

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 30, August 14, 1978

Present: Barnes, Blackstock, Britton, Clark, Dixon, Garza, Hawkins, Horowitz, Jaquith, D. Jenness, Kramer, LaMont, Levine, Lovell, Morell, Petrin, Reid, Ring, Seigle, Stapleton, Stone, Waters

Guests: National Committee members, organizers, national department heads, special guests

Chair: Barnes

AGENDA: 1. Cuba

1. CUBA

Seigle reported. (See attached.)

Kramer reported. (See attached.)

Discussion

RECONVENED TUESDAY, AUGUST 15, 1978

Further Discussion

Proposal from Barnes: To limit speaking time to 15 minutes for speakers and that discussion and summaries end at 11 p.m.

Carried.

Further Discussion

Summary: Kramer (See attached.)

Summary: Seigle (See attached.)

Meeting adjourned.

REPORT BY LARRY SEIGLE

We are going to proceed with this discussion in two distinct—if interrelated—phases. The discussion we will have here is the first phase. This meeting will discuss our analysis of the Cuban revolution, review the position the party adopted in response to it, and how we have continued to politically intervene in the revolution as well as in the process that was set in motion by it in Latin America and the world.

This will prepare the Political Committee for the second phase of the discussion, which will center on our political stance toward the Cuban regime today. That too is interrelated with what we are discussing today but the focus will shift. That is, we will answer the question of whether we should change the party's present position and now call for a political revolution in Cuba, for the overthrow of the Castro regime by the Cuban workers and peasants.

The second stage of the discussion is not the central focus of this meeting. But it should be kept in mind as the objective of the discussion from the beginning.

To justify changing our political line and calling for the overthrow of the Castro government, it has to be shown that a hardened, crystallized bureaucratic caste rules in Cuba. By a bureaucratic caste we mean a privileged petty-bourgeois social layer, with institutionalized material privileges so far reaching that the interests of the ruling stratum are counterposed to the class interests and the welfare of the working masses of Cuba. It would have to be proven that in defense of its own interests, this caste rules through totalitarian methods, as is the case in the deformed and degenerated workers states. Further, it would have to be shown that this case consistently places its narrow national interests above those of the world revolution, follows a counterrevolutionary foreign policy, seeking in alliance with imperialism to strangle revolutionary struggles of the proletariat and anti-imperialist masses, in order to preserve the status quo and therefore its own privileged position, that is, its central policy guidelines—at home and abroad—are determined by its goal of building "socialism" in its own country. In other words the Castro team, whatever its national peculiarities due to its history, has clearly become a Stalinist formation.

We will not be satisfied with a mere listing of bureaucratic practices or instances where the Cuban leadership took wrong or reactionary positions on world events. We all know there has never been a healthy workers state in Cuba, that is, there has never been a government of workers and peasants councils. There have been mistakes and errors from the beginning and we have criticized them from the beginning, but these have not been decisive in our overall assessment of the regime. And it is not enough to say that specific institutions, for example the constitution and elected assemblies, which juridically reflect the absence of workers councils as the basis of the regime, can't be reformed but have to be totally replaced.

There is total agreement on that to my knowledge. We have to be convinced that a qualitative change has taken place, the Cuban Thermidor. We have to be shown how and when it took place. How the privileges were institutionalized and how they affect all major social strata and formations in Cuba.

Most importantly, comrades who propose such a change in our political position will have to convince the party that the Castro team has consistently failed to try to

advance the revolutionary cause elsewhere. They will have to convince the party that we can confidently predict that the Cuban leadership, in response to new revolutionary openings, will act to derail or block a revolutionary victory. They will have to prove that we can now act politically on the assumption that a revolutionary advance of proletarian revolution in Latin America would not attract the Castro regime, but would be met by hostility from the Cuban government and the Cuban Communist Party—that the guiding line of Castro's foreign policy is a search for a peaceful-coexistence deal with American imperialism.

If these things can be demonstrated then obviously we would have to change our political line. We would then begin to work for a political revolution and the overthrow of the Castro government, the Castro team that earlier led the revolution and threw out the United States imperialists and the Cuban capitalists. We would proclaim to the world the need for a political revolution in Cuba, as Trotsky did in the case of the Soviet Union after the 1933 events in Germany and the Comintern.

It might seem that this is a heavy burden of proof to be shouldered by these comrades who propose a fundamental change in our political line. Yes, it is a heavy burden. It ought to be. It would not be a small decision for American revolutionists to decide to call for the overthrow of the Cuban government. And we would want to be absolutely sure we were right before we carried out that political act. We would want to be sure that the facts backing up this position would convince any proletarian revolutionist or anti-imperialist fighter who objectively examined them. Our candidates for public office would have to explain and defend this position, as would the editorial staffs of the party press. They would have to be armed with the relevant facts and analysis to defend such a position. So we will want to examine the evidence that exists in favor of a change in our political line, very, very carefully.

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I think it would be helpful to look at the method we used in responding politically to the Cuban revolution, before outlining the stages it went through.

We didn't start with a model about how socialist revolutions are supposed to occur according to the norms of proletarian revolution, either as set forth in Marxist theory or the experience of the Russian revolution, and match this with what was happening in Cuba in order to define whether or not we could call what had occurred there a proletarian revolution. We started with the *reality* of the Cuban revolution. With the facts.

We think the general features of the Russian revolution provide a guide and model on how to make proletarian revolutions. Included among these features were the existence of soviets and of a mass Bolshevik Party, which led the insurrectionary proletariat to power in alliance with the peasantry. But we did not say, "Well the Cuban revolution didn't happen that way, and since it doesn't measure up to our norms, it didn't happen."

This seems like an absurd way of putting it, but we had a fight inside the party and the international over exactly this question, with the Healyites and the Lambert group. Those comrades said that the Cuban revolution did not live up to their standards, and therefore it didn't qualify as a socialist revolution. That was their political response.

They made the classical sectarian mistake of utilizing our theoretical heritage not as a tool for intervening in, testing, and understanding unfolding reality, but as a set of rigid definitions. And when the reality turned out to be a little more complicated than theory anticipated, they "solved" the contradiction by denying the reality and turning their back on a revolution.

Jim Cannon had a few words to say about this kind of sectarianism in 1961. This is a revolutionary politician talking with decades of experience in mind: "The only *revolutionary* policy for Cuba is to *recognize* the revolution there, as it is and as it is developing as a *socialist* revolution—and to *identify* ourselves with it, and to act as a part of it, not as scholastic wiseacres standing outside the living movement." (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 22, No. 17, June 1961.)

"What would our talk about revolution be worth," Jim asked, "if we couldn't recognize a revolution when we see it?" (Ibid.)

For Marxists, the supreme criterion is not the theoretical anticipation but the objective facts of experience as they unfold in the practice of the living class struggle.

The Cuban revolution was a big test for the Fourth International on a world scale. The challenge to us was to *recognize* the revolution, and *identify with* it; and to understand, as Cannon did, that this is a *precondition* to defending and extending that revolution. Healy and Lambert failed that test, as did the minority in the SWP that supported them.

It was those who passed that political test, those who began from a correct political standpoint, who were able to make the theoretical conquests required for understanding and explaining the Cuban revolution within the framework of the Trotskyist program, and enriching our understanding of the revolutionary process in other countries as well. The key was to begin with the correct political approach, to identify with a socialist revolution and recognize its leadership.

It's important to stress this point about our political response to the Cuban revolution. We were unconditional partisans of it. We identified with it. We did everything we could to get American workers and farmers and students to see the SWP as the party in the United States identified with the gains of the Cuban revolution, with the conquest by the Cuban masses.

We thought it was a great historic event, not just for Cuba but for the whole world. It was pretty good for us in the U.S. as well. It was an opening of the socialist revolution in our hemisphere. We sent Farrell Dobbs, our presidential candidate, to Cuba in 1960 and he toured the United States explaining what was really happening in Cuba and why working people should defend the revolution. The *Militant* answered all the lies and slanders against the Cuban revolution and its leadership, and reported extensively on the developments that took place.

In fact we loved the Cuban revolution. One of the reasons was that it set forces moving to the left outside of Cuba—including throughout Latin America and in the United States. It set some of us moving into the YSA and the SWP. It won an important layer of young people to the socialist movement—just as a few years later the Vietnamese revolution would win even more forces to our movement. And many of the young people who identified with the Cuban *leadership* joined our movement. They were different from the layer of people who *politically* identified with the Vietnamese leadership—not the Vietnamese

revolution, but the Vietnamese leadership—because they did not join our party.

As revolutionists we found we had something in common with the Cuban leaders. They led the Cuban masses to victory in a socialist revolution. That's what we are in business for, though we haven't done it since October 1917. So we thought that we could learn something from their success as well as share with them some of our ideas, our program, the historical experience of world revolution which they would have to absorb if they were to continue to move forward.

This stance of the party was a conscious political one. It was a political response to forces moving in our direction. This is the way revolutionists always respond to forces and currents moving in their direction. We don't begin by denouncing them for holding some mistaken ideas, or making mistakes. We search for points of agreement and for ways to explain our program and our disagreements in a way that will maximize the chances that they will understand and listen to what we have to say. How else can we win people to Trotskyism, to the Fourth International?

We always try to affect events, not just comment on them. We saw the Cuban revolution as a gigantic historical development. A non-Stalinist leadership was at the head of a revolution that had overthrown capitalism. The Stalinists were bypassed by the Cuban revolution. This was a tremendous historical fact and it gave us the opportunity to participate in the political process unfolding in Cuba, and in the process occurring among revolutionary forces in other countries who looked to Cuba for example and inspiration.

We were not interested in being sideline commentators. We wanted to participate in the process and to influence its development with the goal of winning fresh forces to Trotskyism. We were, as Joe Hanse put it, "fight[ing] for the soul of the Cuban revolution." [*Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*, By Joseph Hansen. Pathfinder Press, 1978, p. 94.]

The last thing we had was any kind of fatalistic conception that the Stalinists were predestined to win out in Cuba because we were too small, or the Cuban revolution was too weak, or the Castro leadership was not Marxist enough, to prevent it. We tried to steer history in the other direction, through what we said and wrote and by the active role that our party and the Fourth International played in defending that revolution. And we have maintained that course to this day.

The next general point is that we have always looked at the Cuban revolution in its world context. What was happening in Cuba could not be understood by looking at Cuba in isolation. First of all, the Cuban revolution could only be understood by seeing its relation to American imperialism, which had sucked the blood of the workers and peasants and exploited middle classes for more than sixty years, and had decided to smash the revolution.

We also had to place the Cuban revolution, as the Cubans themselves did, in the context of the existence of the Russian and Chinese workers states, where the economic conquests of the October revolution survive or were extended despite the counterrevolutionary character of the Stalinist castes that exercise power in those countries.

And we recognized that the Cuban revolution took place within a new relationship of class forces on a world scale. Nineteen fifty-nine was not 1919, when Soviet power in Russia was hanging by a thread, barely able to survive the

civil war and the imperialist onslaught.

Nineteen fifty-nine was not 1939, in the wake of the great defeats of the working class in Germany and Spain, which meant the spread of fascism and led to the Second World War.

The Cuban revolution took place in the context of the victory of the Soviet Union in World War II and the tremendous advance of the colonial revolution in the postwar period, including the Chinese revolution. A few years later it would be the Vietnamese revolution that would give the Cubans a breathing space, diverting the resources and attention of American imperialism. If the Vietnamese hadn't tied the U.S. down, it is quite possible that the napalm that was dropped on Vietnam would have been used in Cuba.

Our Responsibility: Defense of the Cuban Revolution

Finally, and most importantly, our starting point was our political responsibility to defend the Cuban revolution against imperialism. We knew that if we wanted to advance the revolution, make it possible to overcome its weaknesses and to fight for its extension, then we had to begin from the standpoint of defending that revolution against imperialism.

This also may seem to be so obvious that it's not worth discussing in the leadership of the SWP. But there was tremendous political pressure against defending the revolution, and that pressure reached right into the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. We were just emerging from the worst effects of the McCarthy era, before the gigantic changes in American political life brought about by the Vietnam War and the antiwar movement. The liberals, the "academic community," the Social Democrats—joined together to denounce the Castro "dictatorship." John Kennedy, who was ready to blow up the world in 1962 over Cuba, fulminated against Castro for "betraying" the Cuban revolution!

An example of how some petty-bourgeois socialists reacted was the response of the Young People Socialist League, then the social-democratic youth group. A week or so after the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, the YPSL in the Bay Area held a public meeting on Cuba where Max Shachtman spoke. Shachtman called for support to the "trade union" section of the gusano invading army, claiming that these were the "democratic socialists." These "democratic trade unionists," he said, were the forces that were going to restore democracy to totalitarian Cuba. If anybody wants to know what Shachtmanism is, that's it. That was the same line that was peddled by ex-Stalinist turned social-democrat Theodore Draper, who called Cuba "the revolution betrayed." The same line was promulgated by the State Department, White House adviser Arthur Schlesinger, and by all the Kennedy hangers-on.

If you weren't straight on identification with the revolution, you made a fatal mistake. You couldn't begin to solve the problems confronting the Cuban revolution without throwing yourself into combatting the very real threats of American imperialism. And with good reason nobody in Cuba would listen to you if you defaulted on the elementary duty of defending the Cuban revolution against Yankee imperialism.

Our party stood in the front ranks of the forces defending the Cuban revolution. There is no prouder chapter in the history of the party, because we set an example of how revolutionists stand up to their own imperialist government. It's my opinion that the party carried out this job

magnificently—given our limited resources—through our press, election campaigns, and through helping to build united-front actions against imperialism's attacks on Cuba. And we spread far and wide the speeches of the Cuban leadership and the truth about Cuba.

Our identification with this socialist revolution was the cornerstone of our whole policy. And if we hadn't made defense of it our central task, the rest of our program and our proposals wouldn't be worth a damn. The workers and peasants in Cuba (and everywhere else) would correctly have paid little attention to anything we might have suggested, except to be prejudiced in advance against any ideas coming from us.

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Origins of the July 26 Movement

What were the key stages in the social transformation that took place in Cuba?

January 1959 saw the victorious rebel army march into Havana. It was a small peasant-based guerrilla army, led by a radical, petty-bourgeois organization, the July 26 Movement.

It was built around a radical bourgeois-democratic program. And it had a significant urban organization and following.

First and foremost in the program of the July 26 Movement was the demand for a sweeping land reform. The program affirmed the goal of national independence. It demanded an end to the tyranny and the torture of the Batista dictatorship. And it included proposals for industrialization, advances in housing, in health, in education, and for raising the standard of living.

The first expression of what later became the July 26 Movement took the form of political opposition to the military coup by Batista in 1952. Castro and other liberal and radical petty-bourgeois and bourgeois figures attempted to oppose the dictatorship through legal challenges and so on. When they failed to develop a response from major sections of the bourgeoisie—we should note that the Stalinists opposed even these steps—Fidel organized the raid on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953. Then came the exile, and the conversion of the July 26 Movement into a disciplined organization; a serious political study of twentieth century revolutions, including the Algerian one; the return to Cuba on the ill-fated Granma in 1956; and finally the beginning of the guerrilla war in the Sierra Maestra and the launching of revolutionary propaganda aimed at the entire Cuban population.

As the rebel army grew and expanded its base of operations, it began to implement the land reform in the territory it controlled. Support grew among the peasantry for the land reform and for the rebel army.

The rebel army had a base of support and organization in the cities. There was an active underground. They raised substantial funds for the guerrilla war. There were organized attempts at sabotage, some of which were successful. However, the political movement in the cities was blunted by the opposition of the totally corrupt trade-union officialdom, which was in the pay of the Batista government, and by the betrayals and opposition of the Stalinists, who denounced the July 26 Movement as "petty-bourgeois adventurers" and fought that movement every inch of the way.

But the Batista regime was so weak and discredited that these obstacles did not prevent the advance of the guerrilla

movement, and at the final stage the rebel army emerged from the mountains and began to challenge the Batista military forces in regular combat. As in all genuinely popular revolutions, military action was only one factor in the political disintegration of the Batista army. The rebel columns advanced as the army fell apart. The support in the cities became overwhelming, culminating in the general strike at the beginning of January 1959, during which Batista got on an airplane for Florida.

The Coalition Government in Power

Three things were done in the first months of the new government:

One, learning the lesson of the 1954 CIA-organized overthrow of the Arbenz regime in Guatemala, the rebel leaders moved immediately to disband the Batista army and police. They put on trial the hated police torturers, although most of them escaped to Miami. These public trials were used to educate and mobilize the masses. It was this display of revolutionary determination and mass mobilization to carry out revolutionary justice that provoked the initial howls of pain and outrage from Washington about the "reign of terror" taking place in Cuba. The imperialists began to doubt that these Jacobins could be corrupted and kept under control.

Two, a coalition government was set up. The most important posts went to the bourgeois figures. A former judge, Manuel Urrutia, was named president. He had voted as a judge against the convictions of some of the rebel fighters who had been captured. Jose Miro Cardona, who was the president of the Havana Bar Association, was named prime minister.

Three, this bourgeois coalition government then proceeded to implement some of the demands that had been promised and fought for by the July 26 Movement. As soon as that began to take place, fissures within the government began to appear. The cutting edge was the radical agrarian reform law adopted in May 1959. Its implementation by the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), backed by the rebel army, provoked growing hostility in Washington and, at the same time, a deepening of the divisions within the coalition government in Cuba. The response of the team around Castro was not to back off but to respond with more and more radical stands and programs, and by turning to the masses for support through mobilizations of the working class in cities as well as the peasantry. These mobilizations grew as the workers and peasants put their stamp of approval on, and consolidated, the measures taken.

One by one the bourgeois ministers resigned from the government. By November, Che Guevara had taken over as head of the national bank, and the remaining bourgeois figures had been removed from the government.

Inauguration of the Workers and Farmers Government

The departure of the last bourgeois ministers from the government marked the point of qualitative change in the nature of the government. It marked the inauguration of the workers and farmers government.

As Joe Hansen explains in the book *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*: "By recognizing [not defining, but 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 popu-

lar 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." [Page 102.]

Among the most significant steps taken by this government was the arming of the population, the organization of a militia of a quarter of a million people, equivalent to a workers and farmers militia of eight million people in terms of the United States population.

The property relations defended by the state were not yet those of a workers state. The capitalist class had not yet been expropriated. It still hung onto its position of power in the economy. Joe Hansen wrote in July of 1960: "What has been established is a highly contradictory and highly unstable regime, subject to pressures and impulses that can move it forward or backward." There remained the contradiction between the government and the economic power of the native capitalists and their imperialist senior partners. What was needed was "to carry the revolution forward to its culmination by toppling bourgeois economic and social relations . . ." [*Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*, page 67.]

This was the key challenge. And it was met decisively and successfully by the Castro team. Under the impetus of and in the face of the escalating threats and offensive moves by Washington, and in the context of the mass mobilizations of the Cuban workers and peasants, the leadership itself initiated that next step.

Let's step back and look at the major moves of the imperialists, and the response of the revolutionary government and the Cuban workers and peasants to them. Following the announcement of the first agrarian reform law, the imperialists escalated their preparation for a counterrevolutionary offensive. They charged there was a Red takeover in Havana. They complained there were no free elections, although they had never complained about the lack of free elections before. They waxed indignant over provisions for compensation in the agrarian reform law, which were not "fair" because the value of the land was assessed at the value listed for tax purposes by the owners of the land under the Batista regime. The White House complained that nothing was working the way it used to, the new officials in the government wouldn't even take bribes. The imperialists denounced Fidel as a demagogue because he talked on television for so long. (Of course, they brushed aside the content of what he had to say.)

Then the campaign began in Congress and the capitalist press to cut the sugar quota. In January of 1960, Eisenhower announced that he would seek authority to reduce the sugar quota. Havana responded by denouncing this as blackmail and announcing that Cuba would sell sugar elsewhere in the world market.

The next month Soviet First Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan visited Havana and signed an agreement for the Soviet Union to buy Cuban sugar. The government began to prepare a law to nationalize the sugar mills. Fidel said: "As they cut our sugar quota pound by pound, we will seize their mills one by one."

And they passed a law authorizing the nationalization of American-owned property, stipulating that full compensation would be paid out of a fund from future income from sugar sold to the United States. No sugar sale, no compensation. For some reason that magnanimous gesture made the American businessmen very angry.

Next came the refusal of the U.S. and British-owned oil refinery companies to process Soviet crude oil. The re-

sponse of the Cuban government was to "intervene," to take over the management of those refineries, as a step toward nationalization.

