasn't it invited delegates from these countries to come to Cuba and learn about the revolution? How does this differ from Trotsky's admonitions? Shane says, without explanation or examples, that "in Cuba the absolute confusion between the government apparatus and the July 26th Movement renders the problem of relations to bourgeois regimes considerably more difficult." The confusion appears to me to be in Shane's head. The reality is that the very opposite of a contradiction exists: the identity of the Cuban Revolution with the revolutionary movement in Latin America.

7. Finally, Shane arrives at a generalized contradiction: that between the anticapitalist nature of the Cuban revolution as expressed at every point of its development and the fact that the proletariat has thus far failed to take leadership of the revolution through the establishment of workers councils as institutions of state power and the formation of a mass revolutionary-Marxist political party.

This is the general contradiction because, he says, a "progressive resolution of all the others hinges upon it." All the other contradictions are unresolvable without workers councils and without a Marxist revolutionary party.

In six different categories, Shane misses the essence of the relationship of forces and then proceeds to the conclusion that his so-called contradictions must be resolved by a Marxist revolutionary party. If he would look at the reality he would be forced to see that these contradictions have already been essentially resolved. He would then have to turn the problem around and ask: how come these contradictions were resolved without a Marxist party? How come we have a workers state here in Cuba -- with weaknesses, yes, and dangers, but a workers state which cannot be reversed short of violent overthrow? How do we best defend this state, extend its power and build the kind of movement that will spread it throughout the world? That is the beginning of a new discussion -- and I hope the minority will arrive at this beginning upon further reflection and examination of the evidence.

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