

EDUCATION FOR SOCIALISTS

ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY 14 CHARLES LANE NEW YORK, N. Y. 10014

Record of a Controversy: 1960—1963

The Nature Of The Cuban Revolution

Draft Theses on the Cuban Revolution

Submitted by the Political Committee of the
Socialist Workers Party

Report for Political Committee

by Joseph Hansen

What the Discussion on Cuba is About

by Joseph Hansen

Appendix I: The Character of the New Cuban Government

Appendix II: Workers and Farmers Government

(Extracts from "Theses on Tactics" adopted by
the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, 1922)

Cuba — The Acid Test

A Reply to the Ultraleft Sectarians
by Joseph Hansen

April 1968

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INTRODUCTION

This is a compilation of four documents (with two Appendices) issued from May 1961 to January 1963 in the form of SWP Internal Bulletins. They set forth the views of the Socialist Workers Party on the Cuban Revolution and the Castro regime.

The first is the "Draft Theses on the Cuban Revolution" submitted by the Political Committee to the National Committee on December 23, 1960 which were later presented to the membership for consideration in the mid-1961 pre-convention discussion.

The other three consist of contributions by Joseph Hansen at various stages of the dispute over the Cuban question. The unexpected victory of the July 26 Movement over the Batista dictatorship in January 1959, inaugurating the processes culminating in the establishment of the first workers state in the Western hemisphere, posed novel and complicated theoretical and political problems which had to be clarified and explained by revolutionary Marxism and its representatives in the United States.

In accord with its organizational principles and traditions, the SWP leadership conducted a democratic discussion within the party on all aspects of these unparalleled events. It first offered its own analysis and conclusions to the membership. These were challenged and opposed by a minority headed by Shane Mage, Tim Woforth and James Robertson. The counterposition of views submitted in bulletins and debates provided the basis for full and free debate in the preconvention period. The first report by Joseph Hansen presented the positions arrived at by the Political Committee to the National Committee plenum of January 14, 1961; the second article defended these positions against the objections expressed by the Mage-Woforth-Robertson group.

Their views were overwhelmingly rejected by the delegates to the National Convention in September 1961 and the majority position became the guide for party policy since that time. The decisively defeated minority proved incapable of abiding by the democratic decision of the majority, subsequently deliberately flouted party discipline, and were expelled for disloyalty.

The third article, "Cuba: The Acid Test," by Joseph Hansen, was written November 20, 1962. It was a polemic

against the mentors of the Wolforth group, the theoreticians heading Healy's sectarian Socialist Labour League of England, who have been totally incapable of comprehending the nature and development of the socialist revolution in Cuba.

This collection is an instructive case-history in how Marxists apply their method of thought to a new political phenomenon of immense importance for the world revolution and defend their conclusions with convincing arguments against critics and opponents. As the tenth anniversary of the epoch-making Cuban revolution approaches, it is much easier to see which side was right and which was off base in this controversy than in the first months and years of its unfolding.

George Novack
March 22, 1968

Draft Theses on the Cuban Revolution

Submitted by the Political Committee

December 23, 1960

DRAFT THESES ON THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

1.

The Cuban revolution began under the leadership of the July 26 Movement, a radical petty-bourgeois political tendency centered around the leadership of Fidel Castro. The initial program of the July 26 Movement was largely bourgeois-democratic, but promised thoroughgoing agrarian reform and industrialization.

It was distinguished by its clear recognition that the Batista dictatorship could be unseated only by revolutionary means, by its insistence on this as a principle in its relations with other groupings, and by its resolution in carrying the struggle against Batista through to the end no matter what the consequences.

2.

In the Sierra Maestra phase of the revolution, the Castro leadership succeeded in mobilizing the guajiros and the agricultural workers the decisive sector of the Cuban working class, to overthrow the Batista dictatorship. The outlook of the young revolutionary leaders became modified by these social forces. The city workers, under a trade-union leadership imposed on them by the Batista dictatorship, were unable to bring their power to bear in the early stages, but with the victory they rallied in their overwhelming majority behind the revolutionary leadership.

3.

The July 26 Movement came to power in January 1959 in a popular political revolution that at first appeared to be limited to democratic aims.

4.

The revolutionary leaders enacted such immediate reforms as an increase in wages and reduction of rents, electric rates, and food costs. They set up a coalition government, granting such important posts as the presidency to the bourgeois-democratic elements.

5.

The American monopolists and their agents were hostile to the July 26 Movement from the beginning, although they also sought to use flattery on its leaders. With the institution of sweeping agrarian reform measures, the Castro leadership met with a belligerent response from American big business and the bipartisan Democrats and Republicans. Wall Street counted on the bourgeois-democratic elements in the coalition government as points of support for its counter-revolutionary objectives. Increasing strains appeared between the two sides in this government as Washington stepped up the pressure.

6.

The conflict between American imperialism and the Castro forces precipitated a political crisis in Havana. This was resolved by a decided turn to the left, signaled, among other things, by the

expulsion from the government of such figures as Urrutia and Pazos; and the coalition came to an end in the fall of 1959.

7.

The fact that Cuba now had a Workers and Farmers government was indicated by its firm resistance to imperialism and its Cuban agents, the resoluteness with which it went ahead with the agrarian reform, disarming of reaction, arming of the people and "interventions" of capitalist holdings. The lack of respect which this government displayed toward capitalist property relations was coupled with bold projects to meet the needs of the masses in employment, housing, education, recreation and culture.

8.

The interacting process between American imperialism and the Cuban revolution swiftly deepened after the end of the coalition government. The measures undertaken by the Castro regime in the interests of the Cuban people met with ever more unbridled attacks from Wall Street, its political agents, propagandists and counter-revolutionary agents. The blows of these counter-revolutionary forces, in turn, compelled the Castro government to resort to increasingly radical measures.

9.

These included the establishment of a monopoly of foreign trade, the nationalization of the latifundia, and, in August-October, 1960, the virtual expropriation of the American and Cuban capitalist holdings; that is, the key sectors of Cuban industry.

These steps necessitated economic planning. This started in the fall of 1959, developed concomitantly with the nationalization of industry and is now firmly established.

All these measures were taken with the examples of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China available for study. Thus, in the final analysis, the overturn in property relations in Cuba is an echo of the October 1917 Revolution in Russia.

10.

When the capitalist holdings in the key sectors of 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.

Aug-Oct. 1960 (and before what was the State?)

11.

The Castro government had already smashed part of the old state structure in coming to power, liquidating the old army and police force in order to assure Batista's defeat. But the failure of the Castro leadership to proclaim socialist aims showed that the subjective factor in the revolution remained unclear and along with it the possible course of the revolution.

impt. link which developed in the deepening of the Cuban Revolt.

compare to post-1954 of Nicaragua.

In the two years since then the state structure has undergone a cleansing out of hold-overs whose basic loyalty was to the former capitalist power. Upon nationalization of the key sectors of industry, the new state structure became so committed to a planned economy that only civil war can now restore capitalist property relations. A civil war could not succeed without a counter-revolutionary invasion far bloodier than that engineered by Washington in Guatemala in 1954.

12.

to purge measures.

The Cuban government has not yet instituted democratic proletarian forms of power such as workers, soldiers, and peasants councils. However, as it has moved in a socialist direction it has likewise proved itself to be democratic in tendency. It did not hesitate to arm the people and set up a popular militia. It has guaranteed freedom of expression to all groupings that support the revolution. In this respect it stands in welcome contrast to the other noncapitalist states, which have been tainted with Stalinism.

13.

If the Cuban revolution were permitted to develop freely, its democratic tendency would undoubtedly lead to the early creation of proletarian democratic forms adapted to Cuba's own needs. One of the strongest reasons for vigorously supporting the revolution, therefore, is to give the maximum possibility for this tendency to operate. (Nicaragua)

At the same time, revolutionary socialists advocate forms of this general character for Cuba because they would greatly strengthen the political defense of the revolution, help safeguard against possible retrogression, and, by setting a new world example, speed revolutionary developments inside the imperialist countries and in the colonial areas they still dominate.

The appearance of democratic forms of proletarian rule in Cuba would also have enormous repercussions in the Soviet bloc, aiding the revolutionary-socialist tendency in those countries which seeks the revival of Leninist democracy.

14.

In search of allies in its defense of the revolution, the Cuban government turned to the Soviet bloc. It met with a favorable response from both Moscow and Peking. The material aid which it received may well prove decisive in its defense against the American-supported counter-revolution.

The overturn in property relations makes it feasible in principle for Cuba to tie its economy in with that of the Soviet bloc, including Yugoslavia, thus strengthening the planned economies in Europe and Asia, as well as gaining life-saving support from them. (N)

This does not conflict with the fact that it is in the interests of the Cuban as well as the American people to resume the trade with the United States which was cut off by Eisenhower.

15.

The Cuban revolution constitutes the opening of the socialist revolution in Latin America. The Castro government has won tremendous support throughout the entire area below the Rio Grande and in turn has inspired millions of oppressed people with the desire to emulate the Cuban revolutionary success. The Cuban question has become the key question dividing all tendencies in Latin America.

16.

The Stalinists were bypassed by the July 26 Movement. This is a fact of world-wide significance, for it shatters the delusion that revolutionary victories can be won only through the Communist parties. In turn, the success of the July 26 Movement adds to the ferment visible in many Communist parties in the past few years, giving fresh weight to the tendencies seeking to break through the crust of Stalinist bureaucratism. (i.e. Sandinistas)

17.

The Cuban Communist party is not exempt from this ferment. The American capitalist propagandists have built a fantastic bogeyman about a "take over" in Cuba by the Communist party. They leave completely out of account the effect of the revolution and its development on the thinking of the Cuban Communist party, above all its ranks.

The fact is that the Cuban Communist party supports the revolution. If a rift were to occur between Cuba and the Soviet Union, it can be taken for certain that the loyalties of a decisive section of the Communist party, if not the party as a whole, would remain with the Cuban revolution. The experience in Yugoslavia speaks eloquently for such an outcome.

With free access to the views of all radical currents, as is the case in Havana today, the Cuban Communist party can be expected to undergo considerable transformation, no matter what the ups and downs of the diplomatic relations may be.

18.

The Cuban revolution has had a stimulating effect on the radical movement in many countries. It can play a powerful role in reviving hope and confidence in the socialist goal, in demonstrating that Stalinism is not inevitable, and thus helping to pave the way for construction of mass revolutionary-socialist parties. In the United States it has already opened up new opportunities for revolutionary socialists, as is evident in many areas, particularly the campus, Spanish-speaking minority groups and the Negro people.

19.

Whatever one may think of the Castro government and the new property relations in Cuba, it is our duty to defend this small country from the attack of the giant American corporations, their

task today in Nicaragua

government and their counter-revolutionary agents. The Cubans have a right to decide their own form of government and property relations free from pressure.

It is especially in the interest of the American trade-union movement to defend Cuba, for the monopolists now seeking a counter-revolutionary overturn there are the same ones that have long sought to cripple and smash the union movement in the United States.

The general slogans that should be advanced are "Hands Off Cuba!" "End the Blockade!" "Help the Cuban People!"

20.

Despite the colossal power of American imperialism and its counter-revolutionary ruthlessness, plus the grave dangers and sacrifices these signify for the Cuban people, the perspectives for the defense of the revolution are most promising. It occurs in the general context of colonial uprisings beyond the capacity of the imperialist powers to contain and it derives strength from this vast upheaval. The Cuban revolution occurs, in addition, in the context of the rising world power of the Soviet countries, whose interests coincide with the defense of Cuba. Finally, the workers and peasants of the small island appear as the vanguard of the Latin American revolution and therefore enjoy mass support on a continental scale.

Born under the influence of these forces, the Cuban revolution quickly established connections with them. It began influencing them in turn. A highly dynamic revolution, it can, by following the natural lines of its defense through revolutionary policies on the international scene, add qualitatively new force to the colonial revolution, to the defense of the Soviet countries against imperialist attack, and to the struggle for world-wide socialism.

December 23, 1960.

Cuba Question:

Report for the Political Committee

by Joseph Hansen

Submitted to the National Committee Plenum

January 14, 1961

CUBAN QUESTION: REPORT FOR POLITICAL COMMITTEE

By Joseph Hansen

In your folders you have a document, "Draft Theses on the Cuban Revolution." The line of this has been adopted by the Political Committee. There is a disagreement in the committee; and a minority has a separate viewpoint which will be presented here. The majority is simply asking the plenum to vote on this one document -- not for every sentence in it or every phrase or how it's phrased but for its line. That's all we want today.

We need this in order to give our party press and our spokesmen throughout the party a guide for some very important developments which have occurred in the Cuban revolution. There are in addition a number of complexities about this revolution and a number of implications on which I'm sure there is considerable disagreement and maybe many nuances. And on these differences I am sure that we will have to have an extensive discussion, a discussion which will probably go on for some time in our party, to go into the ramifications of all that is implied by the Cuban revolution.

Now I hope that we can have this discussion in this coming period -- after we've decided the main points today -- I hope that we can have this discussion in the most objective kind of way, in a cool way, in a way that is in the tradition of our party when we handle questions of this kind -- without heat, without epithets and without any of that pulling together and defending each other's positions because of special relationships in other parts of party work. We want to have an objective, free discussion and I think that one of the advantages of that will be that it will enable us to cooperate in clearing up these differences that we have among us or that can develop among us.

I think that's the freest kind of discussion because it enables us to take an opposing viewpoint and study it and size it up from the viewpoint of seeing where it reflects a weakness in our own position. If I have a position and someone is opposed to it I'm very interested in his position because I'm sure he's a capable, reasonable person and that he's seeing certain weaknesses in my position to which I should pay the utmost attention to preserve the party's interests.

Now our approach on this whole question of the Cuban revolution is from the party-building viewpoint. I think this was manifested yesterday in the discussions that we heard from any number of comrades after Comrade Farrell had finished his report. Each of the branches and each of the areas has reported how the Cuban revolution affected their branch work. And this is perfectly normal and perfectly in order. This is the way we approach all these big events.

Now it may have seemed in a certain way that we were approaching the question narrowly. We were seeing what factional interests the SWP had in the Cuban revolution and how we could capitalize on it as a party. But I think if you look a little farther

than just this surface aspect of things that what's involved is a broad sense of the party's historic role and how the Cuban revolution can help us, the class-conscious vanguard on an international scale, in building the party that is needed in taking us past capitalism and into the socialist world of the future.

Now this broad party-building viewpoint was manifested yesterday by the delegates who took the floor in the way which has been characteristic of all our discussions on all the big questions in the past decades. This is the approach that we took when we came to the big events in Germany in 1931 to 1933. The main question was the role of the party and how the role of the party was affected by events there. The same thing was true when we approached Spain -- the Spanish revolution and our discussions revolving about that. And it was true in the forties when the war broke out and we were faced with the problem of defending the Soviet Union. There again it was the role of the party that came first in our thinking. It was true in our discussion on Eastern Europe, on the character of the state there, on Yugoslavia and again in China.