The United States stepped up the financing and arming of the counterrevolutionaries. Planes from Florida began bombing and setting fire to the cane fields. On August 6, 1960, taking the occasion of the first Latin American Youth Congress meeting in Havana, Fidel announced the nationalization of all the American-owned sugar mills, oil refineries, the power and telephone companies—again with full compensation to be paid from future revenues from the sale of sugar to the United States.

' . . . Down to the Nails in Their Shoes.'

And this was followed by further nationalizations, including the holdings of the Cuban national bourgeoisie. Fidel said: "We will nationalize them down to the nails in their shoes." By October of 1960, virtually every single major capitalist holding had been expropriated. With the nationalizations came state control over foreign trade and the expansion of economic planning. These steps were taken with the example of the Soviet Union and China in mind.

Each step was explained in detail and justified to the Cuban people, who were mobilized in actions that consolidated and carried them through.

This represented a qualitative change in the class character of the state. The workers and farmers government had used its power, relying on the mobilization of the masses, to overturn capitalist property relations, to expropriate the bourgeoisie, to break its power base in the economy. As the Draft Theses adopted by the SWP in 1961 state, "When the capitalist holdings in the key sectors of the Cuban economy were taken over by the government, Cuba entered the transitional phase of a workers' state, although one lacking as yet the forms of democratic proletarian rule."

This was the opening of the socialist revolution in Latin America, right under the nose of Yankee imperialism. It was an event that was cheered and celebrated by the masses of people around the world. And it was hailed by radicalizing forces inside the United States, especially among a layer of the youth, leftward moving, primarily student youth.

However, not everyone felt as good about the Cuban revolution as we did and as the Cubans did. The Shachtmanites, as I've already mentioned, complained more and more. The more radical and proletarian the revolution got, the less and less they liked it, and the more they attacked it, charging Castro with betraying the revolution, installing a Stalinist dictatorship, and so on.

The Stalinists didn't like it either. Their policy was to block the revolution from proceeding to the establishment of a workers state. In August 1960 the Partido Socialista Popular (the Cuban Stalinist party) held a congress. Blas Roca gave the major report, in which he explained:

"The Cuban revolution is not a Communist revolution; it is anti-imperialist and antifeudal . . . patriotic and democratic. . . . The social classes that are objectively interested in the fulfillment of these historic tasks are the workers, the peasants, the urban middle classes and the national bourgeoisie."

As Roca was speaking, Fidel was in the process of putting the national bourgeoisie out of business. James Allen, speaking for the American Stalinists around the same time, said the following:

"The growth of the public and cooperative sector in the Cuban economy and the marked trend to state planning for national growth can be understood within the framework of the present stage, [of the revolution] without confusing these measures with socialism. . . . In Marxist terms these may be considered measures of a state-capitalist type. . . ."

Meanwhile, Che was announcing to the Latin American Youth Congress in session at the Blanquita Theater in Havana that it was necessary to call things by their right name and that the Cuban revolution was a socialist revolution. That speech was published the next day in the morning papers in Havana.

A minority in the Socialist Workers Party, headed by Comrades Wohlforth, Robertson, Mage, and backed internationally by Healy, didn't like the course of the Cuban revolution either. The more radical and proletarian it got, the more critical they got. It did not meet their standards of a workers state. They didn't know what kind of state it was, but they didn't want to call it a workers state. What's more, they insisted that the party open a campaign of criticism against the Cuban regime for allegedly suppressing democratic rights. That this was exactly the same angle the U.S. imperialists were using to justify their attempts to overthrow Castro, didn't seem to bother these comrades, or make them draw back from this position, even when it was pointed out to them.

It was with them and Healy and Lambert in mind, that Cannon asked, "What would all our talk about revolution be worth if we couldn't recognize a revolution when we see it?"

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I want to take up three other explanations of the Cuban revolution, which all have a common political conclusion about the Cuban regime—that it can't be reformed by the extension of the world revolution and that it needs to be overthrown by the workers and a soviet regime installed. These are: (1) That Cuba is not a workers state at all but is ruled by a new state-capitalist class. (2) The theory of "structural assimilation" presented by Comrade Wohlforth. (3) The view that the Cuban revolution is a workers state but was deformed by a Stalinist bureaucracy from the beginning, or from very early.

The 'State-Capitalist' Theory

First on the state-capitalist theory. Before taking up the major problems posed by acting on the assumption that Cuba is a state-capitalist country, I want to say a word on where we differ with the comrades who hold this view on the Soviet Union. These comrades start from the political conclusion that there is nothing left of the October revolution to defend in the Soviet Union today. They see no qualitative difference from the standpoint of the workers between the Soviet Union and the United States. This is the political difference they have, and as we have stressed, it is a very big one with many political ramifications and implications.

A corollary of this political stance is a fundamental disagreement with the position of the Trotskyist movement on the basic characteristics of a workers state. These comrades say that a state is a workers state if and only if the working class directly exercises political rule through democratic proletarian forms. If the working class does not exercise direct rule through its own democratic forms, it's not a workers state. They reject our recognition that it is

the property forms a state defends that determines whether it is a workers state or a capitalist state.

To back this up, they quote extensively from Marx and Lenin about the proletarian dictatorship—what it would look like, what the workers should fight for. They correctly point out that proletarian democracy is necessary to achieve the transition to socialism. Then they show that the Soviet Union deviates from that norm of a workers state—that the Stalinist bureaucracy has usurped political power, that the proletariat is disenfranchised and oppressed.

They argue that the Soviet Union ceased being a workers state around 1939, not because of any change in the relations of production or in property relations—which remained the same—but because of changes in the party and government brought about by the purges of the old Bolsheviks, which they say severed the last living links to the October revolution. In other words, the class character of the state is not determined by the property relations that the state defends but by whether the political forms correspond to the norms laid out by Marx and by Lenin, and defended by our movement.

We think these comrades use wrong criteria. This flows from the wrong political position of abandoning the fight to defend the economic conquests of the Bolshevik revolution before the decisive battle on that front has been fought.

But I want to stress, and I'm sure these comrades will agree, that their position on the Soviet Union doesn't directly prove anything about the class character of Cuba. You can hold that the Soviet Union is state capitalist, but it doesn't automatically follow that Cuba is state capitalist, because the Cuban revolution has its own dynamic—its own course that is quite different from the course of events in the Soviet Union. So we have to look at Cuba, not at the Soviet Union, to decide the class nature of the Cuban state and our political stance toward it. It's one thing to say that the Soviet Union, which had a proletarian revolution in 1917, degenerated to the point where the workers state was overturned. That's wrong, that's not a small mistake—it's a big mistake—but it's not a new one. It's quite another thing to say that there was never a workers state in Cuba, that there was never a social revolution in Cuba. Because if you can't recognize the socialist revolution in Cuba, it's doubtful that you could recognize one anywhere. And a leadership that can't recognize a revolution, can't lead one.

The original proponent in our movement of the point of view that Cuba remained capitalist was Gerry Healy, who refused to recognize the socialist nature of the revolution. He didn't think it was state capitalist—just capitalist. Not much had changed. He stood outside of and in opposition to the revolutionary process, and therefore avoided the necessity of throwing himself into the struggle to defend it against imperialist threats and attacks and to advance that revolution, except in the most perfunctory way.

In the case of Healy, this sectarian stance toward the Cuban revolution went hand in hand with sectarian opposition to the process of reunification of the divided Fourth International. Agreement on Cuba was a key part of the political convergence that was taking place and gave a big impetus to the process of reunification. And Healy's main interest was in using the Cuban revolution—which he didn't give a damn about—as a factional weapon to block reunification.

The National Committee of Healy's Socialist Labour

League wrote: "Does the dictatorship of the proletariat exist in Cuba? We reply categorically NO! The absence of a party squarely based on the workers and poor peasants makes it impossible to set up and maintain such a dictatorship. But what is even more significant is the absence of what the SWP euphemistically terms 'the institutions of proletarian democracy' or what we prefer to call soviets or organs of workers' power."

According to Healy, Cuba remained capitalist. Why? Because the Cuban revolution was not under the leadership of a recognized section or duly chartered sympathizing group of the Fourth International:

"Cuba can and will be defined as a workers' state only when a revolutionary party based on the programme of the Fourth International has successfully overthrown the capitalist state. . . ." That's the Healyite position.

Now this point of view has the same political contradictions as those in the position of the comrades in the SWP today who hold that state capitalism exists in Cuba. And the problem is this: If all of the gains and conquests of the Cuban revolution are possible under *capitalism*, if they have taken place under capitalism, then two things follow:

1. We must say that this opens up the perspective of a whole new era of progress for humanity under capitalism, at least in the semicolonial world; and
2. We must defend that kind of capitalism as a better kind of capitalism than that which existed under Batista or the capitalism that exists in the other Latin American countries today.

Contradictions of 'State Capitalism'

Let's start with the land reform. There was a sweeping, radical land reform. Unlike Stalin's bureaucratic and brutal forced collectivization, it had the overwhelming support of the peasants, rural poor, and agricultural workers. The key to this advance was the consolidation of the political alliance between the Cuban workers and the Cuban peasants, an alliance that remains solid today.

Do we politically support this land reform? Do we think it's a good thing? Should we have advocated it at the time? If not, how would our program have differed from the one actually carried out?

What about national independence? Cuba was a colony of the United States in everything but name. American capital owned great parts of Cuba's wealth. Batista was a Wall Street puppet. Havana was a cesspool of American gamblers, racketeers, drug dealers, and pimps.

That has been totally changed. Not a single piece of imperialist-owned property, machinery, land, or anything exists in Cuba today—with the exception of the hangover of Guantánamo Bay base held by military force by American imperialism. The degradation and exploitation by American imperialism has ended. Cuba is the only country in all of Latin America that is truly independent from U.S. imperialism. Now are we for this or against it? Was kicking out the imperialists a good thing? Could it have been done more thoroughly by a workers state than a "state-capitalist state"?

The Cubans carried this task out pretty well. And not because the Yankees willingly let go. Wall Street fought hard. It mobilized its economic and political power against Cuba. And when that failed, it organized an invasion. And the invasion was beaten back! At the Bay of Pigs.

Then in 1962, the imperialists began preparing for a second, more determined invasion, and the Cubans knew it. To head this off, Castro got nuclear arms from the

Soviet Union and used them to call Kennedy's hand. This was a bold move, but the alternative was to allow an invasion to take place and go down fighting against vastly superior military forces. And it worked; the invasion plans had to be shelved, and the United States has had to keep them on the shelf ever since.

Castro's decision to obtain nuclear weapons thus prevented the Yankee military occupation of Cuba, a step that would have bathed Cuba in blood and rolled back the first socialist revolution in the Americas. Had the imperialists succeeded, it would have significantly shifted the world relationship of class forces against the workers and peasants. And the negative consequences for the world revolution would have been felt everywhere—in Vietnam, in Africa, and throughout Latin America.

Well, were we for Cuba's success against the Yankees or against it? Obviously we have no differences on this. We were for it. But, was all that accomplished by *capitalist* Cuba? Did capitalist Cuba bring U.S. imperialism to its knees?

In the area of bourgeois-democratic tasks, along with the land reform and national independence, we should add that the Cuban revolution made gigantic strides in ending the oppression of Blacks in Cuba, a key aspect of the national question. The job is not finished, but the Cubans have made greater progress on this front than any other country in the world.

The Cuban revolution put an end to Batista's torture chambers, his firing squads, his secret police. It turned his barracks into schools. Are we in favor of those gains? Should we defend those gains? Obviously.

But if Cuban *capitalism* can carry through a radical land reform, can achieve national independence from American imperialism, can qualitatively advance the level of human dignity—if Cuban *capitalism* can do all that, then what happens to the theory of the permanent revolution? That theory holds that not an alliance between the workers and the national bourgeoisie, but only a workers and peasants alliance against imperialism, going over to measures that are socialist in principle, carried out against the national bourgeoisie, can solve the postponed democratic tasks.

If Cuba is capitalist, shouldn't we tell the people of Latin America and Africa and Asia, who are striving to follow the Cuban example, that the Fourth International says, "Struggle for socialism, but if you can't get that, at least struggle for state capitalism, because it can solve many of the most fundamental problems that you face too." Wouldn't we have to say that?

But the political problems of the state capitalist position don't stop with the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, because the Cuban revolution didn't stop with the bourgeois-democratic tasks. It has gone on to eliminate unemployment—eliminate the industrial reserve army in backward Cuba. It has advanced the standing of women in society; qualitatively raised the standards of education, of health care, of housing, of culture. Every measure of the standard of living and the quality of life of the Cuban masses has been qualitatively improved.

This is absolutely indisputable. Are we in favor of those gains and do we defend them? Obviously we must. But do we say that Cuban *capitalism* has done all that?

And there's another thing. The Cuban revolution has continued to defy Uncle Sam internationally. It has refused to bow down to the demands of Yankee imperialism. And it has done more: In Angola—not in Latin America, but in Africa—Cuban troops played a decisive

role in the military defeat of the invading South African imperialists. *Capitalist* Cuba sending troops to Africa to stand up to South African imperialism?

If we say that Cuba is capitalist, then we have to say that something new has appeared in the world, a variety of capitalism that is qualitatively different from capitalism as we have known it. Capitalism that is superior, at least from the standpoint of the Cuban workers and peasants, and African workers and peasants, to the capitalism Cuba had before.

We would have to say we have seen the emergence of a qualitatively better class of capitalists. And what follows from that? Are we for it or against it? Well, the Cuban people are for it, no doubt about that. They know that there is something qualitatively different about Cuban society today from pre-1959 Cuba.

I should make it clear we're not talking about one or another specific anti-imperialist measure taken by a semi-colonial bourgeoisie, like the nationalization of oil in Mexico under Cárdenas, or anything like that. We are talking about fundamental changes in the structure of Cuban society itself and in its relations to the rest of the world.

If that's capitalism, what does that imply for the fight for socialism? What does it do to the conclusion of the Marxist movement that capitalism in our time cannot hold out the promise of a better life, that capitalism cannot enter upon a new era of human development and economic and social progress, including in the superexploited, dependent countries?

Of course, we could close our eyes to reality. We could deny or minimize the changes that have taken place in Cuba. That's what Healy did. I don't think the comrades in the SWP today who hold the state capitalist position make the same mistake. They valiantly try to recognize many of the concrete changes.

But if we were to believe that Cuba is capitalist, then we would disorient ourselves hopelessly, not only in relation to Cuba but in relation to any similar development. We can't accurately orient ourselves in the revolutionary process, we can't decide what must be done next, what demands to put forward, if we can't tell the difference between a workers state and a capitalist state.

Wohlforth's Theory of 'Structural Assimilation'

Now I want to turn to the theory of "structural assimilation" proposed by Comrade Wohlforth.

There are two documents on this. The major one, explaining his theory of "structural assimilation," was written in 1964. This has just been republished by the Workers Socialist League in Britain in a book entitled *'Communists' Against Revolution*, which the comrades have had a chance to read—or at least look through. In this document Comrade Wohlforth took the position that Cuba was not a workers state.

The second document, written by Comrade Wohlforth in 1977, is attached to your Political Committee minutes. It restates some of the main points of the theory, but recognizes Cuba as a workers state.

I want to begin by going back to the origin of the term "structural assimilation." When the Fourth International was first confronted with the post-World War II overturns in Eastern Europe, we turned to the writings of Trotsky on the Soviet Union to see what light they could shed on the process that was taking place. In an article written in 1939, "The U.S.S.R. in War," Trotsky made the point that if Moscow, in territories that were occupied by the Red

Army, left the rights of private property untouched, this would "have a deepgoing principled character and might become a starting point for a new chapter in the history of the Soviet regime, and consequently a starting point for a new appraisal on our part of the nature of the Soviet state."

However, Trotsky thought that this was not the most likely variant. "It is more likely . . . that in the territories scheduled to become part of the USSR, the Moscow government will carry through the expropriation of the large land-owners and statification of the means of production. This variant is most probable not because the bureaucracy remains true to the socialist program but because it is neither desirous nor capable of sharing the power, and the privileges the latter entails, with the old ruling classes in the occupied territories." (*In Defense of Marxism*, Pathfinder Press, pp. 18-19.)

In other words, if these peripheral territories were incorporated into the Soviet Union, then their social structures and property relations would be brought into harmony with those existing in the Soviet degenerated workers state. If this were not done, then they would become a source leading to the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union as a whole.

When we began discussing the overturns in the East European states, Trotsky's views became the first point of reference, and this included use of the term "structural assimilation."

But the countries of Eastern Europe were not incorporated into the Soviet Union. And as the discussions on the social overturns there proceeded, it became clear that the term "structural assimilation" was being used in many different senses. Among other things, it was too general to be very useful in following the concrete process of social transformation, the stages that it went through, the forces involved, the role of the mass mobilizations that took place (however blocked and distorted by the Stalinists).

In his 1964 document on "structural assimilation," Comrade Wohlforth sought to convert the term into a descriptive phrase covering a general theory of all the postwar overturns.

To do this, he defined "structural assimilation" as the expansion of Soviet property forms and Stalinist bureaucratism into countries bordering on the Soviet Union, an expansion carried out by the Stalinist bureaucracy in response to pressure from imperialism. This process, he said, has no independent features at all. It is "essentially dependent on the Stalinist bureaucracy of the USSR." (Emphasis in original.) In fact, this "defensive expansionism" takes place only when there is no resistance by imperialism, and "only where the proletariat is relatively docile—during the *ebb* of revolutionary development." (Emphasis in original.) That's when such a social transformation takes place.

The first problem with this theory is that it does nothing to shed light on the specific character of these postwar social overturns. It dissolves the specific concrete processes into a general description of a process—"structural assimilation"—that begins when local Stalinists take over the government of a country bordering on the Soviet Union, usually under the auspices of Soviet troops, and ends with the establishment of a deformed workers states.

It doesn't help orient us politically to each stage in the process, doesn't help explain what measures to advocate to advance the process of the creation of a workers state. It reduces it all to an automatic process.

This is similar to the political problem raised by the theory that Stalinism in power equals a workers state. If you take the position that once Stalinists are in power you have a workers state, then there's no point in Trotskyists urging mass mobilizations to force the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, to bring about the monopoly of foreign trade, socialist planning, or anything like that. That theory doesn't orient you to what to do next. So it's not very useful from a political point of view.

The "structural assimilation" theory of Comrade Wohlforth comes down to nearly the same thing: Stalinism in power in an area bordering on the Soviet Union, under certain conditions, equals a workers state.

Further, it's one thing to use the descriptive phrase "structural assimilation" to refer to the buffer states in Eastern Europe bordering on the Soviet Union. But it is another thing to extend that to apply to China, which does border on the Soviet Union, it's true, but which has a population four or five times that of the Soviet Union. Does it make sense to speak of China as a buffer state, a Soviet buffer state? Can you speak of "structural assimilation" of China in relation to the Soviet Union?

Well, you can in the sense that any country that overturns capitalist property relations and tears itself out of the imperialist world market before imperialism itself is overthrown in its major bastions will tend to turn to the Soviet Union for military aid and for trade. But if that's all "structural assimilation" means, then it is simply a banal statement of fact that tells us nothing about how such social overturns have occurred.

'Structural Assimilation' and the Cuban Revolution

This problem becomes especially clear if you try to explain how Cuba became a workers state by "structural assimilation." What does it mean to speak of "structural assimilation" of a country halfway around the world and across a couple of oceans? It was not carried out by the Red Army, or by the Red Navy, or even by the Red Air Force.

In fact, the 1964 position of Comrade Wohlforth was not designed to show that Cuba was a workers state but to prove exactly *the opposite*: That is, that Cuba could not possibly be a workers state; it was a capitalist state.

In the 1977 document attached to the PC minutes, Comrade Wohlforth now says that Cuba became a workers state at about the time of the merger of the July 26 Movement, the Revolutionary Directorate, and the PSP, in 1961. He affirms that the theory of "structural assimilation" explains how that happened. So you have a rather flexible theory that can "explain" opposite political conclusions. Cuba is not a workers state, Cuba is a workers state. It works either way.

Let's recall that, according to Comrade Wohlforth, "structural assimilation" occurs only with the acquiescence of imperialism. Did the U.S. acquiesce in Cuba becoming a workers state? Was the Bay of Pigs an acquiescence? The attempts to assassinate Castro? The missile crisis? The economic blockade?

Let's also recall that "structural assimilation" takes place only when the proletariat "is relatively docile, during the *ebb* of the revolutionary development." Were the Cuban workers "relatively docile" during the social transformation? This flies in the face of the facts.