In every one of these discussions the question that was dominant was the role of the party. Now this is in the heritage of the Left Opposition, the heritage that goes back to the very first days, when Trotsky first organized against the Stalinist counterrevolution. And I must say that this is a great tradition of our party, one that we are fully conscious of and one with which we approach all these questions.

I say this as preliminary remarks in turning to the Cuban revolution to indicate that when we approached this question it was with our tradition fully in mind and with the attitude of utmost seriousness towards the questions involved in theory and in politics in relation to the Cuban revolution. It was with full consciousness of the responsibilities that rest on us in approaching these questions.

The reason for this is that the Cuban revolution is a great revolution. It's a revolution that can prove decisive for the development of our party and our co-thinkers in Latin America for years to come. We already see how the Cuban revolution has become a pole of attraction in the radical movement in the United States, separating the various tendencies, cutting through them, beginning a new combination of forces in the United States. This is much more so in Latin America itself. The Cuban revolution has now become a key issue in all political discussions in South America, forcing every party from the extreme right wing of the bourgeoisie over the whole spectrum into the working class, forcing them to take a position on Cuba. The Cuban revolution is having the same effect in Latin America as a key issue as the Russian Revolution had in its day when it first came out. The Cuban question now is comparable in Latin America to the Russian question some decades ago.

And also I must say that in the United States besides becoming a question differentiating the different tendencies in the

radical movement, it has also become a key issue in foreign policy. And there's no party now that takes a stand on foreign policy in the United States that can avoid the question of Cuba. So we emphasize that this is a very, very important question for us.

Now how did we begin our approach to the Cuban revolution? We did not begin it from a theoretical level. We began it from a political level. The first thing we did was to determine what our attitude would be toward the Cuban revolution as a whole. What our policy would be toward it. This was reflected immediately in our press, in the Militant.

Now we had no difficulty whatsoever reaching a political position on Cuba. Because no matter what the specific characteristics of the revolution might be, as a whole it obviously was a part of the whole colonial revolution that had been sweeping the Far East, the Middle East into Africa and in Latin America. Therefore, we supported it as an automatic reflex. We supported it. And we supported it with all the more energy because it involved American imperialism, our own enemy right here at home. That's the approach on a political level.

Now similarly, as this revolution developed, in each of its crucial stages, we had no difficulty in finding what our attitude would be, determining our policy toward each of these turns and in expressing it in the Militant. For example, in January of 1959, when the people of Cuba moved in and took power in all the cities of the country and in Havana and they held the tribunals, citizens' tribunals where they put these criminals, these butchers of the Batista regime on trial, we had no difficulty in stating where we stood on those tribunals. On the opposite side, congressmen of the Democrats and Republicans and all the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie also had no difficulty in stating where they stood and we were on opposite sides of class lines. We had no difficulty there.

✓ We had no difficulty taking a stand on the agrarian reform which began very early but which became codified in the law of May 17, 1959. We were all for that agrarian reform, the bigger the better and it turned out to be a pretty big one.

We had no difficulty in determining our attitude toward the bourgeois ministers who were in the Cuban government. Fresquet, Pazos, Urrutia and the others. We were glad to see them dismissed and kicked out. We had no difficulty whatsoever in taking a political position on these ministers and what should be done about them. I might say in passing that everyone of these are now part of the counterrevolution; they are in one or another of the groupings that are located in Florida.

Well, we had no difficulty in determining our political attitude toward the July 26 Movement taking full responsibility in Cuba as the government. That was easy to determine. We said, "Yes, we're all for that, because this is something quite different from the bourgeois ministers, from those who seemed to be a facade for the revolution for a time." And we were all for them

replacing the ministers in the various posts.

We had no difficulty at all regarding the nationalizations in Cuba. We were a bit doubtful in the beginning whether they would go that far, we would wait and see what would occur. But when they occurred we did not have the slightest difficulty in stating exactly where we stood. "We're for those nationalizations, every bit of them, and the bigger the better." And they were plenty big.

We had no difficulty on such key questions as the monopoly of foreign trade when it was done first in the form of controls by the government over foreign trade. It became established, and we were for that because it was part and parcel of our whole traditional program as to what a country should do of that character as it moves forward -- to establish a monopoly of foreign trade.

And we had no difficulty taking a position on the planned economy that began in Cuba in an early stage in very tentative forms and which is now rolling ahead. We had no difficulty saying, "Yes, we're for a planned economy. We have been for a long time. We think planned economies are a good thing."

And we had no difficulty taking a position on the relations with the Soviet bloc. We said, "That's very good. Cuba has found a possibility here for saving its revolution from being crushed by American imperialism and we're all for that." We were for the aid that they got. And from the Soviet side, we were glad that they would give aid to the Cuban revolution. We had no difficulty taking a position on that.

And we had no difficulty taking a position on the extension of the Cuban revolution into South America. Even in the tentative forms with which it was begun by the Castro forces, the July 26 Movement as they went to the various countries in South America, in Mexico and all the Latin American countries and appealed to them for aid and for help, and suggested to these countries that they should imitate the Cuban revolution and have a revolution like theirs. "That's wonderful, that's a good way to defend the Cuban revolution." All we could say is that we want more like that and stronger and better organized.

On all these questions, which were key political questions, we had to take a stand. As the key situations developed we had no problem at all in reaching political positions.

Pol/theory

Now on the theoretical side, the story is a little bit different. Besides the political side, the revolution has its theoretical side and these are rather closely interconnected. Because it is very difficult to take a political position that is consistent without relating it to theory, to your most general positions. And even if you don't express your theoretical positions, don't develop and discuss them publicly, still you have to have them in mind as you study the politics and decide what your political positions will be. They're very closely interconnected.

Now we have let that side, so far as our press is concerned, remain rather in abeyance and I will explain to you some reasons why in a moment.

At this point, still looking at things from a political viewpoint, it has become politically necessary to make a theoretical assessment. We can't just remain on the level of political events as they occur, we now have to turn to the theory of the Cuban revolution because there is a political need for it. Let me explain that.

First of all, there is a tremendous imperialist campaign being waged against Cuba by American imperialism. And among the aspects of this campaign, one of its components is to picture Cuba as having gone "communist," as having gone "socialist," as having gone "Stalinist." This is in all the bourgeois papers; the most responsible of them as well as the most yellow has this estimate. Now that faces us with the problem, what do we say? Do we agree or disagree with them and if so, why? You're faced with a political problem here. You have to answer it.

The same is true in relation to the radical movement. Other tendencies are characterizing the revolution, beginning with the July 26 Movement. The July 26 Movement characterized their movement in the beginning as "humanist." But it doesn't take much reading now of the Cuban press to see that they are shifting and giving this humanism a socialist content and talking more and more about Marxism and about socialism and planned economies and of the example of the Soviet Union and of China.

*it appears
Sartre has
a lot
beginning
shifting!*

And if the July 26 Movement is shifting this way, we are faced with a political duty to say if we agree or disagree. Are they wrong or are they right, and why? And it's not only the July 26 Movement in Cuba -- which forces us in any case, even if no one else said anything about it. There are figures like Sartre, very important intellectual figures, that have a position. Is he right or is he wrong? And C. Wright Mills. I'm sure all of you have read Listen, Yankee. At least all those in this room have read Listen, Yankee. All right, is he wrong, or is he right? A big important figure in the academic world in the United States has made an estimate of the Cuban revolution. We are now faced with a political need to answer where we stand on this. Huberman and Sweezy have taken a stand on it. Do we agree or disagree? The Communist party has a stand on the character of the revolution. Where do we stand -- do we agree or do we disagree with them?

In other words, we feel a political pressure now to reach a definite decision as to the main characteristics of this revolution. It finally boils down to this question: Should we intervene in the dispute that's going on between all these currents, all these figures, or should we abstain from this dispute and wait still longer before we take a position? If we do, we suffer political damage. Political necessity forces us to turn to the theoretical side of the revolution.

There's another consideration that is even more important in my opinion. And that's this. Enormous changes have taken place in

* the relationships of the classes in Cuba and in the relations between Cuba and the United States. First of all, inside Cuba it is obvious that there has been a complete turnover in class relationships. Between the United States and Cuba -- this should be obvious to anyone who can read the headlines in the daily press -- relations have completely altered from what they were even a short time ago. The relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union have completely altered. And the relationships between Cuba and Latin America have completely altered.

Now our policies, our political policies, are determined by these changes. We have to take positions on them, relate them to our own goals, to where we're heading, say where we stand in relation to them and determine our policies in relation to these changes. To do that, we must size up these changes, see what they are, see what has occurred, name them, label them so that we can see where we are at. We have to do that in order to either maintain our policies or to alter them if it is necessary.

✓ Now we could let this go and just take political positions on current stuff, for or against this and give some reason or another. Let the theory go for a while. But it is highly dangerous to let such a gap occur between your theory and your politics. We know that from theory -- that theory itself at a certain point demands that we take cognizance of its needs too. And the reason for that is that theory links us with the past. It links us with all our past experience in revolutions, all our past experience with parties and points the way in the long range sense to the future, so at a certain point we can't let it drift, we have to take a position insofar as the theoretical side is concerned.

Now I am bringing these questions up because I want to stress one point. And that is that our interest in this theoretical discussion is not primarily terminological. We're not interested in this label or that label or simply in slapping a label on the Cuban revolution. We feel profound needs for assessing that revolution and its stages and its class relationships. We don't feel the need primarily just to put a label on it. It's very important to understand that -- what our interests are in approaching this. The real question that's involved here is to trace the actual stages of that revolution, to trace the actual shifts in the class relationships, the actual shifts in the political power in Cuba. That is very important.

On the other hand, I don't think we should be afraid of labels -- especially if they are correct labels. Labels you know are sometimes a very advantageous thing. I've noticed that many times at the bar. Put a bottle of Old Pap up and a bottle of White Horse and you usually reach for the White Horse -- although it might be mislabeled.

Labels can be very useful. Above all they are useful in indicating analogies. For example, we call Cuba a workers state; we are immediately presented with the analogy of Yugoslavia and China. The mere label itself forces you to compare the two and see how they connect. And this means also that a label

tends to indicate continuity of processes. By labeling the state -- whether the label is correct or incorrect -- it turns us, it forces us in the direction of previous manifestations of the same phenomena.

For example, has the October Revolution in one way or another been extended or reflected in Cuba? Do we have a Soviet type economy here or not? These are all indicated as soon as you come to the question of labels.

Finally, on the continuity of theory. How does this relate to similar theories on similar questions? It immediately points to the discussions we had on Eastern Europe, on Yugoslavia, on China. And it points even farther back, as soon as you enter the field of theory, because there's direct continuity to the very beginning of our movement in Trotsky's Left Opposition and even before that in the Bolshevik period that laid the very foundations of theory in our movement on the basis of what Marx and Engels had achieved.

Now in this case I think that the label should not give us cause for vexation. I think in this case the label should be rather a cause for rejoicing because what we are naming here, if we are correct, is the first workers state in the Western hemisphere. And it's a pretty good-looking one. Everybody that's been down there will agree with that. Cuba is the most auspicious opening for the socialist revolution in Latin America. I think anybody that's been there, really experienced it and felt it and seen these people and talked with them will come back with that, completely re-inspired if they've been dragging a little bit because of the slowness of things in the United States. An auspicious occasion. So we shouldn't be so much afraid of labels.

If the Cuban revolution is such a favorable event, such an important thing, why did we wait until now to take up the question of naming it? I indicated that I would explain the reasons.

First of all, as you've probably gathered from the report that Farrell made yesterday, we did not have a full opportunity to discuss this question from the theoretical side. We were so busy defending that revolution and so busy organizing an election campaign that our personnel here became extremely limited. Key comrades were outside of the city. Others became sick at a crucial time. And consequently it was very difficult for us to discuss this question with thoroughness, with the amount of thought that's needed to approach this.

But I think that even if we had had greater opportunity to discuss the Cuban revolution, to probe into the theoretical sides of it, I doubt very much that we would have labeled Cuba a workers state before now. In my opinion the reason for this was the absence of a manifest socialist consciousness on the part of the leadership of that revolution. We simply could not give them a blank political check when they came to power and say, "Well, obviously because of the mentality you have, your program, your consciousness, you're going to make Cuba into a workers state."

* ||| Therefore we're ready to call it a workers state now." It remained to be seen in the struggle itself what the final course would be in Cuba. And therefore we had to be very, very cautious about it.

✓ This test of the Cuban revolution, the test in struggle, was passed between the period of August to October in 1960, three months ago when industries were nationalized throughout the entire island. Castro said at one point they were going to nationalize them down to the nails in their shoes. This turned out to be correct. He meant all the nails. Cuba is one of the most thoroughly nationalized countries in the world. They took about two and one half billion dollars worth of property down there. Most of it American. All that's left, according to the United States Embassy in Cuba, before they had to leave too, was about 100 million dollars of U.S. property. That was all that was left. That was their estimate. I don't know if they're figuring it on the tax levels or what. This consists mostly of properties like Western Union, Radio Corporation of America, communications outfits, small businesses, completely minor stuff. If you view this from the viewpoint of expropriation, it's hard to expropriate one end of a telegraph line. You've got to have both ends to really make it operate. Whatever the reasons there's not much left down there.

*They took
concern
approach.* Now this attitude on our part, of waiting until we saw what happened, of waiting until the nationalizations actually occurred, if they were going to occur, is a conservative approach. That's a fact. It's a conservative approach on our part. And this conservatism was due to our concern for theory, our realization of the importance of theory. It's a result of the long experience we have had in our party with improvisations and the dangers they lead to, with the dangers that come from failing to think things through. We want in questions like this to be absolutely sure.

✓ Now the conclusions that we have reached are not speculations, they're not projections, are not based on any political confidence in what the regime down there is going to do. Our characterizations simply reflect the facts, just the facts. The fact that the capitalists have been expropriated in Cuba. The fact that a planned economy has been started there. The fact that a qualitatively different kind of state exists there. No matter what you call these things, they are the facts that everyone has to start with. That's the situation.

Now we may be clear enough to put some labels on them.

I don't want to repeat what's in the Theses you have before you. I don't want to rehash them because I expect everybody will have read them and have studied them. But what I would like to place before you are some considerations, some of which I am sure you will agree with, others which you may or may not agree with and some considerations that I present as personal opinions. So first of all, let me indicate where I think you will all agree on the question of Cuba before I come to the speculative side, if it is speculative. It is very important in beginning a discussion to understand what we agree on. It makes the discussion a lot easier. This is true whatever the nuances may be in all the

various positions that are taken.

The first fact I think we can all agree on is this: That the revolution began under a petty-bourgeois leadership. A petty-bourgeois leadership whose program was largely bourgeois democratic. That's one of the things I think everyone will agree with, one reason being that the leadership itself recognizes that. The Castro leadership says that. They recognize that. Now there are two special things about this leadership. One is that it was extremely radical. It believed in armed revolution. It really believed in it and organized it --armed overthrow of the government. They practiced it, they advocated it. And let me add that it's completely legal in Cuba. I don't say it's legal here, but in Cuba it's legal to advocate the armed overthrow of the government.

This leadership had one more characteristic that I think everyone will agree with. Its first appeals were directed to the population at large -- workers, peasants, everybody -- in the expectation that there would be a spontaneous uprising in response to their appeals through some dramatic actions that would dramatize the appeals. Then after they found that this did not work, then they set about organizing an armed force, an armed force consisting largely of the peasantry and of agricultural workers. I think those are facts that are so clear that no one would deny them. Certainly in our movement everyone will agree with them. I think we also have agreement among all of us that this is an extremely profound revolution, one that has gone to far-reaching economic and social measures. Everybody will agree on that, even though they won't agree on what to call them. I think everyone will agree that the revolution began with the support of the peasantry and of the agricultural workers, that it had the sympathy or quickly won the sympathy of the urban workers and finally their active support. That's the present stage of the revolution down there now and I think everybody else who has been there and studied there will agree on that point.

Finally, I think everybody will agree that the Cuban revolution has displayed strong democratic and socialist tendencies, moving in that direction. It's much more democratic than anything we've seen in a long time.

That's where we have agreement so far as the main facts are concerned.

I think we will also have agreement on what our main tasks are in respect to the Cuban revolution and that's of key importance for our party. Also for the discussion we want to have, an agreement on that score is of key importance.

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The first main task is to defend this revolution against imperialism. That's our main preoccupation as a party in relationship to the Cuban revolution. To defend it against imperialism.

I think we have agreement that we should defend all institutions that have been created in Cuba, like the planned economy, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, that we defend these

revolutionary institutions against the counterrevolution. That's a big area of agreement.

I think we all agree that we should do our utmost to rally the American labor movement to the Cuban revolution and rally the students and intellectuals, whomever we can get together to defend that revolution. I think we all agree on that. And I think we agree on certain tasks inside Cuba no matter how we name these various things that occurred there. First, that we follow a policy aimed at expanding and developing the proletarian democracy. That's our Number One. Second, that we follow a policy aimed at building a revolutionary socialist party. In other words, that we follow a policy of deepening, extending the socialist consciousness which has already begun in Cuba. And that we follow a policy aimed at extending the Cuban revolution throughout Latin America, this first area of expansion. We all agree on that no matter what we call these different things. And thus we have a very wide area of agreement.

I want to stress that again and again -- the wide area of agreement that we have. I do that because in a discussion, there's a natural tendency to emphasize differences, emphasize even nuances that appear much larger than they really are. The fact is that our areas of agreement are so wide, so solid that we can afford to take things fairly easy on the other side.

Now we come to the theoretical questions that there may be some differences on. One of these key questions is what the Cuban revolution implies in theory to the role of the party.

I said that on the practical side, at least for the SWP, there's been a new opportunity. This is visible to everyone of us. This is one of the consequences of a revolutionary victory. There it stands in great contrast to the defeats that were suffered in the revolutions of the thirties. In Spain and Germany and so forth. We are now experiencing as a party, a revolutionary victory with immediate impact on the United States. That's a tremendous thing for us.

But we're still left with the question how are we to explain this victory in Cuba in the absence of a party like the Socialist Workers party. Let me explain that. There's no Socialist Workers party in Cuba. But how can they have a revolution down there in Cuba without the SWP? Isn't there great danger involved in this? Doesn't this imply that no party is needed? Can you have a revolution without a party?

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Questions*

Now I will admit that there is a danger here. A danger that some comrades can reach such a conclusion. This was the case in our previous discussions on similar questions. It was the case in Eastern Europe. One of our fears was that this could lead to a revision among some comrades on the importance of the party. The same thing was true in our discussion of China. It was a foremost consideration in our discussion. Before that we had a manifestation in a different form in earlier years where certain

comrades reached the conclusion that since in theory a party is absolutely essential to have a revolutionary victory, therefore since all the Trotskyist parties are very small, this signifies that the perspectives for the revolution are very dim.

To answer this question regarding the role of the party in Cuba and how it was possible to have a revolution there, a successful one, without a party like the SWP there, I think we have to go beyond Cuba to find the answers. I tried to indicate this in an article which is in the current issue of the magazine. It's briefly this: That you have to find the answer not inside Cuba but in the international situation in which Cuba is locked and which affects Cuba from all sides. Cuba is not an isolated country. It is affected by the international situation. And the main factor impinging on Cuba is first of all the decay of imperialism which has reached such a state as to impel people after people in country after country towards revolutionary uprisings. The second factor is the strength of the Soviet bloc which stands as a great enormous example in their minds, a revolutionary example. They realize at least vaguely how the Soviet Union was started, they can see the revolutionary import of its institutions, therefore it stands as a constant revolutionary source of ideology which tends toward a revolutionary direction.

And finally I think the other main factor in world politics which explains this is the default of the Communist party in assuming revolutionary leadership for many decades. It has finally reached the point where people pressing towards revolution which can no longer be delayed, revolutions which grow imperative, which are needed right now, put forward any leaderships which happen to be at hand.

And so we have these revolutions with varied successes. One after another of these situations. I think what these situations indicate is not only the ripeness for revolutions but also the ripeness for the formation of a revolutionary party. It shows that side, too. That's quite evident if you stop long enough and think how rotten-ripe this world is for the birth of a revolutionary party.

Let me state once again what our concept of a party is because I'm afraid that sometimes we tend to look at the SWP as it is -- that's what we mean by a party, a revolutionary party. On that question, I think we have to say, "Yes, the SWP is what we mean by a revolutionary party but also it's not what we mean by a revolutionary party." A yes and no answer. In program and in aim, yes. It's revolutionary-socialist to the core. Personnel? Well, looking around here I can see a lot of people whose personalities need improvement. Mine's all right, of course. And I see a certain lack of forces here. We don't have a great mass party. You see there's a lot of room for improvement in this party both on the personalities that make it up, that's qualitatively, and also in the quantity of forces that we have at our disposal. So our tendency, therefore, is to take a very narrow conception of the party because it's what we see before us, the SWP. But even if we achieved a great mass base in the United States -- which I'm sure would be a considerable step forward --

even if we achieved that, we would still have a tendency, I think, towards a certain narrowness in our concept of the party.

Now when we talk about a party, we mean an international party. One that is commensurate to tremendous international goals. We mean a party that is capable of taking the world working class and leading it forward to overthrow capitalism which is an international system. From then on, leading the world out of capitalism to the socialist world of the future. That's what we mean by a revolutionary-socialist party. A tremendous thing. One that is of the greatest historic importance. It's probably the greatest task that has faced humanity, the building of such a party.

Now let me say right now that such a party has never been built yet. Marx didn't build one. Lenin didn't build one. They started the core of it. Their aim was absolutely clear -- where they were headed. But they never conceived this party as simply a narrow, national party. They conceived it as an international one, one that is capable of the greatest task that has faced humanity, taking us from capitalism to socialism.

When we say that capitalism is rotten-ripe for revolution, we also say that the conditions on an international scale are rotten-ripe for the construction of such a party. Such a tremendous international party that has all the knowledge and capacity, both political and theoretical, for accomplishing these great tasks. How are we going to build such a party? Will it be built in advance of the revolution? It would be very good if it could be -- at least that's what the Cubans themselves say now -- it would be good to have such a party in advance. The fact is that such a party has got to be built in the very process of revolution as revolutions occur with varying degrees of success. That's the fact that faces us. In some countries I think we will be able to build national sections of the party before the revolution occurs and in some countries like ours I think that is an absolute condition for success. In other countries the revolution forges forward faster than the party. That's an evident fact of politics now. So, when we mean a revolutionary party, a revolutionary-socialist party, we don't just mean a revolutionary-socialist party in little Cuba or in little Guatemala or in little Costa Rica, or in little Nicaragua. Those will be important sections of it. We are thinking of an international party on a major scale in which these are component parts. ✓✓✓

Thus we come to the conclusion that there is great unevenness in the growth and development of this party. Great unevenness. Some countries can forge forward faster than others. In some cases the action can transcend the political consciousness of it. Given this great unevenness in the development of an international party, we have to ask ourselves this question: Does this signify that it is impossible for the masses to overthrow a capitalist power in certain countries until the international party appears in full force and completeness? That's the question that faces us. We probably wouldn't even have asked this question if we hadn't already gotten certain answers. The answers are that in certain countries it is possible. Yugoslavia, China and Cuba. That's the fact sheet. We have to look at it and say that's what

it is. I would say that in the light of those three empiric facts, we would have to conclude that it is possible in certain situations in certain countries under certain conditions -- it is possible for the masses to go as far forward as establishing a workers state.

Transitional Program.

Having said that, we immediately come to the question of limitations. These are tremendous. Let's just take the case of Cuba. First of all, there were great and costly errors committed in the Cuban revolution. Great and costly ones. The revolution established a coalition government with bourgeois democrats. That didn't help the revolution any. It led to a very ragged differentiation between the revolutionary forces and those that were counterrevolutionary -- a process that's still proceeding in Cuba. That's the reason for all these "defections" that take place in Cuba; it's the flight of the counterrevolutionaries.

There was a great error made in the relations between the Cuban revolution and the American workers. One of the first things they did down there was to immediately break off all connections with the trade-union movement in the United States. And George Meany said, "Thank you." He couldn't have asked for anything better than such an error on the part of the Cuban revolutionaries. Cut off their relations with the American trade unions.

They've made considerable errors in the extension of their revolution in Latin America. They realized the general importance and need of it but so far as actually carrying it out in a coordinated, organized way, it has been very, very slipshod with any number of errors. We can see that in a practical way in our experience with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. The thing never seemed to get off the ground. It operates in a way that is completely alien to all our concepts, not only our concepts, but alien to the needs of the Cuban revolution. That's one of the problems that has arisen because of the lack of a revolutionary party in Cuba.

Take it from the economic side. Look at the delays that occurred down there in the process of the revolution in expropriating the properties, they had to wait until they were pushed into it by American imperialism, slapped around, then there was a response, a defensive reflex to these blows struck by American imperialism. They were stumbling, fumbling, losing all kinds of valuable time which the bourgeoisie in the United States utilized in order to prepare the ground psychologically for their counterrevolution. Two years of time -- a year and a half at least -- was wasted almost, while the bourgeoisie in the United States, step by step, got prepared psychologically for the counterrevolution.

Finally, we come to this big error in the Cuban revolution, its big limitation; and that is the lack of the development of democratic forms of rule. To any Trotskyist, any revolutionary socialist, it jumps out before your eyes, the weakness of the revolution on that side. And that weakness derives primarily from the weakness of the leadership, of its consciousness. All these things tell us the limitations of this workers state that

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has appeared in Cuba. And this side is just as important as the other side. That is, the recognition of what is positive about that revolution.

So, a success like the one in Cuba demonstrates not that a party has become superfluous -- instead, what it demonstrates is just the opposite. It brings forward with new imperativeness the need for an international party of the kind I've tried to indicate in just a few sentences. That is, the need it has demonstrated is the need for Marxist political consciousness that takes the organized form of a party.

If you view that revolution as uncompleted, it's very easy to see then that this is the big need of the moment. An uncompleted revolution in transition -- and what it needs for completion is a revolutionary-socialist party. But if you view that revolution as completed, as being finished, then you can say, "Well, what do you need a party for? You can have a completed revolution without a party." So it depends how you view that revolution what conclusion you will come to about the party.

Well, we come to this question: What kind of consciousness has appeared in Cuba? What occurred down there? What are the perspectives for the development of revolutionary consciousness, revolutionary-socialist consciousness in Cuba? The fact is that the consciousness is beginning to appear in Cuba. Dick Garza called my attention to the magazine Verde Olivo, the official publication of the armed forces. There's an article in there by Che Guevara, and there are others in the Cuban press if you follow it closely enough, in which he takes up the question of Marx and Marx's contributions. A very interesting article. He says Marx foresaw the laws of the Cuban revolution. He says these laws exist objectively. Marx didn't just bring them out of his head. Marx was reflecting a reality. Marx saw these laws long ago; we were hazy about these laws but we discovered them in practice.

That indicates how the consciousness of this revolution is developing in the mind of one of its leaders. There are many interesting things in that article. For instance, he says, "They ask me if I'm a Marxist. That's like asking a physicist if he is a Newtonian, or a biologist if he is a follower of Pasteur. This has all become part of the body of human knowledge. You can't operate in world politics without knowing something about Marx. In a vague way," he says, "everybody has this consciousness."

He is talking, of course, about the intellectuals that you find in other countries, in Latin America, he wasn't talking about the United States and the workers here and the intellectuals in the United States. It's a reflection of a political culture that you find much more advanced in other countries than you find in the United States. I indicate this article, I hope Dick may be able to give you something that is in it. (Warde: "It's in Studies on the Left.") I only read the Cuban press.

This process that occurred in Cuba, this action of the

revolution, was bound at a certain point to have a reflection in consciousness. They did actually follow the laws of the revolution in practice. But that had an effect on their minds. What's impressive and important is that some of the leaders at this point are aware of this interconnection. They state this publicly. Now as soon as I mention this, let me qualify it. When they state this publicly, they also include references to Stalin. This is a very important consideration. It may be that this is due to diplomacy towards their relations with the Soviet Union. It may be a political price they are paying for the political aid. It also may be a stage in their development. They may have to go through this development in their own mind of really probing Stalinism. Their first assumption may be that it is revolutionary.

We hope that it won't mean a retrogression. But under the oppression of American imperialism and the demands of the Soviet bureaucracy the Cuban revolutionary leadership can retrogress in their thinking. We hope that they won't. We struggle very, very hard, as much as we possibly can, to prevent it. That's one of the key questions with us -- to fight for the soul of the Cuban revolution.

We have on our side this fact that we do know that the central leadership in the Cuban revolution is aware of Stalinism in general and do not like it. We do know that. Mills' report is a very accurate one on the thinking of the leadership in the Cuban revolution; that is, the anti-Stalinism. But they are under tremendous pressures, with American imperialism on one side and the Soviet bureaucracy on the other and they make some very unwarranted concessions.

But beside the leadership there are also the masses in Cuba, the workers and the peasants. They are learning Marxism in the class struggle. They are learning it in the class struggle with the United States and Eisenhower has given them some very eloquent lessons in it and I think Kennedy will follow up his predecessor in giving them even more advanced lessons in the class struggle. Besides this, there is the alliance with the Soviet bloc that is having a big impact on the thinking of the masses there. The example of what's been done in the Soviet Union, its culture, its achievements, science, planned economy, all of that is now making a big impact on Cuban thinking.

Finally, there's the publicity in the press that's now appearing about Marxism, even though it is tainted with Stalinism; it is having an impact on the thinking of the masses in Cuba. It, too, is a reflection of the thinking, of the shift toward revolutionary consciousness.