In a 1963 document applying his theory of "structural assimilation" explicitly to show Cuba was not a workers

state, Comrade Wohlforth wrote: "Thus we see that the process which has been going on in Cuba differs radically from the process which transformed the buffer areas into deformed workers states. The erosion of the former capitalist state apparatus, the destruction of the internal power of the national bourgeoisie, the swing from the international capitalist orbit—all these events had occurred in Cuba just as they have occurred in the buffer areas."

So what was *missing* to make Cuba a workers state?

He answers: "But the *consummation* of this process through the creation of a monolithic *Stalinist* party and the *fusion* of this party with the state apparatus has not taken place nor is it likely to take place in the near future." ("The Cuban Way—The Pattern for the Future?" by Tim Wohlforth, SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 24, No. 17, May 1963. Emphasis in original.)

All that was lacking to make Cuba a workers state was Stalinism in control. So how does that orient you politically? Certainly a deformed workers state is preferable to a deformed capitalist state. So shouldn't we have favored politically a victory of the Stalinists, including Escalante, over the Castro team?

Today Comrade Wohlforth thinks he was wrong before and that Stalinism actually was already in control in Cuba in the early 1960s. His presentation of the facts was better before. His present position, like that of Healy and the comrades who hold a state-capitalist position, implies that we should have been calling for the overthrow of the leadership of the Cuban revolution from the beginning.

Workers and Farmers Government

I want to come back for a couple of minutes to the question of the workers and farmers government, to the accompanying theory of the Cuban revolution, and how it relates to the analysis our movement developed of the events in Eastern Europe and China.

The Cuban revolution further clarified how it was possible for a petty-bourgeois leadership—in the cases of China and Eastern Europe, a *Stalinist* leadership, in the case of Cuba, a *non-Stalinist* leadership—under exceptional circumstances to create governments "independent of the bourgeoisie." It is useful to begin with the section of the Transitional Program that explained under what circumstances such a deviation from the expected course of events might take place:

Is the creation of such a government [a workers and farmers government, independent of the bourgeoisie] 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 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.

Our general approach on the postwar overturns was the common work of the world movement. We indicated in a general way the key processes that took place in Eastern Europe, although the details remained to be filled in on the basis of concrete study of events in each country. This

approach provided the basis for recognizing the Mao regime in China in the years immediately after 1949 as a "workers and farmers government" which only under the pressure of the imperialist offensive in Korea expropriated the bourgeoisie and established a workers state several years later.

Now, unfortunately, some comrades in the Fourth International are proposing, in essence, but without clearly saying so, to rescind these positions.

This is put most clearly in a 1973 article on China, submitted to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin by the IMT ["The Differences in Interpretation of the 'Cultural Revolution' at the Last World Congress and Their Theoretical Implications"]. In that article the comrades insisted that the only way to explain the Chinese revolution is to say that Mao and the Chinese CP "broke with Stalinism" in practice—and ceased to be a Stalinist party. They argue that a workers state—not a workers and farmers government—was established in China with the victory of Mao over Chiang Kai-shek in 1949 and the establishment of political control by the Red Army.

This document goes on to specifically reject the concept of the workers and farmers government in China:

The People's Republic of China was proclaimed October 1, 1949. The bourgeois army of Chiang Kai-shek had, for all intents and purposes, been defeated by that time; the bourgeoisie had been disarmed. Can there have been a "workers and peasants government" *after* the crushing of the bourgeoisie in a civil war? How does this mysterious "workers and peasants government" then differ from the dictatorship of the proletariat?

You will notice that this is the same argument as the one presented by Bert Deck in the 1961 discussion on Cuba that was held in the SWP. Deck argued that Cuba became a workers state with the establishment of the militia. He held that the class character of a state is determined by the character of the armed forces, and not primarily by the property relations the state defends.

The difference between saying that China in 1949 was a workers state, and saying that a workers and farmers government existed there, but not yet a workers state, is rather important in terms of political program and political orientation. It is not a squabble over semantics. It gets to the heart of revolutionary practice.

Although it is true that the bourgeois army in China had been destroyed in 1949, bourgeois property relations had not been overturned. The capitalist class survived and still clung to its base of power in the economy. And as long as capitalist property relations survive, *the old bourgeois armed forces can be reconstituted* on the basis of this bastion of capitalist power. That is exactly what the Chinese capitalists were hoping for and preparing for in the early 1950s, especially in the context of the imperialist threat to China in the Korean War. That is why the Mao regime had to finally move to expropriate them and nationalize the economy.

If we had said in 1949 that China was already a workers state, then what would that have implied about the next key tasks confronting the Chinese proletariat? It would say to the workers that capitalism had *already been* destroyed—not that destroying capitalist property relations was *the key next task*. It would be politically disastrous to make that mistake.

As I said, this view of the postwar overturns and the role of the workers and farmers government was not an innovation made by the SWP, but the common position held by the Fourth International at least until the last few

years, when some comrades apparently have rediscussed this and now proposed to dump it, although they have not presented this systematically.

In 1952 Comrade Mandel gave a report on China to a plenary meeting of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International. In it he characterized the Mao regime at the moment as a workers and farmers government, and pointed to the danger that the Chinese bourgeoisie posed to the revolution itself:

... the capitalists who are now collaborating with Mao's government have been doing so only out of considerations of the lesser evil or of immediate necessity. . . . in the degree that Mao's policy tended toward stabilizing and enriching these private enterprises, that is to say, in the degree that the bourgeoisie again became rich, it would also become bolder, more determined to defend its own interests. . . .

That is why the key next task for the Chinese working class was to mobilize its power to expropriate the bourgeoisie, and create a workers state. But this task lay *ahead*, not *behind*. And Comrade Mandel explained why this was politically important: "If we state today that there is a proletarian dictatorship in China how would we characterize this decisive phase which lies ahead of us?" That is why the IEC characterized China in 1952 as "a workers and peasants government which has in practice already broken the coalition with the bourgeoisie and is rapidly advancing toward setting up the dictatorship of the proletariat."

A similar common analysis was made by the world movement on the Algerian revolution, characterizing the Ben Bella regime in Algeria as a workers and farmers government. This is important because it is an example of a workers and farmers government that failed to use its power to expropriate the capitalist class. As a result, it was not capitalism but the workers and farmers government that was toppled.

In a February 1964 United Secretariat statement on Algeria, we said:

For some time the course of the new regime in Algeria has shown that it is a "Workers and Peasants Government" of the kind considered by the Communist International in its early days as likely to appear, and referred to in the Transitional program of the Fourth International, as a possible forerunner of a workers state.

Such a government is characterized by the displacement of the bourgeoisie in political power, the transfer of armed power from the bourgeoisie to the popular masses, and the initiation of far-reaching measures in property relations. . . .

The question that remains to be answered is whether this government can establish a workers state.

The statement cited the agrarian reform, the establishment of a public sector in industry. However, it pointed out clearly the key next tasks: "Yet to be undertaken are the expropriation of the key oil and mineral sector, the banks and insurance companies, establishment of a monopoly of foreign trade and the inauguration of effective counter measures to the monetary, financial and commercial activities of foreign imperialism." ["On the Character of the Algerian Government," International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. XIV, No. 5, May 1977.]

But in the case of Algeria, the workers and farmers government was overthrown in a military coup in 1965. In 1969, the IEC adopted a resolution reviewing the experience in Algeria, pointing out, among other things, that the recognition of the regime in Algeria as a workers and farmers government had been correct. It noted that the coup that overthrew the Ben Bella government "repre-

sented a reactionary resolution of the contradiction that had existed between the capitalist state and the workers and peasants government with its socialist orientation." It noted that the outcome in Algeria, unfortunately, was the opposite of what happened in Cuba, where there was "the establishment first of a workers and peasants government and then a workers state. . . ." ["The Algerian Revolution from 1962 to 1969," *The Workers and Farmers Government*, Education for Socialists publication.] The Algerian experience was a confirmation of the conception of the workers and farmers government, with a negative outcome to the contradiction such an unstable regime faces.

The common view arrived at by the two wings of the world movement on the historical significance of the victory of a non-Stalinist current in the Cuban revolution and of the stages the revolution went through, culminating in the establishment of a workers state in the fall of 1960, played an important role in the process of reunification of the Fourth International. The common view was all the more important because of the fact that the two sides had arrived at virtually identical positions independent of each other, without the process of exchange of views which takes place in a united world movement.

Now this doesn't mean that comrades can't propose to alter the commonly held view on Cuba, as well as China and Algeria. But if they propose to do so, they should openly say that is what they are proposing, clearly give the reasons for reconsidering those positions, and say what the implications are for all the post-World War II overturns.

Stalinism and the Cuban Revolution

The last point I want to take up is the position that Stalinism triumphed simultaneously with the establishment of the workers state, or soon thereafter. This position is held by Comrade Keil and in part by Comrade Wohlforth, who now is of the opinion that Castro "carr[ie]d] through a social transformation from on top, modelled after the East European pattern, fusing with the local Stalinists, and going over to Stalinism in the process."

Outside of our movement, the Spartacist League and the Social Democrats argue that Castro became a Stalinist in 1960 or 1961. The Social Democrats, in the service of the Kennedy administration, promoted this line of argument very forcefully.

Their purpose was to seek support for overthrowing the "dictator" Castro by an armed uprising initiated by "democratic forces" operating out of Miami with guns and money furnished by Washington.

Now, the fact that Social Democrats say the Cuban revolution was Stalinist from the beginning is not a reason to argue that that's not the case. But it is an added reason to proceed with very precise criteria in mind because if we were to adopt that position, we would have to explain clearly the difference between our point of view and the garbage peddled by the State Department "socialists" for nearly twenty years.

This position raises some serious political problems, including the important question of the nature of Stalinism itself.

I assume we all agree on the non-Stalinist origins of the Castro leadership and the Cuban revolution. It was in bitter opposition to the Stalinists, and despite the sabotage of the Stalinists, that the revolution succeeded in the first place.

So we can dismiss the position that Fidel was a closet

Stalinist all along. But once we do that, we have to answer the question, How did the transformation to Stalinism take place? And what should have been our political line to prevent it from happening? The argument goes that by bringing members of the Cuban CP into the government through the fusion of the July 26 Movement with the Revolutionary Directorate and the old Stalinist party (PSP), and by Cuba's becoming dependent on the Soviet Union for economic aid and military defense, Stalinism triumphed, and corrupted the whole leadership team, Stalinizing the Cuban leadership.

Well, should we have advocated that Fidel have nothing to do with the Cuban Stalinist party after the success and gains of the July 26 Movement divided the Stalinists and forced them to abandon their policy of overt hostility to the July 26 Movement and the socialist measures of the revolution? Should we have expressed the opinion that it was a mistake to attempt to incorporate the PSP working-class cadres—as a minority—in the Integrated Revolutionary Organization that was set up in 1961 and then the new Cuban CP set up in 1965? Should the Cuban Stalinists have been barred from working in government ministries in the trade unions?

Or should we have advocated that the Cubans not take weapons and financial assistance from Khrushchev, because of the absolutely inevitable fact that strings would be attached, that such aid would be used as leverage to blunt the revolutionary policy of the Cuban leadership and their attempts to extend the revolution? That, of course, would have guaranteed the crushing of the Cuban revolution in blood by an American invasion.

Or should we have said that the immediate Stalinization of Cuba was *inevitable*? That was the price that had to be paid for survival of the Cuban state, given the relationship of forces on a world scale, the limitations of the Castro leadership, and the power of the Soviet Union. In that case, no choice was open to us but to sit back and watch it happen.

If we adopted the point of view that the Cuban leadership became Stalinist in the early 1960s, we would have to explain the policies of the Cuban leadership at odds with the counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism.

I want to look at several examples: two from the 1960s, the response of the Cubans to Vietnam and their attempt to extend the revolution in Latin America—and one from the 1970s, the Cuban policy in Africa.

The Cubans responded to the American war of genocide in Vietnam by doing everything they could to aid the Vietnamese revolution. They saw that the war in Vietnam tied the hands of American imperialism, and gave Cuba a breathing space within which to battle the devastating effects of the economic blockade and the problems that it accentuated. The Cuban response to Vietnam was qualitatively different from the response of Moscow or of Peking.

Guevara's famous call in 1967 for "two, three, many Vietnams" sums this up.

Listen to the following quote from Guevara in 1967: "When we analyze the isolation of the Vietnamese we feel anguished over the logic of its meaning for humanity.

"North American imperialism is guilty of aggression. Its crimes are immense, extending over the whole world. We already know this. . . .

"But they are likewise guilty who at the decisive moment vacillated in making Vietnam an inviolable part of socialist territory—yes, at risk of a war of global scale, but also compelling the North American imperialists to make a decision.

"And they are guilty who keep up a war of insults and tripping each other, begun some time ago by the representatives of the two biggest powers in the socialist camp." [Che Guevara Speaks, Merit Publishers, p. 147.]

Is that the line of counterrevolution? Of peaceful coexistence? Did Brezhnev say anything like that, or Mao, or Ho Chi Minh?

The Cuban Leadership and the Latin American Revolution

Second, let's look at the Cuban policy in Latin America that led up to the 1967 defeat in Bolivia and the death of Che Guevara.

The objective of the Cuban leadership was to extend the Cuban revolution onto the Latin American continent. That was the essence of the Second Declaration of Havana. That was the reason for the Organization of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS), and the support Cuba gave to guerrilla movements throughout the continent—it was to extend the socialist revolution.

Let me read a quote from Fidel from 1966, about Chile. He is describing discussions he had with some Chileans:

" . . . We explained to them that to make a revolution it is first necessary to confront imperialism: that to make a revolution, although it may not be a socialist but a bourgeois-democratic revolution, a nationalist revolution, they had to confront imperialism and they had to confront the national oligarchy."

So far, this could have been said by any Stalinist talking left. But Fidel goes on to explain:

"I told them also that I did not think that conditions in Chile permitted a revolution of that type [i.e. bourgeois-democratic] and that in the conditions of Chile, if a revolution was desired, it would necessarily have to be a socialist revolution, and I explained why.

"Because an underdeveloped country, burdened with debts as Chile is, a country where large masses of the population live in the worst conditions, would necessarily have to strike a blow against the interests of imperialism, of the oligarchy, of big industry, of the import-export trade and of the Bank if something was to be done, to give something to the peasant masses and to the masses of workers in the country.

"And also that to wage a battle against the oligarchy and against imperialism, the support of the worker and peasant masses was necessary to confront imperialism; and . . . that the masses of workers and peasants would not lend support to any bourgeois revolution, because the workers and peasants would not be willing to collaborate to serve the interests of an exploiting class."

Is that the Menshevik-Stalinist line of the two-stage revolution? I don't think so.

There is no question that the Cuban leadership attempted to extend the revolution in Latin America. They did not propose the Leninist strategy of party-building. They proposed the strategy of guerrilla warfare. They even sent Che Guevara personally to lead the guerrilla movement in Bolivia in a desperate attempt to solve the problem of leadership.

We have many criticisms of the Bolivian adventure. These are political criticisms, not technical ones. They are spelled out in Joe Hansen's book under the title "The Seven Errors Made by Che Guevara." (See *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*, pp. 235-241.) But whatever criticisms you want to make of the Bolivian adventure, it is rather difficult to characterize it as an exercise in peaceful

coexistence. That, it was not.

If anything, you can say that Cuban policy in Bolivia and elsewhere in Latin America was an attempt to repeat the process that had occurred in Cuba itself. That is, an attempt by the Cuban leadership to duplicate the revolution they themselves had made—to do it the way they had done it. Unfortunately, the circumstances were not favorable for that.

This is a mistaken policy. The Cuban revolution can't be repeated today without a higher level of consciousness than existed in the July 26 Movement. The imperialists learned a lesson from the Cuban revolution. Now, a more powerful instrument is needed in order to bring about the overturn of capitalist property relations. That can't be done without a Leninist party.

But there is quite a difference between a leadership that tries to extend the revolution using wrong methods, and a leadership that consciously tries to strangle and crush proletarian revolution. All the difference in the world. Our criticism of Stalinism is not that it doesn't defend the workers interests consistently, or that it can't be relied on, or that it uses wrong methods for the right goals. No. Our opposition to Stalinism is based on different grounds.

History has spoken unambiguously: Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through. The Stalinists try to block and smash revolutionary initiatives, mass upsurges, anything that goes beyond the bounds of class collaboration. *Counterrevolutionary through and through.* Is that how to describe Che's adventure in Bolivia? Cuba's stand on Vietnam? On Chile?

And if we say the the Cuban line is Stalinist, when we have to, among other things, pretty up Stalinism. True, Stalinists can wage guerrilla war—or regular war under certain circumstances. The Red Army beat the German Nazis in a big war. In response to mass pressure in very special circumstances, they can even take the lead of revolutionary mobilizations—against their desires, in order to control them. But was there a great mass upsurge in Bolivia? Where was the pressure forcing the Cubans to wage guerrilla war in order to be able to head off and destroy a revolutionary mobilization? This is nonsense. Bolivia was an attempt to export the Cuban revolution. The methods used were mistaken. But it wasn't Stalinism.

Cuba and the Upsurge of the Black African Revolution

This same continuity of the contradictions of *Castroism*—not Stalinism—can be seen in Africa. Cuba made its move there in 1975, in response to the upturn in the African liberation struggle following the collapse of the Portuguese empire, after the Cuban leadership's "pause for reflection" on the heels of the setbacks in Latin America, the failure of the campaign to harvest ten million tons of sugar in 1970, and so on. Of course, Cuban attention to Africa goes back to the ties and support of the Cuban leadership to Algeria and the developments in the Congo in the early 1960s. An important aspect of this support for the African liberation struggle is the identification of Afro-Cubans with their African heritage and with the African revolution.

The African revolution began advancing at a time when the legacy of Vietnam tied the hands of U.S. imperialism. The Cubans saw a chance to extend and advance the struggle against imperialism in Africa. Fidel correctly pointed out that Black Africa was the weakest link in the chain of imperialism.

And once again, the Cubans made bold moves. They

took initiatives and took a big chance—and are still taking a big chance—of provoking U.S. reaction. They don't know what Washington will do, how far it will go in escalating its threats against Cuba. But that hasn't stopped the Cuban leadership. They didn't know if Ford or Carter would bomb Havana in retaliation for their actions, but that didn't stop them.

The Cuban army was used to smash the South African imperialist invasion in Angola. In doing so Cuba struck a blow for the African revolution, and for the world revolution.

We believe the Cubans made mistakes in Angola. Among them, they denigrated the importance of the struggles of the oppressed nationalities, forces involved on the side of UNITA and the FNLA. They gave political support to Neto and the MPLA government, praising Neto as a socialist.

But what is involved there is the contradictions of Castroism, not the counterrevolutionary line of Stalinism.

Stalinists are not only against the socialist revolution. They are also against anti-imperialist revolution, because it upsets the status quo and poses a danger—to them—of passing over into the socialist revolution. They know that very well. They hate uncontrolled forces in motion—especially workers and peasants. No one in this room will ever live to see the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow use the Soviet army the way Castro is using the Cuban army in Africa—you'll never live to see it.

The Stalinists consistently use their power to defend the status quo. They use the Red Army only as a border guard to defend the base of their own privileges. That's all.

The Cubans are doing exactly the opposite. Despite the offers made by Ford and then by Carter on ending the blockade and reopening diplomatic relations if the Cubans would straighten up and fly right, the Cubans rejected Washington's terms. They thus increased the risk to their own country in a move calculated to increase the chances of a revolutionary breakthrough.

Within the framework of the upsurge in Black Africa came the Ethiopian revolution. The old regime there was overturned as a result of mass struggles and massive mobilizations. The Ethiopian revolution, a *social* revolution, has registered historical gains: a far-reaching agrarian reform; a drive to wipe out all the hangovers of feudalism and slavery; a series of nationalizations—of credit, banking, public utilities, natural resources, and some industry; the separation of church and state; and the spread of primary education as part of the battle against illiteracy.

Castro oriented to that revolution—and he had exactly the same political stance that we have on the level of the need to defend that revolution against any and all attempts by imperialism or by its stooges to stop it or to drive it back.

Now, the same—exactly the same—types of mistakes appear again. Castro denigrates the importance of the national question, which is a key component of the Ethiopian revolution. He praises Mengistu as a "true revolutionary"—lending political support to the Dergue.

But against the mistaken aspects of Cuban policy on Ethiopia, we have to weigh some decisively correct political conclusions and, most important, actions. First is the unstinting willingness, the unhesitating commitment, to use the Cuban army to extend and to defend the revolution in Africa against imperialism. Second, is the understanding by the Cubans that in the struggle for national liberation in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa what is

decisive is the confrontation with world imperialism, which seeks to dominate the entire continent, and wants to roll back the gains of the masses in Ethiopia. Third, Castro correctly sized up the invasion by the Somalian army of the Ogaden as a military thrust by the Siad Barre regime aimed not at liberating the Somali people of the Ogaden, aimed not at overthrowing the Dergue in the interests of the workers and peasants—but aimed at the heart of the Ethiopian revolution.

The Cuban leadership saw there were only two choices for defenders of the Ethiopian revolution in the face of this military offensive, an offensive encouraged by imperialism: Either use military force to stop the invasion in its tracks; or face a military confrontation later, with imperialist-backed forces crossing the Ogaden, poised 500 miles closer to the Ethiopian capital, with time for military supplies to start coming in from Iran, the Saudis, or wherever.

And the Cuban leadership made the choice of defending, in a war, the Ethiopian revolution. This once again provoked the wrath of Yankee imperialism against the Cuban revolution itself.

The argument is raised that Cuban policy in the Horn of Africa is actually evidence that the Cuban leadership is Stalinist because there is a certain convergence between the policy of Havana and the interests of Moscow. This is an empty argument. A convergence of interests doesn't demonstrate anything. We have had convergences of interest with the Communist Party on organizing antiwar demonstrations. We have even worked in united fronts to bring it about.

In Vietnam, there was a convergence between us and Moscow on defending the Vietnamese revolution. So what? Are we Stalinists because of this convergence? There was a convergence between Soviet interests and Cuban actions in Angola. But it was the Cuban troops, not Brezhnev's divisions, that beat back the South African invaders. These convergences do not mean at all that Cuban and Soviet policy are identical—unless you think the Kremlin has made a fundamental change in its policy.

What the Cuban policy in Angola and in the Horn of Africa shows more than anything is the continuity of the Castroist current and the contradictions of Castroism. It remains a revolutionary leadership that is not Trotskyist, but it is not Stalinist either. To confuse Castroism with Stalinism makes it impossible to explain concretely the weaknesses of Castroism, and why we should help try to overcome them.

Our criticism of Castro is not that he became a Stalinist, but he has remained a Castroist. He has not yet gone beyond the limits and contradictions of Castroism to Leninism. What are these weaknesses?

On the domestic side, in Cuba, they include the absence of democratic proletarian forms of power that would maximize the defense of the revolution, offer better safeguards against mounting errors, and set a positive example for the whole world working class to emulate.

On the international side they include the mistake of down playing the perspective of revolutionary struggles within the imperialist powers, especially inside the United States, and the failure to use the Cuban influence to advance that struggle within the camp of the main enemy of the Cuban revolution itself.

Another weakness is placing greater importance on armed struggle than on political line. This is a policy that has not and cannot succeed in extending the revolution. We opposed the Cubans' guerrilla orientation in Latin

America not because it was Stalinist—it wasn't—but because it was based on the political error of believing that the victory over Batista in Cuba could be repeated elsewhere, ignoring the fact that a more powerful revolutionary instrument, a Leninist-type party, is needed to extend the revolution.

The Cubans make the mistake of giving political support to capitalist regimes that come into conflict with or don't fully line up with imperialism—Mexico, Angola, Ethiopia, and Chile being examples.

Our approach to the Cuban revolution has always been what was outlined by Cannon: to *recognize* a real socialist revolution despite its incomplete character; and to *recognize* a revolutionary leadership despite its errors and contradictions. This stance was the only way to get our political bearings, to participate in the revolutionary process and to build the Fourth International.

* * *

Summary

I want to begin with some of the points made by the comrades who hold the state-capitalist view.

When we completed the process of fusion with the ex-RMC at the convention a year ago, we pointed out that this fusion would serve as an example to the Fourth International. We also said we would strive to set a further example by the way in which we would proceed with the discussion on the differences that we have with these comrades. I think the discussion we have had here has lived up to that. It has been a model of a serious discussion over a very big question.

The key point that we raised about the political problem with the viewpoint that Cuba is state capitalist has two sides.

First, how can you reconcile the view that Cuba is state capitalist with Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution? And second, if it's true that Cuba is capitalist, isn't it a new kind of capitalism, or a better kind of capitalism, that we have to politically defend against ordinary capitalism? We asked how the comrades who hold the state capitalist view of Cuba can explain the gains that have been made by the Cuban revolution within the framework of capitalism.

Shelley tried to answer this point in her report and again in her summary. It appears that both she and Bruce [Levine] agree that the gains of the Cuban revolution have been more extensive than those of any other semicolonial capitalist country, and that they defend those gains against imperialism. That is important to note.

However, in her report Shelley gave three reasons why she believes such advances are possible within the framework of "capitalist" Cuba. The first is that Cuba before the revolution was more developed than other semicolonial countries that she referred to as state capitalist, such as Mozambique. This line of reasoning may say something about the absolute level of the Cuban economy and the standard of living, but it does nothing to explain how "capitalism" has been able to bring about the social and economic *transformation* of Cuba.

The second explanation she offered, to explain the qualitative change in Cuba since 1959, was that the Castro government inherited unutilized social resources from the previous regime and put those resources to use to develop the economy and raise the standard of living. As Dave

[Frankel] pointed out, that's exactly the point. That's exactly what capitalism *can't do, and doesn't do*. The fact that Cuba today can put to use resources (land, labor power, etc.) that were unutilized by capitalism underlines its *proletarian* character.

Her third reason was the aid Cuba has received from the Soviet Union. However, Bruce and Anibal [Vargas] both stated in the discussion that they think the Soviet Union is imperialist. Presumably this means that the Soviet Union exploits Cuba, which is a semicolonial country. So, do we have a state-capitalist imperialist country dominating a state-capitalist semicolonial country and the result is the economic development of the semicolony, coupled with major social gains? This would be a novel theory.

I don't know what the comrades mean by "Soviet imperialism" because Bruce also said there is no export of Soviet capital to Cuba. What can it mean to speak of a semicolony that is not dominated by imperialism, and where there are no imperialist-owned enterprises? Not *any*. Shelley said that foreign capital may penetrate Cuba—in the future. It may. *If* there is a counterrevolution. But that's just the point.

If "Russian imperialism" helps develop Cuba and raises the standard of living of the Cuban people, then we should not only advocate state capitalism as a step forward for semicolonial countries, we should also explain the advantages to these countries of Soviet state-capitalist imperialism.

On the other hand, if we maintain that "Russian imperialism" is bad for Cuba, there is another political problem. Shouldn't we be demanding that the Russian imperialists get out of Cuba? Shouldn't the Soviet Union get out of Cuba? End the military and economic aid and leave the Cubans to the mercy of Washington? Well, that slogan wasn't raised by the comrades as one of the demands they would put before the Cuban people, but it seems to me if the USSR is an imperialist country dominating Cuba, then that would be one of the first things that you would say.

I want to take up two other points these comrades raised. In trying to reconcile the theory of permanent revolution with the view that Cuba is capitalist, Bruce said that Trotsky explained that if the workers don't solve the problems of the unfulfilled bourgeois-democratic tasks—they will be solved by someone else. That is, by the ruling class. That, he said, is what has happened in Cuba. The workers did not carry out these tasks, but the new state-capitalist class did, not democratically and not completely, but in an "incomplete and distorted way." But this is just playing with words.

The point that Trotsky was making was that if the workers don't solve the crisis of society, the crisis will be solved at their expense. That is, by the ruling class crushing the working class, solving the crisis of the system by grinding the working class into the dirt, by fascism, by nuclear war, by the destruction of society.

In semicolonial countries, the bourgeois "solution" blocks land reform, ties the country closer to imperialism, and inflicts upon the masses brutal repression and misery. We've seen enough of these "solutions" in Latin America. That is the alternative to the working class solving the problem. It is not that the problems of the semicolonial dependent countries can be solved, although in an "incomplete and distorted way" by the capitalist class. This is the whole point of the theory of permanent revolution in such countries.

Shelley and Bruce also advanced the opposite argument.

They drew a balance sheet on three key democratic tasks in Cuba: land reform, the question of national independence, and the question of democratic rights. They argued that not all that much has changed in these areas, although they also presented the opposite view, as we have seen.

First on the land reform. Bruce says it is not all that much of a land reform because on the state farms the agricultural proletariat is still exploited, they do not "own the land," and there are no democratic forms of workers management. Of course, state farms do not comprise at all the totality of Cuban agriculture. But leaving that aside, I didn't get the point.

Bruce seemed to favor individual holdings in principle over state farms. Should we be for breaking up the cane fields into small holdings? In any case, the existence of state farms is certainly not an argument against the view that Cuba is a workers state.

On the question of national independence. Bruce said that national independence has been largely achieved. Shelley says the Cubans have gone a long, long way toward it. But, they say, this doesn't really mean anything since Cuba can't be truly independent because it is tied to the world market. Bruce says for this reason Cuba has not won national independence in "any thoroughgoing sense." He says Cuba's independence is an "illusion."

Obviously Cuba cannot escape from the world market. If Cuba were a workers state, that would still be true, as Bruce himself said. If Lenin and Trotsky were leading the Cuban revolution, that wouldn't change. So, why is that an argument against the view that Cuba is a workers state? Should we conclude that the struggle for national independence is unimportant until we have a socialist world?

The comrades asked whether we think national independence means autarky, that is, total national economic self-sufficiency, without any need for imports or exports. They point to Cambodia. Of course not. Not only do we think that Cuba cannot escape the world market, but we think it shouldn't try to *à la* Cambodia. And neither does Fidel. We don't think Washington's trade embargo helps the Cuban revolution. On the contrary, we denounce Washington's policy, and demand the opening of fair trade with Cuba.

Bruce took up the question of democratic rights, as well as the absence of forms of proletarian democratic rule. We agree of course on the need to establish such forms. But the picture he painted makes Cuba look about the way it was under Batista. If you were to say that to the workers in the streets of Havana, I don't think you would get any agreement. Big steps forward have been made in this field too, even if there have been abuses and the revolution has not advanced to set up a soviet-type democracy.

Shelley asked what our line ought to be in Cuba. Would the masses think that the series of demands she read off for more democracy, trade-union rights, elections, etc., were crazy? Well not necessarily. That would depend on what else you said. If you started by explaining that Cuba is capitalist and that the revolutionary regime should be overthrown, yes, I think they would think you were crazy, or worse.

Shelley ran through a list of demands that she would raise in Cuba: down with popular-front governments in Chile, in other countries, and so on. But she left out what would be the first demand: Down with the Cuban government! That's where she would start, isn't it? Do you think the Cuban masses would be receptive to our program for

Chile if they thought we wanted to overthrow their government?

Bruce said that Castro's "whole foreign policy is a search for bourgeois and petty-bourgeois allies" to ease Cuba's economic isolation. And I gather that is the interpretation the comrades put on the example I raised earlier about the guerrilla war in Bolivia. The goal of that, I assume, was to bring to power a friendly bourgeois government in Bolivia that Cuba then could trade with. I guess that also explains the Cuban policy in Africa. What the Cuban leadership is after in Africa, in Angola and Ethiopia, is trading partners to break the isolation of the Cuban state.

But this idea leads to the logical question—Why don't they come to an accommodation with the United States, their most obvious trading partner? One they can really trade with? The one Brezhnev and Mao crawled through the dirt to trade with. Why don't the Cubans do that? Why doesn't capitalist Cuba seek to solve its problems by making whatever political concessions necessary to make a deal with Carter? Why not? It certainly makes much more sense from the viewpoint of Cuba's state capitalists to trade with the United States on the basis of a concession to Washington to stop doing things like Che's attempt in Bolivia, or the sending of troops to Africa, than by pinning their hopes on trade with Angola or Ethiopia.

But they don't, they do the opposite. Time and time again they rebuff the overtures of the imperialists to force the Cubans to back off politically in return for easing the blockade and reestablishing some form of trade relations.

* * *

Shelley asserted that all the great Marxists said that state capitalism is the logical point toward which capitalist society is evolving. That's not true. Not true at all. All the great Marxists have said that state capitalism in the real world is impossible. Capitalism cannot exist without the competition of competing capitals. That's what it is all about. That is what makes it work.

Now the great Marxists did say "state capitalism" is the logical culmination of certain trends of capitalism, which are nevertheless offset by other trends and aspects of capitalism. State capitalism is a theoretical limit of certain trends, but will never be reached because of the operation of offsetting trends. In the *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky took up the theory of state capitalism and rejected it. The comrades quote this passage in their document "State Capitalism and the Proletarian Dictatorship." Trotsky began by saying, "Theoretically to be sure, it is possible to conceive of a situation in which the bourgeoisie as a whole constitutes itself a stock company which, by means of its state, administers the whole national economy. The economic laws of such a regime would present no mysteries." [*Revolution Betrayed*, p. 245.]

So "theoretically" it is possible. But Trotsky goes on, "Such a regime never existed, however, and, because of profound contradictions among the proprietors themselves, *never will exist*—the more so since, in its quality of universal repository of capitalist property, the state would be too tempting an object for social revolution." [Emphasis added.] Then Trotsky says, "The first concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state to occur in history was achieved by the proletariat with the method of social revolution [that is, the October revolution] and not by capitalists with the method of state trustification. Our brief analysis is sufficient to show how absurd are the attempts to identify capitalist state-ism with the Soviet

system. The former is reactionary, the latter progressive." [*Ibid.*, p. 247-8]

* * *

Is Cuba, as these comrades assert, the same as Egypt and other semicolonial countries that the comrades consider to be state capitalist? No. It's the opposite. In Egypt for example, the property that was nationalized at one stage was denationalized without any struggle. It has been largely turned over to private capitalists. That was the purpose of the nationalizations in the first place, and that's what has happened. The power of the capitalist class was never broken in Egypt.

Well, you can say, wait and see and that will happen in Cuba too. No. It *cannot* happen in Cuba. Not without a civil war and the victory of the counterrevolution. If the comrades really think about it, I think at least they will have doubts that the denationalizations that took place in Egypt will be repeated in Cuba without a civil war.

I want to raise another question. What is Stalinism from the standpoint of the theory of state capitalism? As I understand what the comrades are saying, the Stalinists want to seize power so they can set up state capitalism. That is, they want to throw out the old bourgeoisie and install themselves as the new bourgeoisie. But the facts show that the Stalinists don't want to take power. Their very reason for existence is to avoid taking power if they can.

I want to emphasize a point that a number of comrades made, about what this line that Cuba is capitalist would mean for us.

What would it mean for the Fourth International, for example in Latin America, to say that Cuba is capitalist? In Latin America the masses of people are striving to follow the Cuban example. That's their goal. In her summary Shelley asked, Is it inevitable that other countries will follow the Cuban road? She said she hopes not.

But our whole line in Latin America is to point out that there are two roads. The one we advocate is the Cuban road. The alternative to the Cuban road is the road taken in Chile, the road that went from Allende to Pinochet. And the main axis of our line in Latin America is that the workers and peasants must follow the Cuban road of socialist revolution. That is what we said had to be done in Chile, what we say has to be done in Peru, in Nicaragua, everywhere.

Should the Fourth International go to the workers in Cuba and say that there is no qualitative difference between the regime and state that exists now, and what existed before 1959? Could we build the Fourth International in Cuba on that program? Could we win forces to Trotskyism on that program? Not any revolutionary forces. In fact it would be the beginning of the end of the revolutionary character of the Fourth International.

The same would be true if we adopted the position that Aníbal proposed of refusing to defend the Soviet Union in the face of imperialist attack.

* * *

I said at the beginning that this was a two-stage discussion, but like the theory of the permanent revolution the first stage tends to grow over into the second stage. And some comrades made some very valuable points about the question of our political stance today and the question of political revolution, explaining what we have to be convinced of before we would make a change in our

political line. We won't change our line on the basis of vague feelings about Cuba, or because we're annoyed at the Cubans because we disagree with one thing or another, or because we're disillusioned because the Cuban leadership did not meet our expectations.

If we did make this change, it would not be just a formal position voted for at a convention and then forgotten. If we should come to the conclusion that a political revolution is now necessary in Cuba we would have to fight for it. It couldn't be a closet position. If we decided we were for a political revolution in Cuba we would have to defend this at every opportunity.

When our candidates go on national television and are asked, "What does your party say about what's going on in Africa, and in Cuba?" We can't say, "Well, yes, we agree with the Cuban leadership on this and that and the other thing, but we think they're making a mistake on this and that, so what the hell, let's overthrow them." You can't do it that way.

There has to be a decisive test that will be clear to us and to the people we'll explain it to, including the Cuban people—who, after all, will have to make any political revolution that is going to be made.

The Cuban policy in Africa is a test. It is a way to gauge the objectives and capacities of the Cuban leadership. The Cubans saw a big opening in Africa in the wake of the defeat of American imperialism in Indochina and of Portuguese imperialism in Africa. They saw it as an opportunity to extend the revolution. Whatever you want to call what they were doing before they made their move into Africa—a pause or a lull or a drift to the right or whatever—every comrade agrees that there's nothing about what they're doing in Africa that confirms the idea of a shift to the right. It goes in the opposite direction. It was an opening and an opportunity. And their response was to move in and try to take advantage of it. Not because they were under any pressure to do so, not at all. In fact, as Doug [Jenness] emphasized, the pressure from U.S. imperialism was in exactly the opposite direction. Not because their borders were threatened.

In Angola they drove the South African imperialists out. In Ethiopia they defended the social revolution against a drive to smash that revolution.

What will they do next? Will they move into the struggle in Rhodesia? That's what Washington is worried about. That's what the Cubans are thinking about. Will the Cubans get involved in the war of liberation in Zimbabwe? That will really raise the stakes in this fight, throughout this country and throughout the world.

Concerning the Ogaden. Shelley said that the party's position was that we endorsed the Cuban role in the Ogaden. That's not true. We disagreed with the Cuban political stance on the national oppression of the Somali people, just like we disagree with their political stance on and their failure to understand and support the Eritrean national liberation struggle. But we agreed with them on something—the stand they took in the war, with the Ethiopian revolution on one side and the Siad Barre regime on the other, with the threat and potential of imperialist backing and aid to Barre to crush the Ethiopian revolution.

And we agreed with the Cubans that if the Ethiopian army and the Cuban army were smashed, then the invasion by the Somali army would not have stopped at the border between Ethiopia and the Ogaden—that it would have driven on, sooner or later, into Ethiopia itself. And it would have remained a dagger poised at the heart of the Ethiopian revolution.

Whatever the intentions of Siad Barre in the Ogaden, whatever the specific impact on the Somalian people in the Ogaden of that invasion, we say that was not the decisive political question in the war. The key aspect of the national question in the Horn of Africa represented by the struggles of all the peoples there against imperialism, above all American imperialism, remains. We agree with the Cubans on what they said and, most importantly, what they did. We agree with them that the fight against imperialism would not be advanced by the smashing of the Ethiopian revolution, and the crushing of the Cuban army in Africa.

REPORT BY SHELLEY KRAMER

The Cuban revolution, like many other revolutions in the underdeveloped world in this century, was essentially democratic and nationalist in its aims and accomplishments. As Joe Hansen has pointed out, "By all criteria of origin, aims and social following the July 26 movement was a petty-bourgeois formation." ["Theory of the Cuban Revolution," in *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*.] The young, middle-class rebels of this movement fought to achieve the goals of their nineteenth-century bourgeois nationalist heroes—Bolívar, Martí, and so on. National independence, land reform, political liberty, and social equality—these classical bourgeois-democratic goals were the goals of Castro's guerrilla forces in Cuba.

Because of the implacable hostility of U.S. imperialism and of the completely dependent Cuban capitalist class, achieving these goals required drastic measures—the nationalization of the means of production and their transformation into state property. To accomplish this, the revolutionary government utilized the masses of workers and peasants, "mobilizing" them against the regime's enemies.

This national struggle was revolutionary, democratic, and progressive. But to carry it through to its completion, it would have been necessary for the Cuban working class to organize independently of the petty-bourgeois democrats, and—led by a revolutionary workers party and leading the peasantry behind it—seize state power, construct a workers state, and seek to spread the proletarian revolution to other countries. That is, it was necessary to implement the program of the permanent revolution.

Unfortunately, this did not occur. The revolutionary process in Cuba was therefore cut short. True, *some* important bourgeois-democratic aims (like land reform, national independence, the struggle against racial and sexual discrimination) were advanced, though only *partially* or in a distorted manner. But because the proletarian dictatorship was never established, even these tasks could not be fulfilled in the "genuine and complete" way demanded by the interests of the proletariat and its allies and outlined by Trotsky in his theory of the permanent revolution. The failure to consistently carry out the program of the democratic revolution is probably most obvious in the total absence in Cuba of thoroughgoing political democracy for the masses.