Thus, I would say that the conditions are becoming very favorable now in Cuba for the development of revolutionary socialism; that is, formation of a contingent or section of this big international party we are thinking about.

I am coming to my conclusion now. This is the opening stage, in my opinion, of the socialist revolution in Latin America. The opening stage of it. One small island off the coast of that

tremendous land mass. And there are certain lessons we can already draw, I think, about the revolution: What this revolution shows us about what's going to happen in Latin America.

First of all, that in Latin America, the democratic tasks that face all those countries speedily pass into socialist ones. In Cuba, the gap was about a year and a half, plus or minus. About a year and a half. The terrific speed of that revolution shows what the speed will be in the other countries of Latin America.

Another lesson I think is this: that some very crippling myths have been dispersed through the Cuban revolution. The first myth is this: These countries, with their monocultures, one-crop or one-product countries, their poverty which follows as a consequence of that kind of economy, so distorts and twists and cripples them that it dooms them if they should try to break out of the imperialist grip. This has been a crippling myth in Latin American politics for decades. You couldn't make a revolution in Bolivia because it's only got tin, and if isolated by American imperialism, what can it do but collapse? So therefore, why make a revolution? That kind of thinking has been in our own movement and in circles around our movement. That myth has been ended by the experience of the Cuban revolution.

The second myth that has been ended is that imperialism is so powerful that it would be absolutely futile in these countries to try to overthrow the state. Absolutely futile to overthrow the rule of the imperialists. Cuba, by existing as long as it has, only 90 miles from Miami, has demonstrated the fallacy of that view. And that can have tremendous consequences in Latin America.

Now there are some other items that have been disproved. One is that the revolution can be accomplished only by Communist parties. That was an illusion in many, many parts of this world, that you have to wait for the Communist party. And if they happen to be off beam now you have to wait until they are on beam. And let me just ask in passing: What does this do to the theory of entrism sui generis? Where would the Cuban Trotskyists have been in Cuba? They would have been in the CP, wouldn't they? What they needed was 12 guys to go up on the Sierra Maestre. If you go by that experience that's literally what happened. It shows the importance of an independent organization as contrasted to the policy of burying yourself in some organization that's not so revolutionary.

Look what it's done to the theory of peaceful coexistence. Cuba can solve this peacefully with the United States? Every time you pick up a newspaper the headlines show you what a completely wrong, fraudulent policy that is.

And look what it's done to popular frontism, the policy followed by the CP and other organizations. Knocked it into a cocked hat. Popular frontism won't win revolutions. To win a revolution you've got to be very serious and organize from the bottom with the masses and move towards power.

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There are many questions, I think, that are raised of the utmost importance, theoretically and politically and the comrades who have these special viewpoints are to be thanked for bringing them forward.

Let me indicate a few areas now where any comrade can make a contribution who wants to in the field of theory. First of all, the character of the slogans that were used by the July 26 Movement. How many of them, what their character was, and how the masses responded to them. There's a lesson in that for a revolutionary-socialist party, too. At a certain stage of the revolution, slogans become very simplified and condensed and very well worth studying from that one viewpoint alone in looking forward to the struggles of the future.

Another question: the importance of the struggle for democratic rights. We sometimes think of democratic rights as something you struggle for because, well, your democratic rights are involved, because you need room for the party to move in, to breathe in and to stay out of jail, so forth and so on. But in this struggle in Cuba, the struggle for democratic rights against oppression turned out to be a key issue of the socialist revolution. That's a very revealing fact that's worth very serious study.

Another area: the immense importance of an agrarian program to socialists. Our tendency here in New York is to leave the agrarian problem to those out in Minnesota. In the Twin Cities, they say, "What are you talking about? I was born in the Bronx. Or in Scandinavia and I've become an American." Here I think we can go back and get a new appreciation of why it was that Lenin paid so much attention to the agrarian program, and why we, too, even in the United States, should be turning in that direction.

Another area is the true nature of this humanism in the Cuban revolution, its real content.

What was the true nature of the rebel army? Was it just an armed force, or did it have an ideology, a certain political character? Was it something more than an army? Was it partly a party? An armed party. A very interesting phenomenon and the same goes for the militia today in Cuba. Is it just a militia that marches with arms, or does it have a political character, does it play a political role, and have a political consciousness? Is there politics in that militia, is it simply a militia or something more? Those are areas we need to know more about.

Finally, let me give one for the students who go to Cuba. What's the structure of the political life in that country? I mean its real political life. Where's its political life occurring? In the unions? In the militia? In the army? In the cooperatives? In the government organizations? In the political formations like the CP? Exactly how does the political life of that country occur? We know they've got a lot of democracy there. We know there's a lot of discussion. But what are the forms exactly in which that is occurring down there? This is very

important information for us in determining our political line in the sense of influencing the discussion of revolutionary socialism down there. As a matter of fact, that question alone can be decisive in the way in which we move along our policy of constructing the revolutionary socialist party.

January 14, 1961

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What the Discussion on Cuba is About

by Joseph Hansen

APPENDIX I

The Character of the New Cuban Government

APPENDIX II

Workers and Farmers Government

**(Extracts from "Theses on Tactics" adopted by
the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, 1922)**

May 25, 1961

WHAT THE DISCUSSION ON CUBA IS ABOUT

By Joseph Hansen

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

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

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

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

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

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How the Discussion Began

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

workers
state
+ transition
characterized
w. p. gov't

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

workers + Peasant's gov't vs. worker's state.

the Cubans: "Revolutionary Government."*

What Kind of State?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

They've got it backwards

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key →
same

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

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

Why We Went Slow

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

While defending this revolution to the best of our ability and resources inside the United States, we watched its development on the Chinese mainland with the most absorbed attention. The character of the Mao leadership was no mystery -- petty-bourgeois, Stalinist variety. The formation of a coalition government with the bourgeois-democratic elements came as no surprise. The proclamations promising to preserve capitalist property relations were not unexpected. Neither the promulgation of the "four-bloc" theory nor the overtures toward American imperialism astounded anyone. *China 1942-52/3*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Back to Cuba

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

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

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

workers state refers to social property relations; who owns & controls means of production regardless of demo. or not forms of control

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

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

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

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

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

1.e. Castro's 1975 speech

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

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

→ *workers councils possible in capitalism... so... what... up a tree.*

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

Tasks of soc. rev. accomp.

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

Can You Compare Cuba?

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

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

*China before 49 & 52 } transition state?
Cuba bet Jan 59 & Oct 60 }*

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

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

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

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

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

before Aug-Oct. 60?
Dual power?

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

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

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

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

The Politics of the Two Positions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Danger Signals in Trent Hutter

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In October 1959?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hansen: Jan 1 59 - Aug. - Oct 60: Dual Power, Workers + Peasants Gov't
↳ then Workers State.
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Once we are forced by the reality itself to reject January 1, 1959, as the point of qualitative change, we are compelled to await either the appearance of socialist consciousness or of economic institutions that in and of themselves are socialist in principle. Neither of these had appeared by October 1959. What did appear was a quantitative increase in the "bodies of armed men"; that is, the extension of the Rebel Army, so to speak, on a wider and more popular basis. The formation of militias was very important, a development which we warmly greeted, but in itself it was not qualitatively different from the "bodies of armed men" already existing in the Rebel Army and the Revolutionary Police.

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

"True," she writes, "in certain concrete historical situations developing after World War II, we considered nationalization the decisive criterion. But in other concrete historical circumstances it certainly was not the decisive criterion -- for example in Russia in Oct. 1917 when a workers state was established and no nationalizations occurred for months. The criterion in 1917 was conquest of political power by the Bolsheviks. However, even within the Soviet Union itself the criterion changed. With the growth of Stalinism and the defeat of Bolshevism, the criteria for determining the USSR as still being a workers state became nationalized property, state monopoly of foreign trade, national planning, etc."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

May 25, 1961.

THE CHARACTER OF THE NEW CUBAN GOVERNMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Fourth Congress Discussion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Trotsky's Position in 1938

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

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

definition in a different sense of phraseology -> NICA + Cuba

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joseph Hansen

July 1960

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That is the first type of a possible workers government.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Cuba: The Acid Test

A Reply to the Ultraleft Sectarians

by Joseph Hansen

November 20, 1962

CUBA -- THE ACID TEST

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by Joseph Hansen

It is written: "In the Beginning was the Word."
Here I am balked: who, now, can help afford?
The Word? -- impossible so high to rate it;
And otherwise must I translate it,
If by the Spirit I am truly taught.
Then thus: "In the Beginning was the Thought."
This first line let me weigh completely,
Lest my impatient pen proceed too fleetly.
Is it the Thought which works, creates, indeed?
"In the Beginning was the Power," I read.
Yet, as I write, a warning is suggested,
That I the sense may not have fairly tested.
The Spirit aids me: now I see the light!
"In the Beginning was the Act," I write.

-- Goethe.

As the main stream of the world Trotskyist movement heads toward healing a split that has lasted an unconscionable eight years, some ultraleft currents in various areas are pressing in an opposite direction, seeking to perpetuate the old rift, to deepen it if possible, and even to precipitate fresh ruptures. The Latin-American Bureau of J. Posadas, ordering an end to discussion before it was even initiated, bolted from the International Secretariat last April under guise of "reorganizing" the Fourth International, and raised the banner of a program that goes so far in its deviation to the left as to include a but thinly disguised appeal to Moscow to start a preventive nuclear war. On the side of the International Committee, the top leaders of the Socialist Labour League, under guidance of Gerry Healy, have chosen to interpret the efforts of the Socialist Workers Party to help unify world Trotskyism as a "betrayal" of the basic principles of Marxism which they intend to fight tooth and nail; and, to emphasize their dedication to this course, they have hardened a posture on Cuba the only virtue of which is to lay bare an astonishing lack of the most elementary requisite of revolutionary leadership -- ability to recognize a revolution when you see one.

How are we to explain this curious turn? Obviously it was precipitated by the unification process. A series of practical problems surged to the fore. How can you unite with the opposing tendency even if they do consider themselves to be Trotskyists? The question is asked by groups on both sides. After years of bitter factional war how can you collaborate and live in the same organization? Didn't the public positions of the other side damage the cause as a whole? How can you

work with leaders whose records provide grounds for deep suspicion? How can you find areas of agreement? A far easier, more "Leninist", and therefore more "principled" tactic is to simply continue firing at them, no matter if differences have to be magnified. Prestige, pride, bullheadedness, personal eccentricities, all these came into play at the prospect of unification. In the case of the Latin-American Bureau, for instance, a factor may have been fear that pretensions as to size and influence, which were actually declining, would be exposed by unification, or that habits of paternalistic centralism would have to give way to democratic controls. Nevertheless, however weighty they may be -- and in a small movement they can loom large -- such factors do not explain the political differentiation.

The same fundamental cause that brought fresh impulsion to unity sentiments in the past couple of years is also responsible for the flare up of resistance. At bottom lie the mighty forces of the colonial revolution and the interrelated process of de-Stalinization. These are having an effect on the radical movement roughly comparable to that of the Russian Revolution some forty years ago. Cutting across all formations, they are shaking them and regrouping them, dividing them to right and to left. If the repercussions among radicals began with the victory of the Chinese Revolution and speeded up with the famous Twentieth Congress and the Hungarian workers uprising, it came to a crescendo with the Cuban Revolution. When the massive nationalizations took place, and the Castro government expropriated both American and Cuban capitalists, every tendency had to take a stand. The imperialists left little room for equivocation.

The Trotskyist movement has not escaped the general shake up either. The Chinese victory, de-Stalinization, the Hungarian uprising were reflected in both capitulatory and ultraleft moods as well as strengthening of the main stream of Trotskyism. What we have really been witnessing in our movement is the outcome of a number of tests -- how well the various Trotskyist groupings and shadings have responded to the series of revolutionary events culminating in the greatest occurrence in the Western Hemisphere since the American Civil War. The move for unification and the symmetrical resistance to it are no more than logical consequences to be drawn from reading the results, especially those supplied by the acid test of the mighty Cuban action.

The fact that differences, even sharp differences, exist among the ultralefts who were turned up by the latest and most decisive test does not invalidate this conclusion. Fosadas, for example, after initial opposition, came around to the view that Cuba is a workers state, thus making a rather better showing than Healy on this crucial issue. Yet he is, if anything, even more truculently opposed to any moves toward unification of the Trotskyist movement. Advocating a line that bristles with inconsistencies and extravagances, Fosadas is nevertheless compelled to adapt himself to one of the main realities of politics in Latin America today. Throughout that vast region,

it is political death among radical workers to voice a position on Cuba like the one on which Healy insists. Posadas, for all his flights of fantasy, was able to recognize this reality after discovering it the hard way. Healy, unable to agree to so grim a conclusion from anything he has seen in insular British circles, is more nonchalant about the prospect of such a fate overtaking the Latin-American Trotskyists.

As is typical among ultralefts, elaborate justifications "in principle" are offered for their sectarian course, along with dire prophecies about the consequences of the "betrayals" being committed by those following in the real tradition of Lenin and Trotsky. Like similar rationalizations of ultralefts before them, these offer little resistance to critical appraisal. I propose to demonstrate this by examining the main thread of argumentation about Cuba as presented in SLL material, above all the document, "Trotskyism Betrayed." I will then take up briefly the related considerations offered by the leaders of the French section of the IC in "Draft Report on the Cuban Revolution," a document that discloses substantial differences with the SLL leaders on Cuba while maintaining a united front with them on the question of unification.

Should Marxists Go By the Facts?

The world Trotskyist movement has waited now two long and crowded years for the SLL to recognize the facts about the Cuban Revolution. The SLL leaders have refused to listen to the American and Canadian Trotskyists who have followed events in Cuba with close attention from the very beginning. They have refused to listen to the Latin-American Trotskyists who have first-hand acquaintance with the development and results of the Revolution in both its home base and the rest of the continent. They scorn the conclusions reached by other Trotskyists throughout the world. Why this obstinate refusal to admit palpable events? Strangest of all, the leaders of the SLL have come to recognize that they are refusing to acknowledge the facts; they have converted this into a virtue and even elevated it into a philosophy. The reasoning is very simple: To recognize facts is characteristic of empiricism; Marxism is opposed to empiricism; therefore, as Marxists, we refuse to recognize facts. Here is how this reasoning -- included as part of the package in a review of Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks -- is presented by Cliff Slaughter in the original academic language which has proved so entrancing to the editors of Labour Review in recent years and which, we are sure, will prove just as entrancing to readers of this article:

"Lenin's Notebooks on Hegel might appear obscure and a not very pressing preoccupation, when big things are happening all over the world. However, it is exactly on the theoretical front that the sharpest and most uncompromising struggle must be waged. A mistaken conception here can mean a whole

mistaken method, the relations between the facts becomes totally misunderstood, and disastrously wrong conclusions will be drawn. For example, some 'Marxists' assume that Marxist method has the same starting-point as empiricism: that is to say, it starts with 'the facts'. It is difficult to understand why Lenin and others should have spent so much time on Hegel and the dialectical method if this were true. Of course, every science is based on facts. However, the definition and establishment of 'the facts' is crucial to any science. Part of the creation of a science is precisely its delimitation and definition as a field of study with its own laws: the 'facts' are shown in experience to be objectively and lawfully interconnected in such a way that a science of these facts is a meaningful and useful basis for practice. Our 'empiricist' Marxists in the field of society and politics are far from this state of affairs. Their procedure is to say: we had a programme, based on the facts as they were in 1848, or 1921, or 1938; now the facts are obviously different, so we need a different programme. For example, the spurious 'Fourth International' of Pablo's group decided some years ago that the Stalinist bureaucracy and its counterparts in various countries were forced to act differently because of changed objective circumstances ('facts'). New 'revolutionary currents' were abroad in the world, more recently particularly in the colonial revolution. The consequence of this 'mass pressure' would be to force the bureaucrats to act contrary to their wishes and to lead the workers to power. The great scope of the colonial revolution, the 'liberalization' of the Soviet regime, and the exposure of Stalin by Khrushchev, were taken as the 'facts' in this case. Then again, the revolution in Algeria, Guinea, and particularly Cuba are said to be yet a new kind of fact: socialist revolutions, even without the formation of revolutionary working-class parties." (Labour Review, Summer, 1962, p. 77.)