Thus, the Cuban experience once again validates Leon Trotsky's assertion that "the national-emancipation and bourgeois-democratic revolution cannot be brought to a conclusion without the dictatorship of the proletariat," the rule of the workers and the oppressed exercised through the medium of a revolutionary-democratic proletarian state apparatus. ["Contribution Toward a Discussion on the Basic Theoretical Conceptions of the International Communist League," *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34*, p. 164.]

In Cuba, the short-circuiting of the permanent revolution meant a petty-bourgeois nationalist government was installed in power. It did clean out and destroy Batista's state apparatus, since it was a threat to the new government's stability and an obstacle to enforcing its program.

But destroying one *particular* capitalist state machine does not guarantee that a *workers* state will rise in its place. In the Cuban case, a new bourgeois state machine was constructed over time—a state which from the start

excluded the proletariat from control over its actions and deprived the proletariat of all ability to independently organize or freely express its wishes. Within this new state apparatus, a new state bourgeoisie formed which exploited the Cuban workers via the monopoly over the means of production which the new ruling class held in the form of state property.

Thus the Cuban revolution did not transcend the limits of capitalism because it did not establish proletarian rule. Instead it consolidated a state-capitalist system. Nationalized property, monopoly of foreign trade, and attempts at planning were the natural tools and methods of the new ruling class, the new state bourgeoisie, for defending itself against U.S. imperialism and developing the domestic economy—that is, accelerating the accumulation of capital.

The general pattern of the Cuban revolution is not at all unique in today's world. Similar conditions have given rise to similar types of radical, nationalist struggles across Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Such struggles have produced similar types of regimes and economic transformations.

Armed struggle against imperialism and its native supporters, expropriation and statification of the property of the imperialist and the native bourgeoisie, organization and mobilization of the masses from above—all these and other features of the Cuban revolution can be discovered in varying forms and degrees in the revolutionary developments which have occurred in Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Tanzania, Cambodia, Egypt, Vietnam, Algeria, China, South Yemen, Ghana, Guinea, the Republic of the Congo, etc. And most recently and explosively in Ethiopia, where, as Ernest Harsch has described it, the most extensive land reform in African history has taken place. In a number of these countries, Joe Hansen has admitted, "The nationalizations are so extensive, in fact, that quantitatively the situation appears comparable to what exists in the workers states." And frequently, as Joe also explained, the governments involved consciously aim at "forestalling a popular revolution by setting up a simulacrum of a workers state. This phenomenon can be quite correctly placed under the general heading of state capitalism." (Hansen, *Workers and Farmers Government*, p. 29.)

This is what we believe happened in Cuba.

What is the attitude of Marxists toward these nationalist, statist, bourgeois-democratic revolutions?

In every case, we are their most consistent defenders against imperialist threats. We defend the achievement of bourgeois-democratic tasks and related social reforms, even if won under bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leaderships and even if the accomplishments are carried out in an incomplete and distorted manner.

Defend Progressive Measures

We defend the progressive measures carried out by the state-capitalist regimes—like nationalizations, plus the foreign-trade monopoly and planning which go with such nationalizations—as necessary bases of support in the anti-imperialist struggle. We support all the gains made by the masses in these countries in the course of their revolutions—in their living standard, education, health care, literacy, etc.

At the same time, we remain advocates of socialist revolution and opponents of the new capitalist class and its political representatives. We point out that the defense of gains already won and the extension of the struggle for democratic and social rights requires a new revolution which will bring the working class to state power.

Here we subscribe to Trotsky's views about the Mexican oil nationalizations, which I *do* think are relevant. These nationalizations were decreed by the bourgeois Cárdenas regime in the late 1930s:

Without succumbing to illusions and without fear of slander, the advanced workers will completely support the Mexican people and their struggle against the imperialists. The expropriation of oil is neither socialism nor communism. But it is a highly progressive measure of national self-defense. (*Writings 1937-38*, p. 361.)

For Trotsky, this policy did not involve confusing the class nature of the Mexican state or government: "The international proletariat has no reason to identify its program with the program of the Mexican government," he said. For him, the Mexican oil nationalizations belonged to the bourgeois-democratic phase of the revolution; but he insisted on a thoroughly nonsectarian attitude toward such struggles. They were in the interests of the working-class movement, Trotsky said, and called them "advance-line skirmishes of future battles."

Our attitude to the Cuban guerrilla forces can be compared to Trotsky's attitude to the CP-led peasant army in China in 1932.

While we refuse to identify the armed peasant detachment with the Red Army as the armed power of the proletariat and have no inclination to shut our eyes to the fact that the communist banner hides the petty-bourgeois content of the peasant movement, we, on the other hand, take an absolutely clear view of the revolutionary democratic significance of the peasant war. We teach the workers to appreciate its significance and we are ready to do all in our power in order to achieve the necessary military alliance with the peasant organization.

This is the spirit in which Marxists must defend the gains of the democratic revolution in Cuba.

Despite my differences with the majority view on other points, I completely agree with the primary emphasis placed by the party on the defense of the Cuban revolution against U.S. imperialism. This is particularly important for revolutionaries living in the United States. I think, particularly considering the party's small size at the time, the remaining impact of the McCarthyite witch-hunt, and the hysteria whipped up by the U.S. ruling class against the Cuban people, that our party did a remarkable job defending the revolution here. I stand 100% behind the party's record on this score and endorse the party's main slogans of that period: Hands off Cuba! End the Blockade! Help the Cuban People!

Definition of Terms

Now I know all this is a big bite for most comrades to chew. The very concept of state capitalism—let alone applying it to the regimes in Cuba, China, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union since the counterrevolutionary purges of 1936-39—may seem a bit bizarre. So I think it best to step back from Cuba for a moment, to explain my general framework and to define some terms.

Now obviously there's no time to do **any** of this in depth or detail. Comrades should therefore read, if they haven't already done so, the booklet entitled *State Capitalism and the Proletarian Dictatorship* (Revolutionary Marxist Papers #12). There are also summaries and discussions of the

same or related material in Revolutionary Marxist Papers Numbers 11, 13, and 14.

Right here I must limit myself to thumbnail sketches of what I mean by capitalism, state capitalism, socialism, and a workers state, because in these basic definitions we get to the root of our differences on Cuba. And definitions *are* necessary if you are going to interpret the objective facts of the Cuban revolution.

Most people think that the essence of capitalism is individual ownership of specific factories or other means of production by individual capitalists who compete with one another in a completely anarchic marketplace. Once upon a time, this concept—unscientific as it is—might have gotten you by. Today it is not only unscientific, it is also outdated.

For Marx and Engels, what defined capitalism as a unique system of production—what remained the essential conditions of capitalism no matter what else changed—was the relationship between the proletariat as a class and the bourgeoisie as a class—and the relationship of each of these classes to the means of production.

Under capitalism, the producing class is the proletariat. The proletariat is a unique producing class in world history. It is the only class with absolutely no control, ownership, or bond to the means of production. Therefore it does not control either the process of production or the end product of production.

There is only one way for this class to survive. It must sell its labor power—its ability to work—as a commodity. It sells this commodity, *wage labor*, to another, separate, and distinct social class which *does* own the means of production, the capitalists.

As the owning and ruling class, the capitalists own what the proletariat produces. In return for its labor power, the proletariat receives a wage which allows it to subsist (at a higher or lower level, depending on many specific historical circumstances, including the proletariat's degree of organization and previous struggles.)

The capitalist class appropriates the surplus—everything over and above what is necessary for the proletariat's survival. It accumulates this surplus in the form of additional means of production (plus means of repression minus a certain relatively minimal amount for the bourgeoisie's personal comfort). This capital accumulation is the capitalists' whole reason for being. It allows them to increase their power and their ability to exploit ever larger numbers of proletarians.

Marx put it all in a nutshell when he said that capitalism was simply "production resting on wage labour." (*Grundrisse*, pp. 405-406.) Or when he defined capital as "that kind of property which exploits wage-labor." (*Communist Manifesto*.) Or said that:

The capitalist mode of production . . . rests on the fact that the material conditions of production are in the hands of non-workers in the form of property in capital and land, while the masses are only owners of the personal condition of production, viz., labour power. (*Critique of the Gotha Program*.)

To be a capitalist, you don't have to have a limousine or a top hat. You don't need property deeds, partnership agreements, stocks, bonds, or dividends. All you need is membership in the class (the social group) which exploits wage labor by monopolizing the means of production. The class that alone owns the means of production, controls and dominates the productive process, and disposes of the social surplus in its own class interest—the class whose absolute sway over the means of production the proletarians have no right to challenge—this is the capitalist class.

State capitalism is simply capitalism in which the bourgeoisie owns the means of production as a *collectivity*—as a sort of corporation—through its exclusive control over a property-owning state.

All the great Marxists knew and said that this setup—state capitalism—was the logical end point to which capitalist society was evolving.

In Marx's day, the classical picture of capitalism (where every entrepreneur owned his own little company lock, stock, and barrel) was already giving way to less personal and direct forms of ownership like corporations, which severely limited the independent power of the individual capitalist.

The same thing goes for the so-called anarchic, "planless" market. In the 1890s Engels wrote,

When we pass from joint-stock companies to trusts which assume control over, and monopolize, whole industries, it is not only private production that ceases, but also planlessness.

Lenin added that under capitalism, "Planning does not make the worker less of a slave, but it enables the capitalist to make his profits 'according to plan'. Capitalism is now evolving directly into its higher, regulated, form." (CW 24: 305-6)

Like the property owned by corporations and trusts, state property, too, is capital so long as production remains organized on the basis of exploited wage labor. In that case, wrote Engels,

The more productive forces it [the bourgeois state] takes over as its property, the more it becomes the real collective body of all the capitalists, the more citizens it exploits. The workers remain wage-earners, proletarians. *The capitalist relationship is not abolished; it is rather pushed to an extreme. (Anti-Duhring.)*

Regarding state capitalism, Trotsky wrote, "The economic laws of such a regime would present no mysteries." (*Revolution Betrayed.*)

State capitalism—i.e., production based on wage labor where the state owns all or large sectors of the means of production—is a living, breathing reality throughout the world today. This development of long-known trends is an inevitable by-product of the world proletariat's failure to put an end to capitalism before this point.

Of course, the statification of capitalism does not always (in fact, rarely) occur with the complete consent of the old-line capitalists themselves. One case in which state capitalism arose through the *expropriation* of existing capitalists was Nasser's Egypt. There, just as in Cuba, only forcible expropriation could enable the petty-bourgeois-nationalist government to begin to modernize society. Joe Hansen's description of this process in Egypt is very apt. "It was a case of using the state power to establish conditions for the growth of indigenous capitalism at an otherwise impossible rate." (*Workers and Farmers Government*, p. 12.) The same process is being played out in Ethiopia today.

What Is a Workers State?

What, in light of all this, is socialism? And what is a workers state?

For our great Marxist teachers, the socialist mode of production was production carried on without social classes. Under socialism the members of society—the "associated producers," as Engels called them—will collectively determine their own organization of labor, control the work process, decide what to produce and how to distribute the products.

Naturally, this means the end of wage labor and capital, alienation, and exploitation; the end of the division between manual and intellectual labor, between rulers and ruled, between workers and managers. Therefore it also means the withering away of a state apparatus as such.

Of course, this system—these socialist relations of production—will arise only out of a tremendous development of productive forces on a world scale, in particular the development of the creative potential of the working class itself. This is why socialism in one country is impossible and why a more or less extended *transition* from capitalism to socialism is necessary.

And this, now, brings us to the function of a workers state. It is the task of the workers state—of the proletarian dictatorship—to open up, develop, safeguard, and defend this transitional process. The workers state is nothing more or less than the working class using state power to lay hold of the production process and begin to break down class divisions, to begin to abolish the social division of labor.

Nationalization of property, monopoly of foreign trade, planning—all these things by themselves do not abolish capitalism or even make a workers state. But where a workers state already exists—that is, where the workers hold supreme political power, state power—these things are extremely important *tools* through which production can gradually be reorganized along socialist lines.

In other words, the essence of the workers state is first and foremost *political*: which class exercises state power? This explains why Russia was a workers state in October 1917 and was not transformed into a workers state only later in 1918, when the nationalizations were carried out. In fact, in 1918, after the course of nationalizations, Lenin repeatedly insisted that the only fundamental difference between state capitalism in Germany and the Russian workers state lay in the *different types of states and governments* in each.

To make things even clearer [he wrote], let us first of all take the most concrete example of state capitalism. Everybody knows what this example is. It is Germany. Here we have the "last word" in modern large-scale capitalist engineering and planned organization, *subordinated to Junker-bourgeois imperialism*. . . . in place of the militarist, Junker, bourgeois, imperialist state, put also a state, but of a different social type, of a different class content—a Soviet state, that is, a proletarian state, and you will have the *sum total* of the conditions necessary for socialism. (CW 27:339)

History knows only one way to create the kind of Soviet, revolutionary-democratic, proletarian state apparatus which is necessary to open up the transition to socialism, to put the results of capitalist development to the interests of the whole people. Only a revolution led by the working class itself can produce such a state. Only a state founded on the democratic mass organizations of the proletarian struggle—i.e., a state which *is* the working class *organized* as the ruling class—can draw ever broader sections of the population into the direct administration of production, that is, can carry out this transition.

This is not a question of abstract norms but of the very function of a workers state—how it is to carry out the transition to socialism. Lenin was not an idealist but a very practical politician. That is why, when he was summing up the experience of the world's first workers state before the first congress of the Comintern in 1919, Lenin wrote:

The *essence* of Soviet power lies in this, that the permanent and sole foundation of the entire State power, of the entire state

apparatus, is the mass organization of those very classes which were oppressed by the capitalists, that is, the workers and semi-proletarians. . . . The masses are now drawn into continuous, unhampered, and decisive participation in the democratic administration of the State.

Now for reasons with which we are familiar, the Russian workers state was unable to break out of its isolation in the 1920s and 1930s. Consequently, it became bureaucratized and degenerated. Progress in taking the first halting steps in the transition from capitalism to socialism was halted. Then the direction of development went into reverse. The working class was steadily driven back down into the same social position it had occupied prior to the revolution. In the counterrevolutionary purges of 1936-39, the state apparatus was finally purged of all elements tied in any way to the working class and to the 1917 revolution.

But since in Cuba the working class has *never* held state power in any way, has *never* founded a state apparatus of its own, based on its own mass organizations, it is impossible today to speak of there being a workers state there, whether healthy, bureaucratized, degenerated, or deformed.

Cuba's is a state-capitalist regime, modeled along Stalinist lines.

Class Struggle in Cuba

Having reviewed some of the key concepts underpinning the Marxist view of capitalism and the struggle for socialism, I want to proceed to a closer look at the Cuban experience.

Following the downfall of Batista and his gang, Cuban society experienced some extremely far-reaching changes in its internal structure and foreign relations. What we have to decide is whether, at any point in the course of these dramatic events, we can actually see the Cuban proletariat seize state power and establish *its own* class dictatorship.

All this demands that we be concrete. Phrases like "the Cuban revolution," "the revolutionary process," the "revolutionary government," "mass mobilizations," can be useful, but only if we refuse to substitute them for a careful and specific examination of the real social class forces at work. Otherwise these phrases can become abstractions without any class content which confuse more than they clarify, which blur crucial distinctions, and which distort both our analysis and our program.

Of course, all this is true not only with regard to Cuba. It was equally true in 1974-75 when we had the task of analyzing the turbulent events in Portugal, of seeing past the label "Portuguese revolution" in order to determine the real political and economic position of the working class during those events. It was necessary to *distinguish* the different classes and the different political parties involved. Today, for another example, we face the same task in analyzing the "Ethiopian revolution."

According to Fidel Castro, the guerrillas of the July 26 Movement numbered at most 1,000 throughout Cuba when it delivered its final blows to Batista's forces in December of 1958. These young nationalists were drawn mostly from urban middle-class backgrounds.

Peasant support for the Sierra Maestra rebels developed late in the guerrilla war, according to Che Guevara. Even then it was concentrated among the squatters of Oriente Province, whose "social and cultural roots were different than those of the peasants . . . in areas of large-scale and semi-mechanized agriculture." (See *Che Guevara Speaks*.)

I've already referred to the bourgeois-democratic program of the July 26 Movement. Its central aims were national independence and economic development, which were to be achieved through land reform, social reforms, and extension of political freedom.

The movement's strategy—guerrilla warfare—flowed from its petty-bourgeois composition and program. An armed minority—those whom Guevara called "guiding angels" of the poor—would fight for the masses and win their sympathy through action.

The elitist internal structure of the July 26 Movement reflected this same outlook and program. It was not a political party organized along democratic participatory lines that could draw large numbers into decision-making and common disciplined activity. It was a military band, and Fidel Castro was its military commander and unchallenged political decision-maker.

The Movement itself only really met on two occasions—once in 1957 and once more in 1958. In the fall of 1959, once the Castro government had secured its political authority, the July 26 Movement was formally disbanded.

The rebels, of course, enjoyed and even occasionally mobilized much broader support than it actually drew into its ranks—among agricultural workers and urban workers, the urban middle class, and even some large landholders and native industrial capitalists in the early period. And the Movement's victory over the hated Batista dictatorship unleashed a surge of mass activity crowned by the week-long general strike in Havana.

But what was the relationship of the Castroites to these insurgent masses?

Castro *utilized* their anger, aspirations, and power to accomplish his own ends at every stage. In this, his role is comparable to that of Neto in Angola, Machel in Mozambique, Mao in China, etc. All employed the masses as a battering ram against the old regime without ever allowing the masses to realize the fruits of their labors by themselves taking state power.

At first, Castro's forces formed a coalition government with the representatives of the so-called "progressive bourgeoisie." It was under this coalition government that the Batista state machine was dismantled and replaced with the rebel army and police. The means of repression were now clearly in the hands of the petty-bourgeois nationalists.

As we know, this coalition proved to be short-lived. As Castro pressed ahead with his program (including rent reductions, tax reforms, intervention in U.S. companies, and particularly the proclamation of the 1959 agrarian reform), an increasing number of Cuban capitalists packed their bags. U.S. imperialism stepped up its efforts to sabotage and topple the government.

Castro and his supporters refused to abandon their program, but their bourgeois coalition partners—deprived of any base of support for their efforts to halt the revolution from within—began to bail out. In the summer and fall of 1959, Castro booted out the remaining fifth-columnists from the government. What remained inside Cuba of the old national bourgeoisie no longer posed an independent threat to the government.

Washington Escalates Aggression

The U.S. imperialists take it personally when *any* regime, regardless of its class nature, lays hands on their property or limits their personal ability to make profitable investment. Recognizing that Castro would not easily be

bullied off his course—and that he was too popular at home to be overthrown from within—Washington escalated its economic and military aggression.

This, in turn, pushed the Castro government toward more and more extreme measures in sheer self-defense. A series of imperialist provocations in 1960—primarily cutting the sugar quota and refusing to process Russian oil—coupled with continued mass pressure and the security provided by new trade agreements with the Soviet Union prompted Castro's nationalizations.

This period—from 1959 to 1961—was obviously a very tumultuous one. The crack-up of the old state apparatus and the expropriation of the old bourgeoisie by the petty-bourgeois nationalists destabilized the situation. It was similar in many ways to the situation which existed in Portugal during 1974 and early 1975, and presented the Cuban proletariat with a real possibility of taking power into its own hands in alliance with potential peasant allies.

But the workers proved unable to mobilize this potential power in their own interests and in support of their own class program because they lacked revolutionary leadership. Under Batista the unions remained in the grip of a government-imposed bureaucracy. The old-line Stalinists, who had collaborated with Batista in the 1930s and 1940s, were discredited. The leadership of the popular opposition to Batista therefore fell by default into the hands of a score of populist middle-class parties, the broad milieu out of which the July 26 Movement arose.

It is this crisis of leadership in the Cuban proletariat which explains the way in which events unfolded in Cuba following Batista's downfall. Workers, peasants, and youth expressed their desires and demands through spontaneous strikes, demonstrations, and in the mass trials of the Batista henchmen. The Castro government made use of the people's anger and power against the U.S. and the U.S.'s Cuban puppets. In exchange for their support to the Castro regime, the workers won extensive economic and social reforms in this early period.

These radical egalitarian measures—in housing, education, health care, recreation, antiracism, etc.—were unquestionably major gains for the Cuban masses, so long the victims of imperialist oppression. Such measures were properly welcomed by all revolutionary socialists.