Study of this shining passage is worth the effort, for it reveals the theoretical method used by the SLL leaders in approaching the Cuban Revolution and much else in today's world. We note the qualifying sentence, "Of course, every science is based on facts." The author is to be congratulated on admitting this; it is a favorable indication of at least a certain awareness that a material world does exist. We can even pin a medal on him for the sage observation that the various sciences cover different fields, that in these fields facts have various orders of importance and that it is the job of science to reveal their significance and the significance of the relations between them so that we can put them to use. But let us examine more closely the two sentences that stick up like bandaged thumbs:

"For example, some 'Marxists' assume that Marxist method has the same starting-point as empiricism: that is to say, it starts with 'the facts'. It is difficult to understand why Lenin and others should have spent so much time on Hegel and the dialectical method if this were true."

So "Lenin and others" spent so much time on Hegel and the dialectical method in order to avoid starting with the facts? Or to be able to bend them with philosophical sanction to fit preconceived notions? Or to avoid sharing any grounds whatsoever with empiricism, especially in the precise area where it is strongest? But Hegel did not teach that. He was more dialectical in his appreciation of empiricism than Slaughter and others. Hegel recognized that empiricism is much more than mere observing, hearing, feeling, etc. and that its aim is to discover scientific laws. "Without the working out of the empirical sciences on their own account," he observed, "Philosophy could not have reached further than with the ancients." As was his method with all views which he considered to have philosophical merit, he sought to include what was valid in empiricism in his own system. It is worth noting, for instance, that "Being," the opening category of his logic, corresponds on this abstract level to an empirical beginning.

Hegel criticized empiricism on two counts: (1) In place of the a priori absolutes of the metaphysicians, which it rejects, empiricism substitutes its own set of absolutes. Thus it is arbitrary, one-sided and undialectical. (2) Its basic tendency is to oppose the idealism of which Hegel was an ardent exponent: "Generally speaking, Empiricism finds the truth in the outward world; and even if it allow a super-sensible world, it holds knowledge of that world to be impossible, and would restrict us to the province of sense-perception. This doctrine when systematically carried out produces what has been latterly termed Materialism. Materialism of this stamp looks upon matter, qua matter, as the genuine objective world." (The Logic of Hegel, translated from the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, p. 80.)

I would submit that "Lenin and others" did not bring from Hegel his opposition to empiricism on idealistic or religious grounds. On the other hand Marxism does share Hegel's position that vulgar empiricism is arbitrary, one-sided and undialectical. But empiricism "systematically carried out"? This is the view that the "genuine objective world," the material world, takes primacy over thought and that a dialectical relationship exists between them. What is this if not dialectical materialism?

Slaughter's error is to establish an absolute gulf between empiricism and Marxism, leaving out what they have in common. In brief, he is guilty of rigid, mechanical thinking on this point. However, we plead that the culprit be let off with a light sentence in view of the novel circumstances. How often are we privileged to see a British metaphysician demonstrate that the heavy machinery of academic learning can be so finely controlled as to prove a mere trifle like facts don't count? And with Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks fed as information to the machine! It's better than cracking a walnut with a pile driver.

An additional error is involved. Slaughter finds it "difficult to understand why Lenin and others should have spent so much time on Hegel and the dialectical method" if it were true "that Marxist method has the same starting-point as empiricism: that is to say, it starts with 'the facts.'" Our utilitarian must easily understand then that the practical benefit which "Lenin and others" got out of Hegel and the dialectical method was the view that a scientific system of thought like Marxism -- unlike empiricism -- takes precedence over facts. True, in its origin, the Marxist system of thought was admittedly built on a foundation of facts, but once in existence it became -- thanks to Hegel -- relatively free from the need for further contact with facts. Thus the time spent on Hegel and the dialectical method was more than compensated for by the saving made possible in disregarding current facts. The primary task of a Marxist theoretician today, consequently, is not to apply the dialectical method to analysis of reality -- this is subordinate since the job has been done and we know from the system of thought what the reality is like and what it is going to be like. The primary task is to study the books and become adept at expounding the texts so that the system is promulgated in all its purity. Facts are of practical value in this task as illustrations and confirmation of the correctness of the system but are of not much import on the theoretical level.

But this is dogmatism, not Marxism. Marx and Engels did not simply take over idealist dialectics and assign it a chore such as it performed for idealism; namely, helping to dig up material to prove the validity of a philosophical system. From that point of view dialectics is devoid of methodological interest.

In the Marxist world outlook, dialectics does not serve an auxiliary role. It is central. To understand what this means and to appreciate its relevancy to the issue at hand -- our attitude toward facts -- we must go back to the origin of materialist dialectics, which is to be found in Marx's solution to the chief contradiction of Hegel's dialectics. This contradiction, as Slaughter will certainly agree, was its failure to provide for self-criticism, for dialectical self-adjustment. The impasse was inevitable, since the Hegelian system excluded anything more fundamental than thought itself and there was thus nothing for thought to be adjusted against. The material world was viewed as a mere inert and passive "other" created by the activity of thought. Research thus centered on the nature of thought, the "nuclear energy" of the Hegelian system. Marx brought dialectics out of this blind alley by empirically taking matter as the fundamental source of motion. He thereby turned things around drastically and opened the way in principle for adjustment of his own theoretical system; that is, by checking it against the primary source of all movement, the material world. In place of thought spinning on itself as in the Hegelian system, Marx found the way to a genuine "feed back." Through

this revolution the dialectical method became self-consistent. It, too, is open to change. A major characteristic of materialist dialectics, consequently is supreme sensitivity to facts. Any work that fails in this respect will not stand up as an example of materialist dialectics. It is an apology or an academic exercise such as abounds in the Stalinist school of pseudo-dialectics.

Does this feature of materialist dialectics have any practical consequences or is it simply a curiosity among splitters of hairs? We are at the very heart of Marxist politics! An evolving material world, moving in a time sequence, inevitably forces rectifications in the thought that hopes to reflect it in close approximation. This holds with even greater force if that thought aims at active intervention, for it must seek genuine and not illusory points of support in a reality that is in dynamic movement. The primary task of a Marxist theoretician is to analyze reality with the best tools available -- those of dialectics -- so as to provide the most accurate guide possible for revolutionary action in the world as it actually exists at a given stage. This requires us to start with the facts.

The point is crucial. The type of thinking exemplified by Slaughter's contribution, which has brought the National Committee of the SLL to the sad position of refusing to acknowledge the facts in Cuba, has inspired a flood of arguments like those found in the previously cited paragraph from Labour Review:

(1) Years ago some people of a "spurious 'Fourth International'" decided that there were new facts about the Stalinist bureaucracy which required Trotskyism to make adjustments. They were wrong. Today the same "spurious" sources assert that new currents in the colonial revolution can force bureaucrats to act contrary to their wishes and lead the workers to power. Wrong again. We leave aside the crude simplification and consequent distortion of opponents' views and also the merits of the real points involved in order simply to call attention to the logic: Bad people were wrong before; therefore, they are wrong again.

(2) These same "spurious" characters or perhaps some "empiricist" Marxists" whom Slaughter does not name, also say -- in obvious error -- that "the revolutions in Algeria, Guinea, and particularly Cuba are...yet a new kind of fact: socialist revolutions, even without the formation of revolutionary working-class parties." Again we leave aside the distortion of opponents' positions in order to call attention to the hidden syllogism: What is not provided for in the program of Marxism cannot occur; this possibility is not provided for in the program of Marxism; therefore, it has not occurred.

In place of the problem of finding points of support for our program in the world in which we live, the SLL method is simply to assert the necessity for our program despite the reality.

There is nothing wrong, of course, with asserting the need for revolutionary socialism, including the need for party building, but this is only "A." Agreeing on that, we wish to proceed to "B"; how is this to be accomplished in a given situation? The SLL leaders display little interest in "B." For them "A" seems sufficient. Here is a typical example of their thinking that indicates this:

"In practice, however, both the Pabloites and the SWP find themselves prostrate before the petty-bourgeois nationalist leaders in Cuba and Algeria, which they have chosen to regard as the touchstone of revolutionary politics. Our view of this question is not opposed to that of the SWP simply in terms of who can best explain a series of events. It is a question rather of the actual policy and program of Trotskyist leadership in these backward countries."

But no revolutionary socialists "choose" what shall be regarded as the touchstone of revolutionary politics. This is done by much bigger forces; namely, classes in conflict. Cuba and Algeria happen to be the two areas in the world where this conflict has reached revolutionary proportions at the moment. This was not determined by any decision of ours. It was determined by revolutionary mass actions. Nor did we choose the current leaderships of the colonial revolution. They are the result of objective conditions of vast sweep. What we did choose was to study the facts and in these facts seek openings for effective application of our program. If we may express the opinion, it is an overstatement to say that anyone finds himself "prostrate before the petty-bourgeois nationalist leaders in Cuba and Algeria" because he refuses to follow the SLL National Committee in thinking that a Trotskyist can clear himself of any further responsibility by putting the label "betrayal" on everything these leaders do. It is an error of the first order to believe that petty-bourgeois nationalism = petty-bourgeois nationalism, has no internal differentiations or contradictions and cannot possibly be affected by the mass forces that have thrust it forward. To avoid the political prostration that follows the method practiced by the SLL, revolutionary socialists seek to go beyond simply repeating the words about the need for a party. By joining in the action of the revolution, they seek to help build a revolutionary-socialist party in the very process of the revolution itself in-

X |stead of arguing with the revolution that it would have been better to delay things until the party had first been constructed.

Slaughter states, we recall, that "Part of the creation of a science is precisely its delimitation and definition as a field of study with its own laws: the 'facts' are shown in experience to be objectively and lawfully interconnected in such a way that a science of these facts is a meaningful and useful basis for practice." We welcomed that statement. Now we must protest what followed, if Slaughter was by some remote chance thinking of us when he said, "Our 'empiricist' Marxists in the field of society and politics are far from this state of affairs. Their procedure is to say: we had a program, based on the facts as they were in 1848, or 1921, or 1938; now the facts are obviously different, so we need a different program."

In the case of Cuba, proceeding by the Marxist method, we sought to establish the facts and then determine how they are objectively and lawfully interconnected with our previous analysis of China, Yugoslavia and the buffer countries. Our conclusion was not to say, "We need a different program." Quite the contrary. We stated that the case of Cuba confirmed our previous analysis and thus confirmed the correctness of Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union and of his theory of permanent revolution. From this we derived a meaningful and useful basis for finding our place in the Cuban Revolution.

In contrast to this, the SLL leaders approach Cuba as if the problem boiled down to illustrating the correctness of Lenin's norms for a healthy workers state. The correctness of these norms is not at issue. We believe in them, advocate them, and seek to advance them as always. The SLL leaders, however, stop at the mere assertion of these norms and try to force them to do work for which they are insufficient. This leads them into a series of glaring errors and even into disastrous policies, as we shall see.

To anticipate what we shall attempt to prove in detail, the SLL leaders, following the method indicated in Slaughter's article, do not show how the facts in Cuba are objectively and lawfully interconnected with the preceding Trotskyist positions. Instead they commit a very common but also very basic mistake: they dissolve the concrete into the abstract. They do this in two steps. First they refuse to link the facts in Cuba with the criteria used in analyzing China,

Yugoslavia and the buffer countries. They then quite illogically stop at Lenin's norms. The result of going this far, however, is to leave them with only Lenin's norms to determine the character of a workers state. The criteria for determining a workers state have been dissolved into the norms which, since Trotsky's time, have been recognized as valid only for determining a healthy workers state. By dissolving Trotsky into Lenin in this way, the SLL leaders are left without the tools of theory necessary to assess anything except what would have been considered a workers state in 1917. What will not fit the norms is given a capitalist label, since no grays exist in the SLL's world of solid blacks and solid whites. Thus, incapable of correctly analyzing the Cuban Revolution, they end up by refusing to accept as non-capitalist anything that deviates from Lenin's norms. The correct label for that position is ultraleft sectarianism. This method compels them, as an odd final consequence, to contend that "Lenin and others" brought from Hegel the view that facts are not primary. They provide their own ultimate absurdity and seek, appropriately enough, to find sanction for it in the philosophy of idealism.

With such reasoning the National Committee of the SLL determines its policy in a revolution that is shaking the Western Hemisphere. Thus in much of what they write about Cuba one gets the impression of a thought process little above that of medieval times when the experts determined what the world was like through fasting, meditation, prayer and pious reference to the holy scriptures.

Who Has Lost Touch With Reality?

An instructive example of what this type of thinking can lead to is provided by the document to which the National Committee of the SLL appended its joint signature, "Trotskyism Betrayed."

"Does the dictatorship of the proletariat exist in Cuba?" asks the NC. "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."

To substantiate this stern decision handed down by the SLL court, we are referred, in accordance with the method of thought we have discussed above, to the writings of Lenin; and the appropriate texts are cited as if the leader of the Bolsheviks had the Cuban situation before him.

So what exists in Cuba? We are given it, straight from the bench, without any if's and's or but's:

"In our opinion, the Castro regime is and remains a bonapartist regime resting on capitalist state foundations."

As for Castro, he is taken care of with similar crispness: "The regime, however, is a variety of capitalist state power. The Castro regime did not create a qualitatively new and different type of state from the Batista regime."

According to these experts in what the law books say, who cannot find any mention of Cuba in Lenin's State and Revolution, not even dual power exists in the island: "The 'militia' / the quotation marks on 'militia' put those half million armed Cubans in their place! / is subordinate to Castro's state -- not to soviets, not even to a constituent assembly. In this sense they do not constitute workers power or even dual power."

And all those happenings in Cuba, about which the papers have been making such a fuss, are explained as easily as digging up an appropriate citation from Lenin: "Despite or rather because of / that "rather because of" is good! / all the economic and social changes that have taken place in the last two-three years, Cuba has witnessed, not a social revolution which has transferred state power irrevocably from the hands of one class to another, but a political revolution which has transferred power from the hands of one class to another section of that same class. . . . Where the working class is unable to lead the peasant masses and smash capitalist state power, the bourgeoisie steps in and solves the problem of the 'democratic revolution' in its own fashion and to its own satisfaction. Hence we have Kemal Ataturk, Chiang Kai-shek, Nasser, Nehru, Cardenas, Peron, Ben Bella -- and Castro (to mention a few)."

There you have it -- in all its baldness -- the judgment of the National Committee of the SLL on the Cuban Revolution and its achievements.

But a puzzle remains. How come that the Republican Party, which is fairly aware of Wall Street's thinking, doesn't recognize that Castro is just another "Batista?" Why the dragging of feet among the Democrats, who know Wall Street's thinking just as well as the Republicans but who take a longer view of the interests of capitalism? Above all, how explain the anomalous reaction of the Cuban capitalists who poured out of the island like rats from a burning cane field and holed up in Florida, the way Chiang and a section

of the Chinese capitalists holed up in Formosa? How was it possible for the entire capitalist class of the United States to unite, without a single fissure, against Cuba and risk bringing the world to nuclear war in the effort to topple the Castro government? How come they refuse to recognize that their properties could not be in safer hands than those of a Cuban "Chiang Kai-shek"? How are we to assess this strange new phenomenon of Wall Street losing touch with reality in the one area where it never misses -- its property interests?

Another mystery. How come that the Soviet people, the Chinese people, the Koreans, Viet-nameese, Yugoslavs, Albanians and people of the East European countries, all consider that Cuba has become non-capitalist and now has an economic system like theirs? How explain that they, too, have lost touch with reality on such a decisive question?

For that matter, what about the Cubans? Here a whole population is apparently suffering from a manic-depressive psychosis. The capitalists and their agents think they have been overthrown and it's a disaster. The rest of the population agree and think it's wonderful. They have raised the banners of socialism and tens if not hundreds of thousands are assiduously studying Marx, Engels and Lenin. Isn't that going rather far in failing to recognize that "capitalist state power" still exists in Cuba?

We have still not come to the end. There are ten countries, including the United States, in which Trotskyists sympathize with or belong to the IC. In all these countries, only the SLL holds this curious position on Cuba. Not a single other group agrees with them -- not even those in France. Have the other nine, then, lost all touch with political realities? How is this to be explained? Have all of them "degenerated" and "betrayed" Trotskyism except Healy and his staff?

Let us also add that the Posadas group in Latin America would not touch the SLL position on Cuba with a ten-foot pole. Nor for that matter, not a single solitary Trotskyist in all of Latin America, whether with the IC or the IS, so far as I know. Can't any of the Latin-American Trotskyists recognize a "Batista" when they see one? How can they be so far out of touch with the real world?

Since I mentioned the IS, the ultimate horror of "Trotskyism Betrayed," let me concede that here the National

Committee of the SLL can draw some comfort. In their next solemn session they might have Slaughter or Healy read as encouraging news the following declaration by a prominent member of the IS:

"Fidel Castro is at present the latest 'hero' discovered by the Communist Parties of Latin America, to whose regime they attribute the revolutionary gains of the Cuban masses. Fidel Castro, however, is only the Bonapartist representative of the bourgeoisie, who is undergoing the pressure of the masses and is forced to make them important concessions, against which his bourgeois teammates are already rising up, as has just been clearly shown by the opposition set going inside his own government against the -- timid enough -- agrarian reform."

The author of that statement, which the SLL position so obviously echoes, amplifies and expounds is Michel Pablo. It can be found on page xiii of his pamphlet The Arab Revolution. Unfortunately, the authors of "Trotskyism Betrayed" cannot expect to build too much on this, since it was Pablo's position in June 1959 before Castro broke up the coalition government with the representatives of Cuban bourgeois democracy. Pablo long ago dropped that position, if position it was and not just a premature assessment. Pablo, whatever else you may think of him, has enough wisdom and ability not to insist on a position which is that untenable in face of the facts.

It seems, consequently, that the NC of the SLL has succeeded in finding an abandoned niche where they are doomed to complete isolation. It is theoretically possible that Healy and his closest collaborators are the only ones among all these who have not lost touch with the Cuban reality. But the force of the facts makes this most unlikely.

A New Type of Capitalism?

There still remain some vexatious theoretical problems of lesser order, all of which are opened up by the position of the National Committee of the SLL on Cuba, but of which not a single one is discussed in the document they submitted despite all the boasting and arm-waving about how the SLL leaders intend to bring theoretical clarity to the very much muddled world Trotskyist movement.

First on the Agrarian Reform. "A basic criterion for a workers state in the economic sphere in an underdeveloped country," they inform us, "is the nationalization of the land

and thorough political measures by the ruling power to prevent the growth of the kulaks. Neither in Egypt nor in Cuba has this been done. On the contrary, in Cuba, Castro has recently promised (under the impact of the food crisis) to give the land back to the peasants. So long as land remains alienable, so long will petty-commodity production continue and so long will Cuba remain a capitalist nation."

Such a tangle of errors is included in this paragraph that one can scarcely decide which loop to pick up first. But let us be patient, for this is all the National Committee of the SLL has to say about Cuba's Agrarian Reform. To begin with, let us pull out the misleading reference to Egypt since we are dealing with Cuba. Second, it is not true that so long as petty-commodity production continues, the economy of a country will remain capitalist. Petty-commodity production and capitalism are not synonymous. That is why a workers state, on replacing a capitalist state, can safely call on the peasants to take the land. It is also the fundamental reason why Engels, and all genuine Marxists after him, have stood firmly on the principle that the peasants must not be forced into collectivization. That is also why nationalization of the land, while a very important and indicative measure, is not a basic criterion for a workers state and was not considered as such in designating Yugoslavia, the Eastern European countries and China as workers states, a position for which the National Committee of the SLL voted. Third, the addition of the criterion "thorough political measures by the ruling power to prevent the growth of kulaks" sounds queer as a basic criterion for a workers state in the economic sphere. In any case this new "criterion," in this unexpected association was never even suggested in the discussion on Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe and China. Is the National Committee of the SLL perhaps thinking of revising the Trotskyist position on the character of these states by demanding that this new "basic criterion" be added?

Not much is left of the SLL position on Cuba's Agrarian Reform; but, in compensation, the tangle is just about unwound. Only a snarl or two is left. Instead of giving "land back to the peasants," the main course of the Agrarian Reform in Cuba is just the opposite. It is true that the Cuban government has proved quite sensitive to the will of the campesinos in this respect, contrasting wholly favorably to the course followed in all the countries where Stalinist methods were applied either directly by Moscow or under its influence. Thus the deeds to many farms have been handed

out, especially in the Sierra Maestra. Some co-operatives, too hastily formed, may have been dissolved, but the general line of development is clearly in the direction of a bigger and bigger state role. Thus, the most important co-operatives have now been converted into state farms. Good, bad or indifferent that happens to be the case.

On the alienability of land in Cuba, which is beside the point in this discussion, the National Committee of the SLL simply displays an ignorance in perfect harmony with the pattern of thinking which permits them to close their eyes to more important facts that stare them in the face. It so happens that the Agrarian Reform law specifies that the "vital minimum" of land, to which a campesino gets a deed, "shall be inalienable." Exempt from taxes, this land cannot be attached and is not subject to contract, lease, share-crop or usufruct. It can be transferred only by sale to the state, or through inheritance by a single heir on the death of the owner, or, in the event there is no heir, by sale at public auction to bidders who must be campesinos or or agricultural workers. There is only one way in which the owner can even mortgage his land in Cuba and that is by mortgaging it to the state or to its specified institutions. Now that they have learned these facts will our British comrades still maintain that nothing essentially new has occurred in Cuba?

We come to the theoretical problem which is our reward for having opened up this tangle of errors. However you assess the Agrarian Reform in Cuba as a criterion in determining the character of the state, it was the swiftest and most thoroughgoing by far in the history of Latin America. How was such a radical reform possible under a regime that is not qualitatively different, as the SLL leaders allege, from the "Batista regime?" Is this provided for in the classics of Marxism? How are we to explain it? Finally, are we for or are we against this Agrarian Reform? The National Committee of the SLL maintains a painful silence on this that is truly scandalous in leaders who consider themselves to be Trotskyists. But if, after a collective democratic discussion they decide to vote, yes, must they not also add that we should begin reconsidering our attitude toward "capitalist" regimes capable of such far-reaching measures?

We come to a related question. Castro's insistence on a thoroughgoing, radical agrarian reform blew up the coalition government in July 1959. The representatives of

bourgeois democracy hastily stuffed stocks, bonds, dollars and pesos into handbags and followed the representatives of the oligarchy and the imperialist interests into exile in Miami. Thus a new government came into being that proved capable of acting in a qualitatively different way from the previous one.

Let us note what this government did so that the National Committee of the SLL will understand better what we mean by "the facts." It carried through, as we have noted, the swiftest and most radical agrarian reform in the history of Latin America. It did this against the combined resistance of the Cuban landlords, Cuban capitalists, and American imperialists. This resistance was not simply verbal. The counter-revolutionaries fought with rifle and bomb and whatever the CIA and Pentagon could give them.

Against this powerful landlord-capitalist-imperialist resistance the new government armed the people of Cuba. Not with just speeches but with mass distribution of guns and the organization of a powerful militia. Against the mounting military measures taken by American imperialism, the new government turned to the Soviet bloc for comparably effective defensive military hardware. While this was going on, the new government initiated sweeping economic measures such as the establishment of controls on foreign trade and controls over capitalist management. Still more important, it continued the process begun in conflict with Batista's army and police of smashing the old state structure. Finally, some two years ago, in defiance of the wrath of the mightiest capitalist country on earth it expropriated capitalist holdings "down to the nails in their boots." This same new government proceeded with astounding speed to expand state controls into state planning and when the imperialists brought an axe down, cutting all major economic ties between the United States and Cuba, this new government, responding in heroic way to the emergency, tied its economy in with the planned economies of the Soviet bloc. Can such a government be described as differing only quantitatively from a "Batista" regime? Accurately described, that is.

All right, have it your way. Let us grant that the difference is only quantitative and -- for the sake of the confusion on which the National Committee of the SLL insists -- let us stubbornly refuse to grant this quantitatively different government even a quantitatively different label. Our theoretical problems are only worsened -- and in a

qualitative way. We must then admit that reality has so changed that it has now become possible for a Batista-type regime to carry out such revolutionary actions in a series of countries. What has happened to capitalism to give it the possibility of taking such self-destructive measures? Has it suddenly become rejuvenated? Has the death agony of capitalism really turned out to be a fountain of youth?

As in the case of Cuba's Agrarian Reform, we are also faced with a political issue that cannot be evaded -- unless, of course, you counsel that we abandon politics. Are we for or are we against all these measures? If we approve them, are we then not compelled to admit that such governments are capable of a progressive role? Does it not follow, if they are "a variety of capitalist state power" as the SLL leaders assert, that capitalism has not yet exhausted all its progressive possibilities? If this is so, a still more thorny problem arises. Does any barrier exist to prevent a capitalist government in an industrially advanced country from playing a similar progressive role? If a barrier does exist is it qualitative or simply quantitative? What, inside this new capitalist reality, determines the character of the boundary? On all these questions, which are raised in principle by the document flung so vehemently on the table, the National Committee of the SLL maintains the most discreet silence.

Let us consider for a moment the character of the Cuban economy today. "The nationalizations carried out by Castro do nothing to alter the capitalist character of the state," the National Committee of the SLL claims. Good; for the sake of argument let's see what happens if we agree not to change the label, whatever else has changed. We note that these nationalizations were not undertaken by either the capitalist or imperialist supporters of Batista. Nor were they undertaken by the representatives of bourgeois democracy. The bulk of the Cuban capitalists, such as they were, most of the landlords, and the corrupt assemblage of politicians who served as their agents are now to be found in Florida or any other land of the palm save Cuba. Thus we must add to the fact of "mere" nationalization, the fact of expropriation of the Cuban and American capitalists and landlords. The National Committee of the SLL may stoutly deny this. None of the former property holders will. In addition, I think that, roughly speaking, 999.9 out of 1,000 observers who have taken the trouble to visit Cuba or study the events will put these two items down as incontrovertible facts.

To this must be added the fact that a planned economy has been installed that extends so far as to completely embrace the principal agricultural sphere -- sugar. True, the planning may not be efficient. It may be hampered by lack of competent personnel, poor balancing, some bureaucratism, breakdowns and other faults. These are due not only to lack of experience but to the direct sabotage of counter-revolutionaries and to the enormous pressure of American imperialism which seeks to throttle in the cradle this effort at planning. Nevertheless, in principle, the planned economy is operative in Cuba, has already achieved remarkable successes, and has clearly displaced private capitalism in all the key sectors of the economy. This is a fact, too. (1)

(1) (Perhaps this is the place to file an objection to a declaration in the statement of the SLL, where the nature of the state in Cuba is considered, that nothing essential was changed by the Castro government: "What it did do was to clear out the old judges, administrators, bureaucrats, diplomats and policemen and replace them with people who supported Castro. The old institutions were filled with new personnel." This is dead wrong. The old institutions, including its personnel were committed to the preservation of private capitalist property interests. The new institutions, in contrast to the old, are committed to the preservation and administration of nationalized property.

Putting these three main facts together -- expropriation of the bourgeoisie, nationalization of industry, and the institution of a planned economy -- and adding to this combination the "capitalist" label on which the National Committee of the SLL insists, what do we end up with? It's inescapable: state capitalism. But, again, what is gained by such a label save indescribable theoretical confusion and the admission that capitalism still has great and progressive inherent possibilities despite all that has been said about its death agony? Moreover, we are not saved thereby from taking a political stand. Is this so-called state capitalism in Cuba better or worse than the private capitalism which it overturned? Yes or no? If it is superior, in what respect is its superiority apparent?

Finally, exactly what does the National Committee of the SLL propose on the economic level, which if enacted would entitle us to cross out the "capitalist" label? Our haughty theoreticians disdain to answer in their document. We would appreciate, if it's not asking too much, a plain and simple reply to that question,

China, Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe

Two whole years after the event, as we noted above, the National Committee of the SLL still refuses to recognize Cuba as a workers state. In their efforts to establish theoretical grounds for the dogmatic view that nothing has changed in Cuba and that it's all a malicious "revisionist" invention about the Batista regime being overthrown, they inevitably tear gaping holes in basic theory.