But because of the absence of a revolutionary leadership, the working-class masses were unable to pass over from supporting and pressuring the radical petty-bourgeois government to imposing their own class authority directly.

What use did the Castro government make of the political and economic power now concentrated in its hands? What was the program of the new regime?

In a nutshell, it set out to build up the strength of a native Cuban capitalism organized along state lines. In 1958 Castro said that the central goal of his movement was to free the Cuban economy from economic dependence and to do this through "industrialization at the fastest possible rate."

On the one hand, of course, this meant a fight against the domination of U.S. imperialism. It also meant raising the living conditions of the work force—especially its level of education and skills—so that the Cuban economy could really modernize and develop. The Castro group saw itself, moreover, as the representative of the interests of the entire Cuban nation. Thus the social reforms it promulgated were simultaneously part and parcel of its own particular class program, concessions to the Cuban masses, and sincere attempts by these "guiding angels" to

prove their devotion to the masses and to maintain mass support for their own government.

Reforms of this same kind have become a hallmark of similar state-capitalist regimes across Africa today. The most dramatic advances have been registered there in the struggle for national independence and against racist oppression (which is inextricably bound up with the anticolonial struggle itself).

In Mozambique, in addition, free health care and education, literacy campaigns, land reform, nationalized housing, people's tribunals, factory and village councils, popular militias, etc., have all been sponsored by the Machel/FRELIMO government. Similar policies—in some ways more far-reaching than in Mozambique—have been carried out by the government representing the Ethiopian officer corps, the Dergue.

Cuban Reforms of Early 1960s

But the Cuban reforms of the early 1960s were the most extensive, however. Why?

For one thing, the country as a whole was already far more developed economically than the African societies I have mentioned. This made everything easier.

For another, the Castro government found itself in possession of enormous amounts of previously *unused* or wasted material resources when it came to power. Supporters of the revolution agree that Castro's initial social reforms were substantially paid for by finally tapping these accumulated sources of potential wealth (which the U.S.-dependent economy of Batista had been unable to do). This economic fat also made it possible to provide jobs to thousands of the formerly unemployed.

Third, Castro continuously benefited from the injection of massive amounts of Russian aid—some \$300 million in outright grants by 1964—which naturally enabled the regime to live beyond its own domestic means. In addition, trade with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe reached comparable levels, providing Cuba with an essential market for its sugar crop and for the purchase of needed parts and machinery (especially important in the face of the U.S. embargo).

This is why Castro was able to carry out reforms which strengthened Cuba's economic infrastructure, bolstered the government's image as the legitimate representative of the whole Cuban nation, and secured the support of the masses in his government's resistance to the demands of U.S. imperialism.

Castro's dependence upon the good will of the Cuban masses was especially great in this early stage of the revolution, while imperialist threats (and actual attacks) were escalating and while the new state apparatus was still unstable. The most obvious illustration of this was the creation of a popular militia and its central role in turning back the Bay of Pigs invasion.

The government in these early years mobilized the masses in huge assemblies and demonstrations. There government officials communicated government decisions to those assembled.

Mass organizations like the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, as well as women's, peasants' and youth

associations, were formed by the government. These assemblies and organizations gave the masses an opportunity to sense their collective power, to demonstrate their defiance of imperialism, and to *feel* themselves in greater control of events than ever before.

But none of these forms of mass activity added up to *independent*, democratic political action of the masses. Their actions were dictated by organizations controlled from above, organizations whose leaders were appointed by the Castro government. This government, in turn, was responsible only to itself and (to a certain degree) the rest of the state bureaucracy. The workers were not free to organize their own mass organizations in their own manner under their own leaders, or in their own class interests.

Thus the Cuban "mass mobilizations" were in no way qualitatively different from those organized by Nasser, the Dergue, Machel, Neto and other petty-bourgeois nationalist or popular-front governments.

None of the government-initiated mass organizations were controlled by those enrolled in them. The militia was quickly brought under the command of the army. The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution were supervised by the police. Other of these mass organizations were controlled by the appropriate government ministry or agency and later by the Cuban Communist Party itself.

Why? Why was the Cuban working class never—at no point—permitted, much less encouraged, to *direct* the workings of the new state? Or even to form their own separate mass organizations?

Because to strengthen Cuban national capitalism along statist lines Castro needs not merely to mobilize the masses but also to dominate them and keep them under tight control. This fear of the masses' own initiative arises from the fundamental divergence of class interests between the workers and poor peasants (on one side) and the embryonic state bourgeoisie (on the other). (I'll return to this point in a moment.)

From the first days of the revolution the initiative of the masses was viewed with suspicion and dismay. Peasants who moved to seize their land by themselves in 1959 and workers who struck against imperialist enterprises were quickly ordered back into their places.

The 1960 Nationalizations

When the 1960 nationalizations were decreed, the estates and factories were occupied not by democratic committees of workers and peasants but by the government-controlled army and militia. James O'Connor and Maurice Zeitlin (two of Castro's most enthusiastic supporters in the U.S.) emphasize the absence of independent activity by the masses during the process of statification and contrasted this fact to the mass occupations and efforts to organize soviet-type councils which had occurred in the midst of the 1933 general strike.

Nor did the working masses assume control after the nationalizations had taken place.

The state farms and short-lived cooperatives were managed either by the army or by government-appointed administrators. Where peasant councils were initially elected, they were quickly subordinated to the control of managers sent out by the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA).

What was true of the peasants and state-farm employees was equally true—if not more so—regarding the freedom of action of the trade unions.

In 1959 Castro intervened in scheduled trade-union elections to secure election of a single "unity" slate composed of July 26 Movement activists plus PSP cadres. In the months which followed, the new leadership's opponents were purged. At the Eleventh National Congress of the Cuban Labor Confederation (CTC) in November 1961, a single list of government-selected candidates was presented, headed by Lázaro Peña, the former CTC general secretary in the years 1939-47. Lázaro Peña was an old Stalinist hack notorious for enforcing the PSP's policy of collaboration with the Batista dictatorship.

Adolfo Gilly reported in 1964 that Peña enjoyed the "unanimous opposition of the Cuban workers." He won this dubious distinction not so much for his past record as for his current role in enforcing the government's dictates, Gilly added.

In 1962 Vice-Premier Raul Castro expounded the new regime's view of the tasks of the trade unions in the Cuban workers state:

Yesterday it was necessary [for unions] to struggle continuously in order to gain certain advantages, to obtain a little more from the profits being made by the magnates. Today the great task confronting the CTC and the unions is to increase production, recruit voluntary workers, tighten labor discipline, push for higher productivity, and improve the quality of what is produced. [Carmelo Mesa-Lago, ed., *Revolutionary Change in Cuba*, p. 213.]

When workers balked at this new concept of trade unionism, Fidel Castro criticized them: "The working people gave the impression that they did not understand the new role they have to play. . . ."

As for the Technical Advisory Councils (through which factory employees allegedly cooperated in planning and management), these were a "fiction," a "phantom which exists on paper," in Gilly's words. Gilly adds that the TACs were necessarily impotent, since in a state-run economy, economic decisions are also political decisions. And in Cuba, he said, the workers were strictly excluded from state power and political decision-making.

To secure the independence which it required vis-à-vis the Cuban working class and peasantry, the Castro government had to construct a new bureaucratic state machine, which could administer production, dominate the bonapartist mass organizations, and command the instruments of repression. This necessity increased as time passed and the capitalist character of the government and its program demanded the application of greater and greater pressure upon the masses, their living standards, and working conditions.

From what source could the cadres for such a state bureaucracy be recruited? There were two logical sources, considering the type of state which was required. One—the army itself, a militarily disciplined, hierarchically organized body. Two—the Stalinist PSP, likewise disciplined and even more experienced and ideologically trained in the art of controlling workers in the interests of capitalism. O'Connor claims (approvingly) that the PSPers were placed in charge of the unions precisely because of their previously demonstrated ability to whip the unions into line.

This is how I see the significance of the fusion which took place between the forces of the July 26 Movement and the PSP's in the ORI (Integrated Revolutionary Organization) in 1961—the first step toward the establishment of the Cuban Communist Party. The fact that this move followed immediately upon Castro's announcement that his regime was socialist should suggest something about just what type of "socialism" he had in mind.

The point, as I see it, is not that the old PSP forces had now somehow "conquered" the Castroites. Nor was Castro merely bending before Russian pressure. Castro remained loyal to his original basic program for Cuba, and he certainly planned to retain the upper hand in his partnership with the Stalinists. The point is simply that cadres trained in the orthodox Stalinist school provided natural materials for the construction of state capitalism in Cuba and for enforcing its dictates on the population.

Economic Goals and Methods of Cuban Government

The basic economic goals and methods of the Castro government have remained the same for twenty years, even though different techniques have been tested through which to implement them. I've referred to the Castroites' self-conception as the "guiding angels" of the oppressed. No doubt in their minds they want only the best for the Cuban people. They were not, however, and still are not, prepared to let the Cuban masses take state power and begin to break down capitalist relations of production.

This placed Castro in the same fundamental position in which people like Agostinho Neto and Samora Machel have found themselves. For all of them, "doing good" for the people presupposes strengthening the hand of the benevolent capitalist state and an embryonic state bourgeoisie.

But the problem is that capital can only be strengthened—in whatever form or stage of development it exists—in one way. That is, through the maximization of surplus-value production and capital accumulation. This, in turn, meant—over time—pushing the Cuban workers and peasants back from many of the gains they had won in the immediate aftermath of Batista's downfall.

Gilly saw even in the early 1960s that the state bureaucracy had interests and an outlook "counterposed to those of the workers." This was because, he observed,

[E]xcept when direct control by the workers exists, which can only occur politically, the proportions between consumption and investment—and the proportions within the latter—also tend to be resolved by the state bureaucracy guided by the pressure of its own interests as a socially defined group, deciding of course according to what benefits it most. We are not saying that this is a conscious and deliberate attitude; what matters is that here too existence determines consciousness.

During the early 1960s, the new state bureaucracy began experimenting with different types of plans and techniques for driving up the accumulation of capital. In doing so, it was confronted with serious difficulties. The U.S. trade embargo cut Cuba off from her traditional source of parts and supplies. The stream of émigrés denied Cuba skilled personnel to serve the state and industry. And the supply of accumulated untapped resources began to run out.

On top of these hardships, the regime now made a series of disastrous decisions. First, it attempted mechanically to transplant to Cuba the highly centralized *form* of planning and financing state-capitalist production which was then current in the Soviet Union. It also attempted a great leap into rapid, all-round, semi-autarchic industrialization aimed at making Cuban national capital more or less self-sufficient. The result was a total breakdown in the planning process, tremendous waste and inefficiency, a rapid decline in industrial and agricultural output, and severe shortages generally. This translated, in turn, into an

overall decline in the growth rate and the introduction of rationing in the distribution of consumer goods.

These cutbacks took a particularly hard toll on women, who were at various times forced out of the work force in large numbers because they had to spend their days standing on lines for scarce consumer goods. The shortages themselves meant that real wages were under heavy attack, regardless of the amount of money workers held in their pockets. And under Castro's prodding, the Stalinist-run unions declared a whole series of give-backs in the early 1960s—in the length of the working day, seniority, pensions, sick and vacation pay.

Denied a say in government policy or even trade-union rights, the workers responded in the only way left open to them—one already well known in the capitalist world. Guevara described the workers' response:

The mass carries out the tasks set by the government whatever their nature. The initiative generally comes from Fidel or the high command of the revolution. It is explained to the people, who make it their own. . . . However, the state at times makes mistakes. When this occurs, the collective enthusiasm diminishes palpably as a result of a quantitative diminishing that takes place in each of the elements that make up the collective, and work becomes paralyzed until it finally shrinks to insignificant proportions; this is the time to rectify.

In other words, what Guevara was saying was that the working class resorted to slowdowns, absenteeism, and the like.

This is exactly the form working-class protest took throughout the 1960s—reaching crisis proportions in 1970, the government's "Year of Productivity." Productivity began its downward plunge (falling 30% between 1962 and 1965), and absenteeism rose simultaneously (reaching 29% of the work force in 1970).

Attempts to stimulate so-called "socialist competition" among factory workers failed; the workers simply refused to go along. Their resistance reflected their anger (according to a government official quoted in *Hoy*) at "having to remain silent" while administrators make all economic decisions.

In 1962, consequently, the government legislated a system of punishments for absenteeism. In 1964, work quotas were formally established. A worker who didn't—or couldn't—make production (which he or she had no say in setting) was docked a proportional amount of their wages.

In June 1961, Guevara was already declaring that "the Cuban workers have to get used to living in a collectivist regime and therefore cannot strike." In 1962 plant grievance committees came under sharp government attack. They were called "a barrier creating contradictions," by Guevara, and, he said, they "will be able to accomplish a very useful task only provided that they change their attitude. Production is the fundamental task." (*Revolutionary Change in Cuba*, p. 220.)

Stepped-up Repression

Simultaneously, the government moved to tighten its repressive apparatus and to put it into motion. It was necessary to restore discipline in the fields, factories, and throughout the society.

A "pots and pans" protest by women in the city of Cárdenas against shortages and rationing was met, in 1962, with a military display of tanks and machine guns. Maurice Zeitlin, an observer, concluded, "Organized dissent is prohibited."

The militia was disarmed in 1963 and replaced by a Civil

Defense Organization under army command. Other mass organizations "ceased to exist on anything but paper," according to K.S. Karol, who added that in the future these organizations would be revived only to carry out "repressive functions."

The 1961 crackdown on the Cuban Trotskyists was part of a rising tide of political and cultural repression. *Lunes de Revolución*, a controversial cultural journal, was shut down. Press censorship was tightened under the Commission of Revolutionary Orientation. The only legal political party, the ORI, brooked no internal dissent and was run from the top down by the notorious Stalinist hack Aníbal Escalante.

As the workers retreated in the face of this economic and political offensive, the bureaucrats' relative privileges began to increase. This became increasingly obvious in the fields of housing, food, vacation time, and pay.

Even more obvious and fundamental than these consumer privileges was the bureaucracy's monopoly over the means of production and its regulation of the work process. Gilly wrote in 1964:

"The ones with the brief cases' is an allusion to an unproductive social group who, among other things, have the privilege of deciding and leading in matters in which the masses should be taking the initiative. The hostility of this and other expressions is a form of social struggle inside the Revolution, a struggle for equality and for the right to decide."

It was this mass resentment which prompted Castro's first purge of Escalante in 1962 (along with Castro's desire to consolidate his own command over the bureaucracy as a whole). Escalante and his circle, who took to bureaucratic command like ducks to water, were a particularly sharp source of popular irritation.

But this operation, like its sequel in 1967, had the hallmarks of a classic Stalinist or Maoist purge. Escalante was made the scapegoat for crimes that were characteristic of the *whole* bureaucracy. The root of the special privileges and abuses of the Escalante clique—the bureaucracy's total control over all facets of Cuban life—was left untouched by the purges. And that is precisely why the other ex-PSP hacks helped to stick the knife in.

But just as in other state-capitalist societies, this struggle within the bureaucratic ruling group exposed real social sores, like the growing pressure exerted on Cuba by the Soviet Union and the consolidation of the bureaucracy's powers and privileges. But proletarian revolutionaries are interested in such conflicts only if—and insofar as—they result in an increase in the democratic rights of the masses. This did not occur in Cuba.

From 1962 to 1968, the proportion of the Cuban GNP targeted for reinvestment reached an unprecedented 31%, the highest target in any underdeveloped country. According to a new development perspective adopted in the early 60s, the government set out to drive up the rate of capital accumulation by producing the largest possible amount of the sugar cash-crop for export. Profits realized through the sale of this sugar would then go toward purchasing industrial equipment abroad.

This huge productive effort was to be primarily supported by what Guevara had called "moral incentives"—or socialist consciousness." But in the absence of either the political premises for socialist consciousness or the material basis necessary to sustain it, such rates of accumulation could only be met through unpaid, and in some cases, coerced labor. This was the source of the catastrophic 10 million-ton harvest by 1970.

To organize and enforce this campaign, production was

increasingly militarized in this period. By 1967, labor brigades composed of unpaid volunteers—who risked losing jobs and consumer rations for failing to volunteer their time—composed 8% to 12% of the work force. Women and youth were drafted into unpaid labor service in huge numbers.

When these methods failed to raise productivity, a harsher labor discipline was imposed. In 1969 a law was passed requiring workers to carry "work force control" cards at all times. The cards record the workers' productivity record, political background, and quota of fulfilled voluntary labor. Changing jobs without government approval became a criminal act.

An antiloafing law for men only was drawn up in 1968 and enacted in 1971; it reinforced the system of work quotas, which had fallen into disuse between 1966 and 1970. Criminal penalties were also mandated for absenteeism, including revocation of rationing cards, denial of social services, cuts in wages, and even imprisonment.

The social security law was changed in 1968. Receiving full benefits at retirement was now premised on a work record showing consistent donation of unpaid overtime and volunteer labor and fulfillment of work quotas. Only 6% of the work force qualified for full social security benefits under this law as of 1969 (according to Valdez and Bonachea).

Castro's 'Great Revolutionary Offensive'

In 1968, concurrent with Mao's "Cultural Revolution" in China, Castro declared his own Great Revolutionary Offensive.

In the name of eliminating all surviving bourgeois privilege, all small privately owned shops and small-scale commerce were nationalized. To root out the major source of the agricultural black market (a natural product of the shortages-inflation-rationing syndrome), a third agrarian reform was undertaken. This one forced thousands of small farmers out of independent existence; their lands were absorbed into the state-farm sector. It also eliminated many small private subsistence plots previously permitted for state-farm employees.

Once again the government organized the population to carry out these acts, just as had been done in China, Vietnam, and most recently in Ethiopia. No doubt many workers and even poor peasants supported these measures, hoping they would make available more consumables at lower prices.

But this was not the aim of the new measures, according to various progovernment writers. "The total eradication of the private sector, excepting small farms, made it impossible for anyone to hide whether he worked or not," explained Bonachea and Valdez, editors of *Cuba in Revolution*. They add that this was the necessary precondition for enforcing the new work-record-card and antiloafing laws, which were props of the government's all-out labor mobilization drive.

In fact, the Great Revolutionary Offensive did not ease but only exacerbated consumer shortages. State production could not provide what had previously been produced or retailed privately; food supplies dropped even further and prices rose even higher. Demands that the masses respond, produce more for less, became even more insistent.

The overall effect was yet another decline in productivity. The GNP fell some 30% between 1966 and 1969.

Hand in hand with the militarization of labor went a

further increase in the level of repression in the late 1960s. Karol and Dumont (soon to be denounced as CIA spies for their pains) documented a sharp rise in arbitrary arrests and imprisonments. For example, a Moncada veteran was given a sentence of fifteen years in prison for criticizing Castro. A young army guard was also sentenced to fifteen years for allowing cows to graze on rice land.

The crime rate went up, particularly among the youth. The government responded with an attack on "youth culture," singling out homosexuals for special abuse. The universities clamped down on dissent. The age of criminal liability was dropped to 16. Crimes against state property or "abnormal sexual behavior" were made punishable by life in prison.

What remained of cultural freedom was still further restricted. After the arrest and confession of the poet Heberto Padilla in 1971—and the furious denunciation of the leftist intellectuals who came to his defense—Castro declared that all Cuban art would henceforth have to prove its political merit to government satisfaction.

There have also been limitations on the rights of women and Afro-Cubans. Blacks have unquestionably benefited from the outlawing of overt discrimination and from the government's economic reforms in general. But supporters of the regime report that it has never adopted an affirmative-action policy—i.e., special training and promotion programs aimed at establishing true equality of opportunity. The Cuban family code is similar to those in the USSR and Eastern Europe, sanctifying the nuclear family.

And still social differentiation increased. In 1968 wage differentials spanned a ratio of 1 to 10.5. For every peso earned monthly by army youth, cabinet ministers earned 100; supreme court justices, 149. During the 1969 austerity program, 1,500 Alfa Romeo sedans were purchased for CCP bureaucrats. Differentials in housing, recreation, and access to consumer goods widened.

Escalante and the 'Microfaction'

When the level of popular indignation reached crisis levels, Escalante (now a middle-level state farm manager) was once again accused of major responsibility for these vices. This time *Granma's* portrait of the evils supposedly fostered solely by Escalante's "microfaction" was even more revealing about the social character of the state bureaucracy.

Granma said this,

When the Revolution triumphs and the direction of the economy passes into the hands of the State, bureaucracy intervenes in the administration of production, in the control and governing of the material and human resources of the nation . . . Past experience in struggle against this evil indicates that bureaucracy tends to operate as a class . . . functionaries have nothing to defend except their own positions and these they defend as would any class.