Not openly and boldly, but in a covert way, they strike at the entire continuity of our theory since the time of Trotsky insofar as it relates to assessing the character of a workers state. They begin with Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union, attempting to cut that theoretical foundation away from the problem before us. "But it is ridiculous to think," they argue, "that the question of the Cuban state can be resolved abstractly by 'criteria' from this earlier discussion (with Shachtman and Burnham) even at the end of which Trotsky was still saying that the last word had still to be said by history." What do they mean by that cryptic last remark? That Trotsky doubted or was not sure of the character of the Soviet Union? Or that the National Committee of the SLL has now become shaky about it? What do they mean by the epithet "ridiculous?" Ridiculous by whose standards and on what grounds? The criteria used by Trotsky, abstract though they may be, happen to be the concrete theoretical grounds for every succeeding step in Trotskyist analysis concerning the problem of the character of the Soviet Union and the workers states that have appeared since then. To sever this connection prepares the way for revising everything accomplished in theory in this field since then -- and also prepares the way for revising Trotsky's theory of the degenerated workers state. The National Committee of the SLL is taking here a most revealing step.

The mechanical thinking that feels an inner compulsion to cut the link with Trotsky's analysis, reveals itself in still another way. On page 12 of their document "Trotskyism Betrayed" they seek to summarize Trotsky's position: "The bureaucracy which usurped the government power in the social economy of Russia was a parasitic group and not a necessary fundamental class." That sounds correct on first reading, but something is missing. What kind of parasitic group? What was its class coloration? We search the page in vain for an answer. Yet this is one of the most distinctive features in Trotsky's analysis. The parasitic layer is petty bourgeois, a reflection of the peasantry, the

remnants of the cold classes, the elements who switched allegiance from Czar to the new regime -- all these and the political-military administrative levels of the new government who, under pressure from the capitalist West, drifted from the outlook of revolutionary socialism or came to prominence without ever having genuinely understood or accepted it. What was new in this situation -- and this is the heart of Trotsky's position on the question -- was that a reactionary petty-bourgeois formation of this kind could, after a political counter-revolution, wield power in a workers state and even defend the foundations of that state while being primarily concerned about their own special interests.

We come now to the question of why this point is important -- of decisive importance, in truth -- in solving the central problem posed by the spread of Soviet-type economies in the postwar period. However, let us first listen to the National Committee of the SLL:

"The states established in Eastern Europe in 1945 were extensions of the Russian revolution by the military and bureaucratic methods of the Stalinist leadership. They were possible under the circumstances of special difficulty for imperialism and the chaos in Europe consequent on the defeat of German capitalism. In fact the betrayals of international Social-Democracy and Stalinism restricted the advance of the revolution to Eastern Europe (and later China). This perpetuates the essential conditions of the survival of the bureaucracy in the workers states. There was by no means the same dynamic in the foundations of the deformed 'workers states' as there had been in Russia in October 1917. Our movement's characterization of all these states was not simply a question of applying 'criteria' like nationalization to the finished product."

These six sentences constitute all that seems to have registered with the National Committee of the SLL of that rich collective effort of our world movement to solve the complicated problems posed by "the facts" in those areas. Yugoslavia, a special case which gave rise to considerable discussion in the world Trotskyist movement, is not even mentioned. We will not cavil, however, in view of the fact that China was brushed off with three words (inside parentheses).

What is remarkable about this capsule treatment of an important chapter in the preservation and development of the theory of our movement is that although it concerns the decisive links of theory between Trotsky's analysis of the

Soviet Union and the world Trotskyist movement's analysis of Cuba today, it does not contain a milligram of theory not even by way of historical mention! Such references as "chaos," "betrayals," "circumstances of special difficulty," "by no means the same dynamic," etc., indicate the general setting to which theory must relate but not the points of the theory itself. The six sentences constitute in fact a shamefaced way of completely disregarding the theory of the character of these states. Thus, if we combine the previous operation of cutting away Trotsky's position on the Soviet Union by declaring it has no relevance to the Cuban discussion, we stand where? The answer of the SLL is to leap across all the intervening links to Lenin's abstract formulations of the State and Revolution period. None of the arguments used against the pertinence of our referring to China, Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe apply to the pertinence of the SLL referring to Lenin! Why? Well, these are texts written by Lenin himself you see and you don't want to be against Leninism do you? Now do you? This methodology is, of course, the correct means for accomplishing one end -- the conversion of Lenin into a harmless ikon,

Leaving nothing undone to make sure that the confusion is twice confounded, the National Committee of the SLL states on page 13 of their document, "Our essential differences with the SWP on this question is, therefore, not over the 'criteria' of workers states. We do not accept such a framework for the discussion; if, in fact, we had defined a workers state by the existence or non-existence of Trotskyist parties then this would be a lapse into 'subjectivism,' but we have not done this." A few lines further down on the very same page, however, we have done this. We read: "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." The latter sentence, then, excludes Cuba from being a workers state -- and also China, Yugoslavia and the East European countries. It even excludes the Soviet Union since you cannot "maintain such a dictatorship" in the "absence of a party squarely based on the workers and poor peasants."

Listen again to the National Committee of the SLL on why Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union is not relevant to Cuba: "At every stage of his eleven-years-long work towards a 'definition' of the USSR, Trotsky insisted on a rounded, critical perspective and not simply on the 'normative' method of applying definition criteria." Are we in

a kindergarten for retarded children? It was precisely because Yugoslavia, the East European countries and China did not follow the norm that we could not use the "normative method." That was the big difficulty, if we may remind the National Committee of the SLL, and why we sought an adjective like "deformed" to indicate that these workers states were not according to norm.

"The SWP method is the opposite," our analysts continue, "taking certain 'criteria' from the discussion of one particular manifestation of the revolutionary struggle in one part of the world as a unique stage in the development of the world revolution. They apply this criteria to another part of the world a generation later, to a particular sector at a particular stage of the struggle. Thus nationalization and the existence of workers militias are sufficient to make Cuba a 'workers state' and to make the Cuban revolution a socialist revolution."

We protest! And not just over the misrepresentation of our position in the last sentence. It is the SLL method that is normative. They refuse to consider either the individual or the particular. They go back two generations to the most general norms of the workers state as defined by Lenin in the light of the writings of Marx and Engels. They then apply these norms to the individual case of Cuba. Since Cuba does not fit, their conclusion is that Cuba is not a workers state. It is this method of thought which we claim is now represented in the positions that the SLL is pressing for adoption by the entire world Trotskyist movement. It is undialectical and completely mechanical. It measures facts by norms, and if they do not measure up, too bad for the facts.

What are the particular threads of theory to which Cuba must be related, if we are to proceed dialectically? In the case of the Eastern European countries, we held that the petty-bourgeois layer which had usurped power in the Soviet Union could, under certain conditions, export both their own rule and the property forms on which they were a parasitic excrescence. To do this they had to overthrow capitalist property relations as well as capitalist regimes. (At a certain stage they also liquidated native revolutionists who might have led independent currents.) The physical presence of Soviet armies in the occupied countries made it not too difficult to grasp the theory that reflected this process. In Yugoslavia, as has been pointed out before, it was more difficult. Partisans played the predominant role and in place of Soviet generals and Soviet secret

political police, the Yugoslav revolutionists came to power. They were, however, of the Stalinist school with a strong nationalist coloration. Can a workers state be established by petty-bourgeois figures such as these? Without the intervention of a revolutionary-socialist party? The National Committee of the SLL voted yes. The theoretical position they approved was that a petty-bourgeois Stalinist leadership can take power and establish a workers state, not because it is a Stalinist species of petty-bourgeois leadership but because it is at the head of a revolution, involving both peasants and workers, a revolution that is of even greater relative strength because it occurs in the time of the death agony of capitalism and after the victory of the Soviet Union in World War II.

✓ The next link was China. This particular case displayed even more novel features: years in which the Mao leadership existed as a dual power in which guerrilla warfare played a prominent role, eventually paving the way for full strength regular armies, the march on the cities, and so on. With all its differences, the key problem again was like the one in Yugoslavia, save that the direct role of the Soviet Union was even more remote. Could a revolution be led by a petty-bourgeois formation -- without prior organization of a revolutionary-socialist party -- to the successful formation of a workers state in a country as vast and populous as China? There was long hesitation about this but "the facts", which the National Committee of the SLL so lightly wave aside today in the case of Cuba, spoke so powerfully that the world Trotskyist movement had to accept the reality. The National Committee of the SLL, be it noted, did not contribute much to that discussion but they made up for the slimmess of their writings by the elacrity with which they voted to call China a workers state. Perhaps it is only now that they are beginning to consider the implications of what they voted for? The strange part is that this difficulty in taking a Cuba Libre chaser after downing China in a single gulp arises over the fact that the Cuban leadership is in every respect superior to the Chinese, unless you consider Mao's Stalinism to be a virtue. Perhaps, with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous, the SLL leaders have learned to put up a hand with firm resolution, "Thanks, but we don't drink!"

The position that Cuba is a workers state rests on the extension of the theory, as it was developed in the previous particular cases, to this new case. A contrary position must demonstrate either that the previous positions were fallacious or that nothing has really happened in Cuba. A half-way position, with which the National Committee of the SLL may be toying, is to hold that each individual case calls

for its own special criteria -- one set for Cuba, another set for China, etc. This would signify the complete breakdown of any scientific approach, not to speak of dialectics, and the enthronement of the most vulgar empiricism. The National Committee of the SLL has chosen the alternative of denying the facts. It has, however, gone far, as we have shown, in preparing the ground for shifting to the other main alternative; namely, that everything must be revised back to 1940, if not back to Lenin.

On the other hand, the theory with which we were able to provide a rational explanation for the appearance of such unforeseen formations as workers states deviating widely from the norms laid down by Lenin has proved its worth -- and quite dramatically in the case of Cuba. I refer not only to its help in defending and extending the Cuban Revolution but in understanding why the Cuban issue is of such extraordinary explosiveness in world politics.

The position of the National Committee of the SLL utterly obscures this role, in fact denies it, for Cuba is seen as only one particular "unique" case, unconnected with anything save the colonial revolution in general and perhaps the American elections in particular; hence incapable of playing any great or even unusual role. They overlook what is absolutely basic -- the fact of a socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere. In place of the revolutionary action which flared in the powder house of imperialism, the SLL leaders substitute the most barren academic schema: "A Marxist evaluation of any movement insists upon an analysis of its economic basis in the modern world. This must begin from the international needs of imperialism." How do these most generalized economic abstractions apply to the blaze in the Caribbean? "We have tried to understand and discuss the Cuban question," the National Committee of the SLL answers, "in terms of our own analysis of the economic position of Cuba and the evaluation of the present struggle in Cuba and the rest of America." This approach, worthy of a dogmatic instructor in an economics department, has led them to constantly underestimate Cuba politically; and the many painful surprises have taught them nothing.

Once you see Cuba for what it is, a workers state and the opening stage of the socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere, as is made possible by linking it to the revolutions in Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe and China (The Cuban leaders are well aware of the latter tie), then it is quite clear why it plays such a spectacular role. The extension of the October 1917 Revolution into the Western Hemisphere

is a revolutionary action far more decisive in the scales than the weight of Cuba's economy in North and South America. This revolution has something qualitative about it as a culmination of the overturns that began in Eastern Europe. With its signal that the stage is now opening for non-Stalinist revolutionary leaderships, it even appears as a major turning point in the whole postwar period. Wall Street, quite understandably from the viewpoint of its class interests, is not excited over the weight of Cuba as a particular country but as a bright flame burning amidst crates of high explosives. It can absorb the economic losses in Cuba. It cannot absorb the political consequences of long continued existence of the revolution that caused these losses. Cuba in its eyes, to change the simile, has the peculiar shape of a fulcrum offering a point of support for a lever from the land of the October 1917 Revolution, Wall Street knows very well that not much weight is required on that lever to lift the entire Western Hemisphere and with it the world.

Thus U.S. imperialism views Cuba as of first-rate importance. This being the view of the most powerful capitalist class, the heart and center and main support of all the other capitalist sectors, its moves in relation to Cuba inevitably reverberate in every country. For all the weaknesses inherent in its size and economic and military position, Cuba thus occupies the center of the stage and becomes a general problem for all of humanity.

This is not all. By bringing forward a leadership of non-Stalinist origin, the Cuban Revolution has visibly hastened the eventual closing of the whole chapter of Stalinism. By impelling this leadership toward revolutionary-socialist views, the Cuban Revolution has increased in a marked way the actuality of Lenin's general norms. This would seem so graphically evident that the blind could see it in the measures taken by the Castro regime against Stalinist bureaucratism and in the debates resounding in the Soviet bloc over the meaning of "peaceful co-existence" and how best to fight imperialism. "Unique" Cuba, following the particular pattern of the buffer countries, Yugoslavia and China, has become a general concern for capitalism and the Soviet bloc, and given fresh inspiration to the partisans of Lenin's norms. Dialectics has provided us with a beautiful example of the interrelationship between the individual, the particular and the general.

In maintaining and developing in this way the theoretical positions staked out by Trotsky, we have not engaged in "revisionism," as Healy and his closest collaborators charge. We have conceded nothing in our program, which continues to be based on the fundamental positions laid down by Lenin.

We have, on the contrary, found it easier to find our way in the complex course of the revolutions that followed World War II. Our analysis enabled us to work out more skillful ways of finding points in these revolutions from which to bring the norms of Lenin to bear. We prefer to believe that this was Lenin's way both in spirit and in method.

The Proof of the Pudding

As the National Committee of the SLL can undoubtedly prove a thousand times over by quotations from "Lenin and others," theory and practice are intimately interrelated. A bad theory is bound to be reflected in practice; and vice versa. Thus from the highly erroneous theory of the Cuban Revolution which the SWP holds, as the SLL leaders see it, certain disastrous consequences must inevitably follow. Prominent among these is a pro-Castro attitude and a vast overrating of the importance of the Cuban Revolution. These sickening symptoms, in the opinion of the National Committee of the SLL, show the cancerous "degeneration" which the SWP has suffered. The alleged decline of the American Trotskyist movement is in turn to be explained as a product of the unhealthy environment of economic prosperity and political witch-hunting in which the SWP has had to operate throughout the postwar period.

It really is a curious dialectic, isn't it? The SWP displays its tendency to capitulate to American imperialism by standing in the forefront against all the witch-hunting of the American imperialist pack howling and clamoring for Castro's blood and the downfall of the Cuban government! On the other hand the National Committee of the SLL shows how much better it resists the imperialist pressure of Wall Street's junior partners in the City by sneering at the importance of the Cuban Revolution and calling Castro just another "Chiang Kai-shek." This proves that the freer and easier environment provided by British capitalism is more conducive to Leninist intransigence since the temptation to stray into sin is higher and the opportunities for it more numerous than in the USA, and these challenging objective conditions offer on the subjective side greater scope, under wise Leninist guidance, to stiffen and improve the character and consciousness of the cadres... or words to that effect.