Our own party at the time unfortunately took Castro's version of the anti-Escalante purge as good coin.

Huberman and Sweezy, hardly Castro's sternest critics at the time, came closer to the truth, as we can see after the test of ten years' time.

We are suggesting [they said] that the case of the [Escalante] microfaction sets a precedent and lays the groundwork for wholesale suppression of criticism in Cuba at any time the leadership may, in its own discretion, decide that the interests of the Revolution demand it.

Huberman and Sweezy recognized that these trials would

only strengthen bureaucratism, which has as its source "the monopolization of power by officials appointed by and answerable to those above them in the chain of command."

Since the early 1970s, the Cuban economy has settled into fundamentally the same kind of profit-oriented state-capitalist economy which exists today in the Soviet Union. As Dick Fidler, Joe Hansen, and other leaders of the Fourth International have said, the forms of "democracy" instituted by the Cuban government in the 1970s resemble the empty showcases of the Soviet Union as well.

Nevertheless, the Cuban government retains popular support. In this respect, too, it resembles radical nationalist regimes such as Perón's and Nasser's, or the FRELIMO government of Mozambique today. Restrictions on the masses' right to freely read, discuss, and organize certainly retards the development of coherent opposition, and our ability to find out about it. But much more important is the fact that the Cuban people still feel themselves—correctly—immediately threatened by U.S. imperialism. The Castro regime seems the only possible bulwark against reconquest. Most undoubtedly, they equate the weakening or overthrow of Castro with losing everything won in the course of their national revolution—everything from greater national independence to all the social reforms which remain in existence. This is one more reason why U.S. revolutionists must demand an end to all imperialist threats, sanctions, and attacks against the Cuban people.

The foreign policy of the Castro regime has been governed by the same considerations which have guided its domestic policy.

The Cuban revolution inspired anti-imperialist fighters everywhere, especially in Latin America. The heroic actions of the Cuban people—and the militant posture of the Cuban government—shattered the myth of U.S. invulnerability.

But the Castro leadership did not use this deserved prestige to foster *proletarian* revolution in a *single* country of the world. On the contrary it has always sought alliances with governments (and would-be governments) which stand for the preservation of capitalism, even if capitalism in a statist or paternalistic form. This is how the regime has fought back against the continued pressure and threats of U.S. imperialism. Moreover, it cements these alliances, or tries to, by endorsing and reinforcing the reactionary anti-working-class policies of these governments and the two-stage strategies of petty-bourgeois national liberation forces.

From the first—at the 1961 Conference for Latin American Sovereignty and in Castro's Second Declaration of Havana in 1962—the Cuban government espoused a left-sounding version of the standard Stalinist two-stage revolution: stage one revolving around blocs with progressive bourgeois forces. "In anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggles," Castro said, "it is possible to bring the majority of people behind the goals of liberation—the working class, the peasantry, the intellectuals, petty-bourgeoisie and the most progressive layers of the national bourgeoisie."

Contrary to the appraisal of the party and Fourth International at the time, the 1967 OLAS turn on the part of the Cuban leadership represented tactical not programmatic differences with mainstream Latin American Stalinism. Pushing a *strategy* of guerrilla warfare no more proved the Cubans' proletarian-revolutionary credentials than it did for the Vietnamese CP, which carried out a heroic war on this basis.

Parallels drawn to the Bolsheviks' attitude toward "armed struggle" were misplaced. For the Bolsheviks, armed struggle was a necessary tactic in the struggle to lead the proletariat to state power. The tactic was subordinated to and took its revolutionary character from the class program of the Bolshevik Party.

Castro's Strategy of Guerrilla Warfare

But for the Castro group, guerrilla warfare was a strategy based on an orientation not to the proletariat but to the peasantry. It was explicitly based on a generalization from the experience of the Cubans themselves in this regard. Castro thus declared it was a "crime" to advocate directing guerrilla warfare from the cities, the industrial base of the proletariat's collective power. How is this different from the strategy of Mao Tsetung in China or the NLF in Vietnam? In his polemics against this strategy as applied to China in the 1930s, Trotsky denied on principle that even a successful peasant-based military campaign could bring into existence a workers state.

Proof of the nonproletarian axis of Cuba's foreign policy was not long in coming. By 1968 the defeat of guerrillaism in Latin America reinforced Castro's drive for allies among the so-called "progressive bourgeoisie" and to promote the revolutionary credentials of the counterrevolutionary Russian Stalinists and their various agents.

Thus what we have oddly called Castro's eight-year "pause for reflection"—from 1967 to 1975—was not at all a period of "pause" in Cuba's international diplomatic campaigns. In one country after another, Havana took its stand with bourgeois regimes and against the working class and poor peasants: refusing to solidarize with workers and students in France and Mexico in 1968; supporting the repressive statist regime of Velasco in Peru; supporting Torrijos in Panama, Allende's popular front in Chile, and the popular-frontist Frente Amplio in Uruguay.

In Angola, Cuban policy goals produced contradictory results. Giving wholehearted political support to the MPLA regime meant deploying Cuban troops against the invasion of South African imperialism. Here was the progressive side. But it also meant the consolidation of this capitalist state apparatus and government against the country's workers and oppressed.

More recently, the Cubans have lent their name to the popular-frontist García Márquez movement during the presidential elections in Colombia against the revolutionary candidacy of our Comrade Socorro Ramirez. In Peru, by the same token, it supports the PSR (an MFA-type formation) in its bid for power against the popular masses behind the FOCEP and Comrade Hugo Blanco.

A crucial test was posed in Czechoslovakia. After years of denouncing Russian foreign policy in words, Castro in 1968 lined up on the wrong side of the barricades there as Moscow's tanks rolled in to crush the masses' struggle for minimal democratic rights. Since then, he has followed the same line with regard to all the struggles by Eastern Europe's peoples against their oppression by the Kremlin bureaucracy. Castro justifies his policy with references to the needs of world socialism against so-called pawns of Western imperialism.

The truth is that Castro's reactionary line in Czechoslovakia was counterposed to the interests of the world revolution; only the Czech masses could have advanced those interests. Castro's statements simply repeated the standard Stalinist denunciation of progressive struggles

and movements as imperialist plots. And that, too, is how the Cuban press characterizes world Trotskyism to this day!

This is also how Castro justifies employing Cuban troops against the just struggles of the Somalis and the Eritreans right now. Here, too, the insurgent masses are allegedly "instruments of reaction and imperialism" out to "liquidate the Ethiopian revolution." It is the Dergue, we are told (as in 1968 it was the USSR's troops in Czechoslovakia) which defends the interests of revolution.

A Balance Sheet of Two Positions

I want to conclude with a balance sheet of how we see our position in relation to the party's position.

Why should the party and the international abandon their present orientation on Cuba in favor of the one which I have presented today?

Because understanding that Cuba is a capitalist state allows us to analyze and intervene in the class struggle in that country in a consistently Marxist manner. Only this analysis provides the basis for the kind of program needed by the Cuban working class and its vanguard—and by the Fourth International.

The state-capitalist theory I've outlined follows from Marx's definition of capitalism as a specific mode of production based on specific relations of production among living social classes.

It builds on the orthodox Marxist view that state capitalism is merely capitalism in a different form, one which retains all of that system's basic contradictions.

It reaffirms the fact that a workers state is and can only be a state which enforces the dictatorship of the proletariat—a state which can be born only out of a proletarian revolution.

It is consistent with Marx's ironclad principle that the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working class itself.

This understanding of the Cuban revolution reaffirms the theory of permanent revolution, as propounded by Trotsky. That is, that the democratic revolution can only be realized in a manner consistently in the interests of the proletariat if the proletariat itself conquers state power and opens up the international transition to socialism. These are the theoretical underpinnings for the revolutionary practice of our movement.

The position our party holds today—that Cuba is a workers state whose bureaucratic deformations can be overcome through peaceful reform—weakens and distorts these Marxist fundamentals and disorients us in terms of program and strategy.

This view holds that a workers state can be constructed without the proletariat ever seizing state power. A petty-bourgeois guerrilla band with a small peasant base is capable under the right conditions of overturning capitalism, establishing a workers state, and beginning the transition to socialism.

It confuses the essence of a workers state—the real political and social dictatorship of a definite class of proletarians—with a series of economic forms (nationalized property, economic planning, and foreign-trade monopoly) which are in no way necessarily proletarian or socialist in their essence.

This leads into treating the need for the proletariat to enforce its own class rule through its own organs of power as something of secondary or incidental importance. We refer to the Cuban proletariat's lack of state power—and

even of minimal democratic rights—as merely the absence of “forms of proletarian democracy.” The revolutionary character of the Cuban regime is deduced from motives imputed to the bureaucracy rather than the real objective situation and prospects of the Cuban working class.

The permanent revolution is transformed from a program which must and can only be implemented through the proletariat’s conquest of power, into something which petty-bourgeois nationalists can implement—unconsciously—if only they are consistent.

Now comrades try to square all this with our revolutionary tradition by employing the worker-farmer government concept to explain how a workers state was established in Cuba—without the working class. This label is slapped upon the 1959 Castro government—even though this government was not composed of a coalition of workers and peasants parties. It is the question of party composition which united the various usages the Communist International and Trotsky made of this algebraic governmental slogan.

Instead, the Castro government, according to comrades, became a workers-peasants government retrospectively—that is after it carried out a program of statist economic measures in 1960. These measures—imputed to be “socialist in principle” lent the government its proletarian content and were said to prove the Cuban leadership’s socialist consciousness. But as I’ve tried to demonstrate, such measures are widely carried out by nationalist regimes throughout the underdeveloped capitalist world, in many places destroying the old ruling class and state machine in the process. Do these state capitalist reforms transform the FRELIMO government or the Ethiopian Dergue into workers and farmers governments?

Employing the workers-farmers government concept in this way is an exercise in circular logic and it does nothing to explain the real relationship of classes in the Cuban revolutionary process. At bottom it argues as follows:

Only a workers and farmers government carries out extensive statist economic changes. In 1960, the government of Fidel Castro—despite its manifestly petty-bourgeois character and lack of working class component—initiated such changes. It must follow then that Castro’s government was and had been since the fall of 1959 a workers-farmers government.

But after all is said and done, the big question still remains: How is it possible to make a proletarian revolution, erect a proletarian state, and make the proletariat the ruling class without the direct, independent, and leading role of the proletariat itself. The workers-farmers government is no substitute for an explanation of these hard facts.

The current position also contradicts another aspect of the Marxist theory of socialist revolution. It holds that the 1959 seizure of power by the Castro group was not yet a proletarian revolution and that the government formed, ruled over a capitalist state. The replacement of capitalist rule by the proletarian dictatorship occurred, we are told, sometime late in 1960, when Castro initiated his nationalizations. The proletariat thus established its dictatorship without the need for an armed insurrection. How does this square with the following cardinal principle of our movement, which was enunciated by Trotsky on many occasions:

The transition from a bourgeois to a proletarian dictatorship cannot occur as a peaceful process of “growing over” from one to the other. A dictatorship of the proletariat can replace a democratic, or fascist, dictatorship of the bourgeoisie only through

armed insurrection. (“Manifesto of the ILO on China,” 1930.)

The present position also undermines our movement’s views of Stalinist parties as counterrevolutionary in essence. In 1961 when the ORI was formed—fusing petty-bourgeois Castroites with the Stalinists of the PSP—some Trotskyists reconsidered their evaluation of the Castro group. This, for example, was the position of the Chilean POR then and today of SWP member David Keil. But the SWP majority reconsidered the character of the PSP instead, one of the most loyally Stalinist parties of the Western hemisphere. The *International Socialist Review* argued that this fusion could create the revolutionary party needed in Cuba, that factional differences with the Stalinists should be subordinated—and counterposed the ORI to the building of an independent Leninist party.

Believing that the proletarian dictatorship could arise from peasant guerrilla warfare, our international movement lost its bearings vis-a-vis petty-bourgeois guerrillism in the 1960s and early 1970s. It became necessary for the Leninist Trotskyist Faction to lead a protracted struggle to return the Fourth International to a proletarian orientation.

But our party’s misassessment of the Cuban revolution and Castro leadership contributed to this international disorientation. What had been our advice to the Cuban Trotskyists? “What they needed was 12 guys to go up on the Sierra Maestra.” Following this guerrillaist strategy later, many Latin American Trotskyists lost their political way—and sometimes their lives.

Understanding Cuba as an underdeveloped capitalist country helps explain the zigzags of Castro’s foreign policy. It stops us from being taken in by his socialist rhetoric—rhetoric common to state-capitalist regimes of both Stalinist and non-Stalinist origins. Remember, after all, that Mao used to talk a lot about the “uninterrupted revolution” in the 1960s. This sounded a lot like the permanent revolution. Remember also that the Neto government and the Dergue today use a lot of Marxist verbiage, and both are considered socialist by the Cuban regime. But with the state-capitalist understanding of the Cuban government, we can understand the kind of foreign policy it employs.

The present position gives us no such assistance. Instead, we find ourselves looking for some progressive, revolutionary, and internationalist essence even in the worst of Castro’s policies (such as his endorsement of the Soviet Union’s imperialist invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968). The present party line predisposes us to believing Havana’s justifications for whatever international adventure it may be engaged in.

This is what seems to have happened in fact in the Ethiopia-Somali war. Our party initially held to a generally rigorous Marxist analysis of the forces and stakes involved in that struggle. But now we’ve altered our position and today we endorse Cuba’s role in the Ogaden. This makes what comrades call Castro’s contradiction our own contradiction by placing our party on the wrong side of one of the key democratic struggles which make up the Ethiopian revolution as a whole.

Understanding that Cuba is not a workers state also helps preserve our Leninist outlook on what a proletarian revolution in an underdeveloped country *can* accomplish—even with the combined reactionary pressures of the U.S. and Soviet Union. The kind of economic, social, and cultural development possible in a state which is ruled by the proletariat and peasantry—which unleashes their productive and creative powers. What a revolutionary

foreign policy would look like and how it could lead and inspire revolutionary struggles in the imperialist and underdeveloped world.

Finally, comes the question of the defense of Cuba against imperialism and the advancement of the Cuban revolution. Here too a state-capitalist analysis can help forge a revolutionary program and strategy.

It directs the attention of revolutionary Marxists in Cuba back to the proletarian masses and away from the bureaucratic state that keeps them in a straitjacket. It demands that we strive to build—in Cuba just as we do everywhere else—a revolutionary Trotskyist party—Cuban section of the Fourth International—that will lead the struggle of the Cuban people against both U.S. imperialism and Castro's capitalist state.

It clarifies the real relationship that exists between the defense of the gains of the 1959 Cuban revolution and preparing the groundwork for Cuba's coming socialist revolution. While demanding unconditional defense of Cuba's national independence and the social gains made since Batista's downfall, it places no confidence in the Castro government's ability to defend these gains or to carry forward the revolutionary process.

These are the advantages I see in the position I've outlined. But in one crucial area, both perspectives on the Cuban revolution merge. I agree with what Larry said, that you can't begin to solve the real problems of the Cuban revolution without beginning with the defense of Cuba. And in leading this defense effort from the first days of the Cuban revolution, the Socialist Workers Party has consistently upheld the highest principles of proletarian internationalism.

SUMMARY

From our point of view this has been a very good discussion, a very educational one.

Comrades have raised a lot of important questions. But, given our small representation here, we can't possibly answer them all. So I'm just going to try to take up a few of the key ones.

Tony [Thomas] and Jack [Barnes] both said in the discussion that a revolutionary proletarian leadership in Cuba, that is, a section of the Fourth International, could not have done things very differently than Castro has. But then, when those of us who consider Cuba state-capitalist point out the anti-working-class policies that the Castro government has carried out at home and abroad, comrades answer by saying that we could hardly expect more from a non-Marxist leadership! I think this is a contradiction.

Comrades of the majority argue that the difficulties facing the Cuban working class and peasantry are products of the pressure of U.S. imperialism, and secondarily of the Soviet Union as well. You argue that they are not the result of any social conflict between the Cuban government and the Cuban masses. And that a Trotskyist leadership in Cuba, working under the same disadvantages, really couldn't do much better. I disagree with this.

In the first place, I think this kind of thinking tends to [belittle] the very importance of the Fourth International and its program. If a petty-bourgeois guerrilla leadership can do just as well as we could do, or mass proletarian parties could do, then I think that you would have to conclude that the 1969 turn of the Fourth International

toward a guerrilla-war strategy was not so wrong.

Moreover, I think this kind of attitude would place the Fourth International on the sidelines in Cuba itself. Because the Castro leadership excuses its errors this way, too. It justifies its refusal to allow the masses their rights on the grounds that this would open up the country to the dangers of imperialist intervention.

Now what would we say to this if we were inside Cuba? Is this the line that we would peddle to the working class? That they have to be denied their freedom, denied their rights, because proletarian democracy would endanger the country? Or would we, on the other hand, champion the needs of the masses by raising demands on the government? Would we champion their needs for greater freedom, for greater rights, for greater control over their working and living conditions?

I would be for doing the latter and I assume that other comrades would too, but I think that this does stand in contradiction to the general strategy Jack [Barnes] outlined based on trying to win over Castro and his ruling group—since in our view there is a conflict between the policies the Castro government pursues and the needs of the working class and peasantry.

Soviet Russia under Bolshevik rule faced some of the same kinds of problems Cuba has faced: isolation, dangers from imperialism, etc. In fact, the immediate situation was even worse because the Russian workers state was born in the ravages of interimperialist war and soon suffered a civil war on its own territory. But do we deduce from this that the Bolshevik Party really didn't make much of a difference inside Russia? Did the existence of external threats and pressure turn the government's policy toward the Russian working class (which was the ruling class of that state) and its policy toward the international proletariat, into second-rate questions? Hardly.

Comrades know that is precisely the kind of rationale that Stalin's apologists have always come up with. They always excused Stalin's course of action by saying it was a result of U.S. imperialism, that his "excesses" were somehow inevitable.

Now, of course, we agree that United States imperialism bears the major share of the blame for Cuba's economic problems. And we agree that the Soviet Union puts a high political price on the aid it grants to Cuba. But that does not answer the question of what policy a Cuban workers state would follow within these limitations. What choice would a revolutionary proletarian leadership make?

We all agree that any proletarian revolution in an underdeveloped country today would encounter the same kind of pressures that Cuba faces, even if we don't agree on the class nature of Cuba. But would a workers state inevitably have to walk down the Cuban road? Would a proletarian leadership inevitably have to deny the workers a voice in their government—for twenty years' time? Rights in the trade unions? In the factories? Or on the land?

Would a revolutionary proletarian leadership have to support other bourgeois states politically and extend political support to the Russian counterrevolutionary ruling class?

No, I don't think so. A revolutionary proletarian leadership could and would follow a different course. And I want to cite a few examples of what was possible for Cuba in order to clarify our differences over the Castro regime. At the same time, this can show comrades on what program we would work to build the Fourth International in Cuba today.

First, a revolutionary leadership would have constructed a new state—the dictatorship of the proletariat—based on mass organizations of peasants and workers. We don't consider this just a frill or some kind of "ideal norm." Such soviet-style institutions are the only form through which the proletariat and its allies can express their demands and needs in all aspects of life. These councils would set policy on everything from foreign policy to economic planning, defense, production decisions, education policies, and cultural life.

We are for replacing the present Cuban state machine, which is controlled by a distinct bureaucracy and serves its interests, which provides no role for the masses in decision-making. We're for replacing it with a proletarian democratic state machine, not of course with a more bureaucratic one or a counterrevolutionary one. I still don't know whether comrades of the majority agree with this perspective.

We don't think the Cuban masses would find this proposal so crazy, or so preposterous. If they did, Castro would not already feel the need to talk so much about instituting workers democracy, even though he has never delivered on this talk. The fact that he constantly promises a decision-making role for the masses is, in our view, a sign that the masses want this, a sign that they are advanced in their consciousness, not that they are stupid, or backward, as some comrades said our position implies. The Cuban masses want workers democracy. But the Castro government has used its power to block its development.

A revolutionary leadership in Cuba would draw the masses into the work of administering and planning the economy. Trade-union rights and the right to strike would be defended. This in our view would be the way to qualitatively strengthen the economy and to boost productivity by drawing on the resources and talents of the producers themselves. Here too—in the relations of production—we don't think that workers democracy is an unnecessary luxury. The lack of workers control over the economy has had costly consequences for the masses.

Castro's advisers and supporters of the regime who have written about the economy have all pointed out the really tremendous waste and inefficiency that results from bureaucratic planning in which the producers, those with most knowledge about the work process, simply have no voice, no input.

The same would hold true of rationing. Yes, a Cuban workers state might well have had to ration consumer goods. But there are different kinds of rationing, different degrees of rationing, which are in part determined by whether or not the mass of consumers have any say over this process and the economy as a whole. Do workers have any reason to raise productivity? Do they control the proportions in which different items are produced? Is rationing carried out in a democratic, egalitarian fashion?

In response to the Cuban antilabor laws I described, comrades answered that the Bolsheviks also had to deal with problems of absenteeism and labor discipline. That's right. They faced those problems, and capitalist classes face these problems. But the Bolsheviks did not handle these problems the way capitalists do. And they did not handle these problems the way the Castro government has. They sought to solve them while advancing the general interests of the working class inside the Soviet Union, while reinforcing the proletariat's dictatorship.

Lenin said, in fact, time and again that the more disciplinary measures the government had to impose—the

worse the shortages became, the lower the rations—the more essential it became to bolster the proletariat's control over its party and state, to tighten its alliance with the peasantry.

That was Lenin's solution to these economic problems and the bureaucratism they gave rise to. It was because he saw a bureaucratic trend developing, that led away from this kind of revolutionary solution and toward capitalist methods of labor discipline and repression, that Lenin began his struggle against Stalin. But this is not the way the Cuban government has responded to these problems.

As I tried to document in my report—and comrades haven't really disputed this—the Cuban government has progressively cracked down on the working class. Does the working class run the country today, as some comrades have at least implied? That's not my understanding. The new legislation of the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly the work-force-control cards, the antiloafing laws, the new criminal code lowering the age of criminal liability, these are very similar measures to the ones that Stalin pursued only well into the revolution's degeneration. That's when these measures were introduced into the Russian economy.

Comrades said in the discussion that the early social and material gains of the Cuban revolution have been constantly extended, that all kinds of democratic forms have been opened up to the masses, in the Communist Party, in the organs of popular power, etc. And this is supposed to prove that the masses have a big say over government policy.

But again this is just not what the evidence shows. It shows crises in the Cuban economy that have caused cutbacks in earlier gains. Comrades themselves have sometimes pointed this out to "illustrate" the results of imperialist pressure.

As for these so-called democratic experiments, particularly in the 1970s, they have been exposed as shams in our own press, in *Intercontinental Press*.

Was there any sign of proletarian democracy at the first congress of the Communist Party of Cuba? Not according to *IP*. Was there any freedom for workers to express their opinions or vote their views in the Matanzas elections? Not according to *Intercontinental Press*.

So, in Cuba today I would be for demanding trade-union rights, the right to free press, free speech, free elections, etc., the right to run the factories and farms through democratic organs, workers control of rationing to prevent abuses. These kinds of demands.

Would the masses think I was crazy? Maybe some of them would. But I don't think everyone would. In fact, I think many of those who are the most class-conscious would agree with these demands. To believe otherwise—that is, to believe that no section of the working class cares at all whether the proletariat rules directly in Cuba—is to assume that the workers are stupid or horribly backward. That's not our point of view. We are *not* pessimists. We think that the workers' consciousness did rise as a result of the social revolution in Cuba and that we would find an audience for these advanced ideas.

And the same thing is true for foreign policy. We think a Cuban workers state under a revolutionary leadership would act a lot differently. It would appeal for aid to the world proletariat. It would appeal to the proletariat of other countries to pressure their governments, instead of flattering and appealing to the bourgeois governments themselves. This includes first and foremost the United States proletariat, but also the Russian proletariat, and the

proletariat of Eastern Europe. This is how a revolutionary leadership could—and would—counter the combined pressures of the U.S. and Soviet Union. Think of what a difference it would make for Cuba if instead of siding with the Soviet Union against the masses—for example, in Czechoslovakia—the Cuban government stood behind the struggles of the workers and oppressed. That kind of solidarity would make it more difficult for the Russian rulers to pull off their policy of political and economic blackmail.

This is the way the Bolsheviks countered the imperialists' pressure: by helping to form revolutionary workers parties around the world, by solidarizing with every proletarian and democratic struggle, by seeking to spread proletarian revolution. Sure, the Bolsheviks had to make compromises, like the Brest-Litovsk peace. But they did not turn these into political capitulations. On the contrary, each time they had to make a concession to the capitalists, they turned these concessions to their favor. They used them to help expose the capitalists to the workers of their countries, to help inspire the workers to fight even harder against their governments.

Now what about the Castro leadership? It is absolutely true that the Castro government has supported national liberation struggles such as in Angola. And that's progressive. And we also think it's progressive when Mozambique, Angola, and Tanzania shelter guerrilla forces fighting in Zimbabwe and South Africa and offer them bases and arms. And in our opinion it was progressive when Somalia sent its troops to aid the Somali national liberation struggle in the Ogaden.

But has Castro sought to spread the *socialist* revolution? That is, has the Castro government pursued a strategy to lead the working class to power and to establish working-class rule in any country? If so, where? Not in France, in Mexico, in Chile, in Czechoslovakia, in Angola, in Ethiopia, or in Peru, just to name a few.

(Just an aside on this, regarding the dispute among comrades who hold that Cuba is a workers state. Many comrades have said that Trotskyists can only advocate a political revolution in Cuba once we've established that the Cuban bureaucracy is consciously counterrevolutionary, that is, out to smash revolutions. But this was *not* Trotsky's criterion in deciding, after the German events in 1933, that a political revolution was necessary in the Soviet Union. You can see this if you read his discussions with C.L.R. James in the late 1930s. Here he says that a new international, a new Russian party, and a political revolution became necessary in 1933 because the Soviet bureaucracy and the Communist International could no longer lead proletarian revolutions. They were too bureaucratically deformed. But Trotsky did not conclude until 1936 in Spain that the Comintern was *consciously counterrevolutionary*. So just on that score, when comrades are looking at Cuba's foreign policy, I think we should keep Trotsky's method in mind.)

One of the dangers that I see in the majority position is that it forces comrades to look for justifications in Castro's international record. For instance, it forces you to try to look at the Czechoslovakian events through Castro's eyes, pointing out that in Castro's own view he was defending the interests of world revolution versus the Czechoslovakian masses. Of course, the same is true today in Ethiopia; Castro says he is defending the "world revolution" against the Somalis and the Eritreans.

And comrades said in the discussion, which is new to me, that Castro had a left-wing line in Chile. I didn't know

that that was our attitude. Moreover, it doesn't account for the lessons that Castro says he drew from the Chilean experience. According to Castro, the Chilean defeat did not prove that a bloc with the Christian Democracy was wrong, but simply that some of the Christian Democrats were particularly right-wing. That is obviously not the lesson a revolutionary leader would draw.

What's important to those of us who consider Cuba state-capitalist is not what's in Castro's mind. Maybe that's a preoccupation if you think that you can win Castro over to the Fourth International. What is important to us is the effects of his policy on the working class in Cuba and internationally. The interests of the masses—that's our concern, the same concern we have in every other country in the world.

I think that comrades are right in saying that a new Latin American upsurge will be an important test of our viewpoints on Cuba. If the Cuban government were to support and aid a proletarian revolution in Latin America, then I think that we would have to reconsider our point of view, since I do not think that a capitalist class would pursue such a policy. But if, on the other hand, Castro does not rise to this occasion in that way, but rather ends up subverting and holding back the revolution in Latin America (which is indicated by his record thus far), then I think other comrades would have to reconsider their position.

What would those of us who consider Cuba state-capitalist say about Cuba's foreign policy inside Cuba itself? We would have championed proletarian internationalism: defend the French students and workers, defend the Czechoslovak masses, solidarity with the Mexican students, national liberation for the Somalis and the Eritreans, replace popular-front governments with workers and farmers governments.

In other words, we would have said what we say everywhere, in every other country of the world. And when we said this, we would undoubtedly have antagonized Castro because this was not his line. Nonetheless, we would have educated and objectively aided the Cuban working class.

I agree with comrades in the majority that Castro's policy has been basically consistent. But I don't agree that it has been consistently revolutionary. I think that the government has continued to restrict working-class rights at home and has sought political alternatives to working-class revolution abroad. So I would advocate a policy of advancing the needs of the Cuban working class through a series of democratic and transitional demands, some of which I have indicated. I would be for forming a Trotskyist party on this program to recruit and educate Cuban workers.

But I'm not sure what the comrades of the majority point of view would be doing in Cuba. From my vantage point it's your perspective that seems very vague. How would we fight for Castro's loyalty and at the same time champion the needs and interests of the masses? Would we operate in the Communist Party? Or form our own party? Would we go underground, which is the only way to function inside the Cuban Communist Party, which forbids tendencies, factions, or democratic rights? How do we peacefully go about forming our own party when the Cuban government imprisons its political opposition?

These questions are treated very abstractly by majority comrades. We call for a "Leninist-type party." But what does that mean concretely in Cuba today? Where do we work for this party? Inside the Communist Party? Outside

the Communist Party? Underground? In what ways? And what is our program?

There is another question that I think comrades have to answer. Why, after twenty years of rule, has Castro, if he really is a revolutionary leader, refused to give power to the masses in the state, factories, on the land, or in the schools? This is a question no one has addressed. Perhaps comrades believe this is another error resulting from Castro's lack of Marxist education. But as comrades themselves point out, this deficiency alone is no barrier to carrying out class-struggle policies, that is, to leading a government in the interests of the working class.

The answer, in my view, has to do with the fact that Castro is defending interests that are antagonistic to those of the working class. If not, what is the answer? Maybe Larry can take it up in his summary.

I want to turn now to a few misinterpretations of our position.

We are not saying, and did not say in the discussion, that there are no differences between Cuba and other capitalist states. Obviously we see the difference between New York City and Havana, between Mexico and Cuba. We're not politically blind.

Nor are we saying that Cuba is simply a totalitarian country, that Castro rules by terror, or that he has no support from the masses. In my report I said just the opposite. I said that his regime is popular and I tried to explain why.

There are other popular capitalist governments around. Some of the Stalinist states, like Vietnam and China, and some of the new African regimes that came to power through national liberation struggles and enjoy popular support. Allende's capitalist government had mass support as have many popular-front governments. But that does not make these governments less capitalist, or capitalism more progressive, even when they do carry out real reforms. Nor does it mean that we don't talk about our politics in these countries because the masses would think we're bizarre. If Trotsky had operated that way in his fight against Stalin—if he had raised only popular ideas—none of us would be here today. As George Breitman made clear in the speech he wrote on what it took to build the Fourth International, the Trotskyists had to swim against the stream for their ideas in the 1930s.

The parallel we draw between Cuba and state-capitalist countries in Africa is twofold. First is the common formation of state bourgeoisies from petty-bourgeois layers on the basis of nationalized property. Second is the fact that these governments have carried out various bourgeois-democratic tasks and even mobilized the masses in doing so.

We say that new bourgeoisies have been formed in these countries, in the way other comrades of the Fourth International have described new bourgeoisies forming in Egypt, Algeria, and elsewhere in Africa. They are new in relationship to the old comprador bourgeoisie—not in relationship to the working class.

We do not say this is a brand new social class ruling a new social order destined to spread internationally—the kind of qualitatively new animal Burnham thought he saw in the 1930s. No, we are talking about a capitalist class—different only in composition and structure—that rules on the basis of nationalized property.

Whether or not these new state bourgeoisies, which we have all identified in one country or another, eventually denationalize property or rescind the social gains of the

masses does not negate the fact that the phenomenon already exists in various places. You may make the case, as Gus [Horowitz] did, that what we see in Cuba is something different. But you can't dismiss the development of a new bourgeoisie—out of petty-bourgeois elements and through the vehicle of state property—as something preposterous.

On the permanent revolution, I think comrades with the majority point of view have some explaining to do on this themselves. Trotsky said that only the working class through its revolution and its state could genuinely and completely fulfill the tasks of the democratic revolution. Yet in the countries the majority considers workers states, these democratic tasks have allegedly been resolved—completely and genuinely—by petty-bourgeois-led revolutions and governments.

We believe various tasks of the permanent revolution were carried out in Cuba. But, as we said, we don't think they were carried out in a complete and genuine way, that is, in the revolutionary proletarian way Trotsky described.

There are ways capitalism "solves" various bourgeois-democratic tasks, such as land reform and national liberation, ways different from those the working class employs through its revolution and with its state. The proletariat's position in and control over the revolutionary process determines to what extent the solutions to these tasks advance its class interests.

For instance, for Trotsky the key to carrying out a land reform in the interests of the proletariat was not simply expropriations. That was certainly where to start, but that wasn't the be-all and end-all. The other key aspect of land reform was bolstering the peasantry's ties to the proletariat and to the proletariat's dictatorship. This is why Trotsky opposed Stalin's forced collectivization measures.

In Cuba the peasants clearly were not brutally forced into the state farms as was the case under Stalin's rule. Although, we should note, small farmers have been increasingly subjected to political and economic pressure to liquidate their holdings into state farms since the late 1960s—despite Castro's previous guarantees.

But more importantly than this, farm workers just do not run the state farms in Cuba. I think we all agree on that. But I don't think that comrades really think about what that means. That means that the workers on these farms have no say over what they produce, how it is produced, when it is produced, they have no voice in the planning that takes place. And one effect of that is that state farms have experienced the greatest drop in labor productivity. This land reform in Cuba was a big, big gain over the past. But it's not the kind of land reform that Trotsky considered a "complete and genuine" solution to the land question. It is not one that liberates the agrarian population and binds it to the proletariat.

Now on national independence and Cuba's break from imperialism. In the discussion we said that we recognize that Cuba has gone a long, long way in the battle for national independence. We think other capitalist states—both Stalinist and non-Stalinist—have also made gains in this regard in varying degrees. But that does not mean for us that we abandon our program for national liberation, that we therefore have to advocate Stalinist, petty-bourgeois, or guerrillaist strategies for national liberation, just because they have succeeded in making gains in such countries as China, Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.

We continue to advocate our own revolutionary proletar-

ian strategy for national liberation because we recognize, as Colleen [Levis] pointed out, that genuine national liberation will only be secured through the world revolution. And only the dictatorship of the proletariat under a revolutionary leadership will seek to spread the world socialist revolution. We think that Cuba's problems today—its isolation, etc.—are not simply the result of the fact that there has been no world revolution, but also that the Cuban government itself has not fought and cannot fight to spread the socialist revolution.

Today the Cuban government is talking about allowing foreign investment in Cuba. The same thing is being discussed and initiated in Vietnam. Would comrades then conclude that Cuba was no longer nationally independent? Would you then change your class characterization of Cuba? That would be a rather sectarian conclusion to draw. By that criteria of national independence, Cambodia has achieved the most "complete and genuine" fulfillment of national liberation anywhere. But the example of Cambodia shows precisely the impact of the absence of proletarian democracy on the completion of democratic tasks, such as national independence. In Cambodia you have a form of national independence that clearly is not in the interests of the proletariat. That does not mean that we don't defend Cambodia against imperialism. Nor does it mean we don't recognize that a gain was won in breaking its direct tie to imperialism, but Cambodia is certainly not *our* program for national independence.

I didn't find what Doug [Jenness] said objecting to the slogan "Cuban Troops Out of Eritrea" very helpful. He argued that we can't demand that Cuban troops leave Eritrea because Cuba is a workers state and such a demand would equate Cuban troops with imperialist troops. But by this logic, comrades who hold the workers state point of view can never call for the troops of a workers state to leave anywhere. You couldn't demand that Russian troops get out of Czechoslovakia, for instance. It just doesn't make sense to me to draw this kind of generalization.

The point is to be concrete. There is a specific national struggle going on. The Eritreans are fighting against the Ethiopians, who are supported by Cuban troops. The Eritreans claim that the Cubans are still in Asmara. The Eritreans claim that up to February the Cubans did bomb Eritrean cities. Those are my sources—the Eritreans, not just the *New York Times*. And I think we have to take what the Eritreans say seriously. We can't simply dismiss it as imperialist propaganda.

So in this particular case, in Eritrea, in what way are Cuban troops playing any progressive role? It would be very different if Cuban troops were, as they were in Angola, fighting imperialist forces. But the role of the Cuban troops in Eritrea is just the opposite. They are in fact fighting against a just national liberation struggle. I can only hope that if the time comes in Angola when the masses rise up against the Neto government, and the Cuban government continues to extend support to the MPLA regime, we would call for Cuban troops out of Angola. I hope we would support the Angolan peoples' right to decide their own destiny.

Larry said in his presentation that the comrades who hold a state-capitalist analysis of the so-called workers states don't have to conclude that Cuba is state-capitalist just because we think Russia is. He said we shouldn't try to squeeze Cuban reality into a preconceived schema. On the other hand, in Joe Hansen's book on Cuba, and

certainly in the discussion here, comrades of the majority point of view have emphasized the very real links between their theory of what occurred in Cuba and the transformations in the other so-called workers states. And, of course, the view that Cuba itself became a workers state in 1960 is based on certain economic measures that were taken at that time—the nationalizations, the establishment of the state monopoly of foreign trade, economic planning. Those are the same criteria by which the majority judges other states to be workers states, and which we say are not the criteria for deciding whether or not the working class rules.

To convince us that there is a qualitative difference between Cuba and the rest of the states you consider workers states, you would have to prove to us that there is a qualitative difference in the relationship between the Cuban working class and the Cuban state. Comrades claim that there is such a qualitative difference, but I haven't really heard much in the way of concrete evidence to back this up in the discussion.

Comrades have quoted Cuban sources. Well, we can take that into account, but comrades should remember that the Cuban press is censored. You don't get all sides of the picture from reading *Granma*. And comrades have talked about their personal trips, which I did find interesting. But I don't think you can deduce the class character of the Cuban regime simply from these trips. Comrades are going to have to show concretely what the position of the Cuban working class is. Larry did not go into this very much in his presentation, and very few comrades addressed it in the discussion.

I was only nine years old when the Cuban revolution took place, so I don't remember it from television like some other comrades. And I didn't read about it in the newspapers at the time. And I haven't been to Cuba. So I had to approach this discussion by reading whatever I could. I tried to go to sources that were favorable to the revolution, so I read our own press, *Intercontinental Press*, the *Militant*, *Inprecor*, and *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*. I read *Che Guevara Speaks* and *Fidel Castro Speaks*. And I read Karol, Huberman and Sweezy, Mesa-Lago, Silverman, Gilly, O'Conner, Zeitlin, Scheer, Dumont, Bonachea and Valdez. Each of the facts I presented were based on more than one of these sources. I never took facts from just one source. But comrades who disagree have to come up with some alternative evidence of what has happened to the Cuban working class, or else explain how it is that the working class is in the position it is—in a state which is ruled by a "revolutionary proletarian leadership."

Comrades have said there has been a drift in the Fourth International, a disillusionment with Cuba. And they have admitted that part of this is because the Trotskyist press, particularly the press of the SWP, has not covered and explained events in Cuba for many years. So we consider that the burden in this debate is not all on our side. It's not just up to those of us who have a different point of view to prove that the party position is wrong. It's also the responsibility of the comrades of the majority to prove that what they are saying is right. Many years have passed—long pauses—in which our press simply has not documented what has happened to the Cuban working class and why. This is where we should start when we look at Cuba. Not with the intentions of its leadership, not with Castro's motivations, but with the Cuban working class, with the masses.

I just want to end on the question of defense of Cuba. I think we covered this before, but there still seems to be some misunderstanding. We absolutely, 100%, defend Cuba against imperialism. As I said in my presentation, we think the party has done a first-rate proletarian internationalist job in carrying out this defense from the first days of the revolution. We are proud of that record.

We defend the economic and social gains the Cuban masses have made, including nationalized property, the monopoly of foreign trade, social reforms. We defend all of this. They are all important gains of the class struggle. They are all important weapons against imperialism. And we defend the Cuban government against any imperialist attack or against any kind of domestic counterrevolutionary coup that is inspired by imperialism.

We would do all of this in other underdeveloped capital-

ist states as well. We would defend the nationalized property of Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and Tanzania, against imperialism. And we would defend whatever gains the masses have been able to make there. But this does not mean that we have to support the Cuban government against its own working masses or any of these states against their own working masses. That's where we draw a distinction.

So I think that comrades should try to be very clear on the fact that we are in no way shirking our responsibility to defend Cuba against imperialism by saying that we don't think Cuba is a workers state. We think that we are capable of carrying out that defense with the party and that there is nothing in our political history that would indicate that we would fail in assuming this responsibility.