Despite "or rather because of" this sour, billious attitude toward the goings on in Cuba -- whatever they may be -- the National Committee of the SLL is convinced that it is putting up a model defense of the Cuban Revolution. Following

a paragraph reaffirming the need for the "construction of a Marxist party based on the working class and armed with the finest and latest what are the latest? weapons from the arsenal of Marxism," the Committee declares:

"In conclusion we state that such a policy does not inhibit the struggle for the defence of Cuba against imperialist attack, nor does it prevent episodic alliances with the Castroite forces in the struggle against the latifundists. On the contrary, it would immensely facilitate the tasks of defending Cuba and defeating landlordism.

"The defense of Cuba and Castro against imperialism is a tactic. Our strategy remains the overthrow of capitalism and the setting up of a real workers' state with real worker's power. This task still remains to be done in Cuba."

Should we begin with the end and work back through this tangle? "A real workers' state." Then some kind of workers state now exists in Cuba and the task is to make it "real." But that means capitalism has been overthrown. Our authors scramble to the alert. "That's not what we mean!!" All right, let's skip it and take a look at how your reduction of the defense of the Cuban Revolution from a principles to a "tactic" has worked out.

Before their policy had crystallized into a hardened sectarian dogma of refusing to recognize the victories of the Cuban Revolution, the British comrades organized a demonstration in behalf of Cuba that brought immediate response in Havana. The papers there gave it top banner-line coverage and reproduced big photos of the demonstrators with their placards. This action undertaken by the SLL proved to be only a flash in the pan. In place of sustained action, a literary campaign was substituted. Perhaps the SLL was too weak and uninfluential to do more. But the literary campaign has to be read to be believed. Utilizing as object lessons what it took to be the crimes and betrayals of the Castro government, it sought to provide, apparently, a healthy offset to the supposed deviations of the SWP. The theme of this educational material was "Cuba Si, Humbug No." This was the headline over what was passed off as a fundamental contribution, setting the tone and line of the press for the ensuing period. This key article took us everywhere in the world, to Siberia and Bolivia, through time and space, everywhere but Cuba. As I noted elsewhere, some of the American defenders of the Cuban Revolution thought that a typographical error was involved and that the title was really intended to read, "Humbug Si, Cuba No."

As late as a year or so ago, the SLL might possibly have recovered from the heavy penalties that were being paid for its ultimatistic abstentionist course. But they took a step that could scarcely be better conceived to block recovery of lost ground. They turned down an invitation from the Cuban embassy to attend a reception. This rejection was couched in the form of an ultimatum and put in such an insulting way as to signify that the occasion was being utilized to slam all doors and to hell with any Cubans, Trotskyist-minded or otherwise, who might be extending a hand in their direction. The excuse for this ultimatum was a report that appeared in some South American newspapers of an attack on the Cuban Trotskyists (members of the Posadas group) which Guevara made at Punta del Este in the summer of 1961. The SLL did not inquire at the Cuban embassy as to the accuracy of the newspaper account. It did not then inquire -- if the account had turned out to be accurate -- whether Guevara would still stand on these remarks. (2)

(2) On one occasion, Guevara attacked the newspaper of the Cuban Trotskyists over TV. News of this attack was quickly disseminated, since there are many forces, including Stalinist-minded, who are interested in driving a wedge between the Cuban Revolution and Trotskyism. Only months later did we learn accidentally that on TV, the very next night after this episode, Guevara apologized to the "Trotskyist comrades" for the misrepresentation of their views and said that he had been mistaken in his interpretation of what they had said. Even at Punta del Este, Guevara met with leading representatives of the Posadas group, and they gave banner lines to this interview, paying no attention to the alleged attack on them, as if this were inconsequential or had been garbled by the reporter who included it in his dispatch. Experiences of this kind taught us quite early in the Cuban Revolution how cautiously any reports in this area must be handled. Such considerations, of course, are meaningless to Healy. They don't show up in the crystal ball he reads in London.

It did not even leave open the possibility that there might be differences among the Cubans over the question of Trotskyism and that the opening of a door in Britain might be due to pressure in our direction. The National Committee of the SLL acted as if by reflex -- not to explore, but to slam the door. That's what openings are for, ain't they?

Later, in response to suggestions from the SWP, the leaders of the SLL organized a campaign for aid to Cuba. This was very tardy, but it still might have opened some possibilities if it had been accompanied by a positive turn in the

SLL press. This was not to be so. The campaign itself was conceived and executed in such unilateral, isolated fashion that not even the Cubans were consulted, despite the talk about "episodic alliances with the Castroite forces." Thus the SLL campaigned for "food" for Cuba, without co-ordinating the campaign with the international one launched in consultation with the Cubans for "medicines." The result was that the SLL got its reply to the diplomatic note that had been sent the Cuban embassy: disavowal of the isolated, unilateral SLL campaign for "food." The Cubans did not go for the "tactic" of the SLL. The SLL leaders felt, in consequence, that they had no choice but to abandon their campaign. In this they were wise to recognize the reality: they had proved incapable in Britain of either leading or inspiring so much as a modest concrete campaign to aid the Cuban Revolution. Thus a departure from the principle of defending Cuba and Castro against imperialism -- the principle of unconditional defense -- had been paid for to the damage of the SLL as well as the Cuban Revolution.

The SLL defense efforts were, consequently, reduced to their press. But here any campaigning was not only cut down in size, it was made to carefully reflect their theoretical concept of the Cuban Revolution. To read The Newsletter on Cuba is like exploring an empty vinegar barrel. Not much there and not very enticing.

How the centering of attention on the texts of Marxism, coupled with refusal to admit and to weigh facts, can separate a leadership from some of the main realities of world politics can be seen in vivid fashion by following the pages of The Newsletter. We need not go far back in the file; some fresh examples are available for study.

As American imperialism began its preparations for the naval blockade, The Newsletter handled the news in perfunctory fashion. The issue of September 8 reports the new aggression plans and correctly calls for "assistance of the Cuban people in every way possible." However, the temptation to spoil this with a jibe is irresistible: "The true friends of the Cuban Revolution are not the 'radical tourists' flying back and forth across the Caribbean, but the working class movement throughout the world." Among the "radical tourists" happen to be revolutionists from the working class movement all over the world, especially Latin America, for Havana has become a kind of revolutionary crossroads of the world. The SLL leaders, of course, can be excused for not knowing this since it is within the realm of "facts" about Cuba; moreover, they are not inclined to be "radical tourists," especially in a hot

place like Cuba.

In the September 15 issue Cuba gets a few inches on page three. It seems that the "U.S. State Department has been pressing other governments, including the British /that's alert reporting/, to stop ships from taking goods to and from Cuba, in an effort to tighten the stranglehold of their economic blockade of the island." This brief item gets the very correct but very perfunctory headline: "Labour must counter U.S. Cuban plans." Labor must, of course, but The Newsletter is not much excited about it. Even the heavy pressure from the U.S. State Department on the Macmillan government fails to kick off a sharp reaction in the phlegmatic editor. Has this counterrevolutionary pressure, then, no meaning for British politics? Is the Labour Party to draw no lessons from the despicable role played by the Macmillan government in the Cuban crisis? Are the Labour Party ranks supposed to regard complacently how the bureaucrats knuckled under?

The September 22 issue gave Cuba a real break: a signed front-page story -- but modestly at the bottom. "Any resemblance between a real war danger and the present crisis in Cuban-American relations must be seen as pure coincidence." The analyst presents his reading of the situation: "The U.S. government, and Kennedy in particular, are still smarting from the Bay of Pigs fiasco last year. Moreover this is election year in the U.S. and Kennedy knows only too well that the only way to stay in the White House is by staying out of Cuba -- and concentrating on Berlin."

The author correctly notes that "the State Department has a long-term plan whose sinister implications are becoming clearer every day. It hopes to starve Cuba into submission by intensifying the blockade and threatening sanctions against West European nations who continue to trade with and aid the Cuban nation." These excellent sentences are, however, completely spoiled by the ultraleft prescription which is proffered to the Castro government: "Any attempt to establish normal relations with the U.S. government would undermine the Cuban liberation movement irretrievably in the eyes of the Latin-American masses." The headline for this illuminating article is "Cuba: hot air and wine."

The commentator who wrote this, Michael Banda, is not to blame. He is only faithfully and very logically applying the line developed by the National Committee of the SLL, giving a practical demonstration of how thoroughly steeped he is in its method of thinking.

The September 29 issue of The Newsletter apparently did not consider the continuation of Kennedy's new aggressive moves to be newsworthy despite the mounting world tension. The editors have their own way of gauging the importance of "the facts"; and, as we have seen, this does not necessarily coincide with the views of the rest of the world or even anyone else.

The October 6 issue continues to rate the Cuban Revolution and its defense as unnewsworthy. Perhaps it was just as well.

In the October 13 issue, Cuba managed to fight its way onto page two. Someone, obviously bored with the assignment, notes that "The past few weeks have seen a stepping up of the U.S. efforts to tighten the economic stranglehold on Cuba." It appears that the State Department is going to place a naval blockade on Cuba. The British government may get involved in this, but it's not too clear from the article just how. The abstract formulas about the vital need for "assistance from the International Labour movement" are repeated. Finally we come to the section where we must bare our flesh to the needle. The plunger is pushed to the bottom. We are inoculated against the danger of placing the slightest confidence -- not in the British, but in the Cuban government.

"The aid, both military and economic, which the Cubans have received from the USSR, has enabled them to defy the attacks of U.S. big business. But increased dependence on these supplies carried with it the danger of political pressure from Khrushchev for more 'responsible' policies to be followed.

"The UN speech of Cuba's President Dorticos is a warning of the possibility of such moves. Dr. Dorticos declared his government had no intention of spreading revolution to the South American mainland, or of taking action against the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo."

In the following issue, Oct. 20, Cuba did pretty well in The Newsletter. A column on the front page noted that the pressure was being stepped up, a Cuban patrol boat having been sunk "by a large exile ship." The main danger was correctly seen to be "the strength of American imperialism" not the "small groups of counter-revolutionary exiles." Another danger was well handled by the author, Eric Neilson; that is, the readiness of the Soviet bureaucracy to compromise with the American imperialists. With almost prophetic insight the author wrote probably the two best paragraphs in many an issue of the paper:

"This compromise could mean that Khrushchev is considering cutting off the supply of arms to Cuba, arms vital to the defence of that country against U.S. imperialism.

"Any such compromise must be firmly opposed by all those who claim to support the Cuban revolution against the reactionary forces which now threaten it."

When Kennedy had completed the mobilization of troops for invasion of Cuba, had stationed the fleet in the Caribbean, put bombers in the air carrying nuclear weapons and readied rockets and submarines for the attack, he issued his ultimatum to the Soviet government. The world teetered at the edge of nuclear destruction. For once the National Committee of the SLL decided that "the facts" outweighed their texts. Reality broke into the columns of The Newsletter. The top headline in the October 27 issue was awarded to Cuba. "SAY NO TO YANKEE WAR." A map even was printed on the front page showing that there is an island named Cuba and that it lies off the tip of Florida and between the Bahamas and Jamaica, which are of special interest to British readers.

Even more, a big section of page two was used to reprint extracts from the speech by President Dorticos about which readers of The Newsletter had been warned in the October 13 issue. Now The Newsletter, veering completely around, praised what Dr. Dorticos had said: "This very clearly exposes the preparations for war which have now entered a stage of open and undisguised aggression not only against Cuba but against the Soviet Union."

In the main article Gerry Healy became so enthusiastic over the Cuban Revolution that he ventured to say these welcome words:

"The Cuban revolution is a continuation of the great colonial revolution. Its defence cannot be organized within the framework of 'co-existence with world imperialism.'

"To defend the Soviet Union is to fight for the extension of the revolution which gave rise to it in the first place.

"The Cuban revolution is just such a revolution. That is why U.S. imperialism wants to destroy it, and in doing so has now decided to attack the Soviet Union itself."

Splendidly stated! The existence of a workers' state in Cuba, extending the October Revolution into Latin America, is an unbearable challenge to U.S. imperialism. That is why Wall Street is willing to risk nuclear war to crush it.

You would never know from the pages of The Newsletter, since such "facts" are of little concern to them, but the British working people acquitted themselves well in this emergency. Hundreds of spontaneous and hastily organized demonstrations flared up throughout Britain. These became a significant factor in causing Kennedy to hesitate in reaching for the red telephone.

This impressive response of the British working people to the crisis over Cuba was a convincing demonstration that they are not nearly so insular in their outlook as the National Committee of the SLL. Our "Leninists" were so far behind events that they could not even be said to be "tail-ending." To be a tail-ender you at least have to run after someone who does something or try to catch up with actions that are occurring. The National Committee of the SLL was dreaming about a different world than this one.

To close this gruesome chapter, we place in evidence the November 3 issue of The Newsletter. The Cuban crisis still rates a prominent place but the leaders of the SLL have obviously relaxed. The opening sentence of the front-page article by Gerry Healy reads: "The defence of the Cuban revolution against U.S. imperialism is now the acid test for the world Trotskyist movement."

In a newspaper addressed to the British workers, it may be taken as eccentric to open the main article with a sentence of such narrow focus. Actually the audience which Healy specifies is too broad. It would have been sufficient to cite the National Committee of the SLL. That's the public Healy has in mind anyway, isn't it? This strange article does not go after British imperialism for the treacherous role it played in the crisis. Instead it attempts to illustrate the thesis that "Cuba is another grim warning of the predominantly reactionary nature of the Soviet bureaucracy and its politics." Much of the article is a plodding repetition of the basic Trotskyist explanation of the nature of this bureaucracy and its opposition to revolution. When he gets to his point, however, on how the Cuban situation illustrates his abstractions, the author runs into trouble. "In the case of Cuba, Khrushchev has provided Castro and his people with food supplies although in inadequate quantities." On this, Healy's view of the situation is a little awry. Some

of the shortages faced by the Cubans, such as pork and lard, could probably not be made up in the Soviet Union. In general the poor people in Cuba are eating better than in Batista's time, the children certainly, and hunger is not the main problem as of now. Where the Soviet role has been decisive is in supplying oil, tools, vehicles, machinery and military goods. The Cuban cause is very popular throughout the Soviet bloc and it is a considerable error to think that quite substantial aid has not been given.

However, Healy rests his case not on this but something rather unexpected:

"The establishment of rocket bases in Cuba could not possibly defend the Cuban revolution. This can only be done in the immediate future by the struggle to win over the solidarity of the American working class and to extend the revolution in Latin America.

"Of course the Cuban government had every right to accept these rocket bases and sign such agreements as it wished with the Soviet Union.

"But it was most inadvisable that it should have exercised this right by permitting Khrushchev to place under the control of Russian technicians rocket bases which were plain for all to see on the small island. (*)

"Having a right and exercising it are two different things. One does not necessarily follow from the other."

Like the hero in the novel by Victor Hugo, Healy deserves to be decorated for that sentence about winning the solidarity of the American working class and extending the revolution into Latin America. And then summarily shot for his advice to the Cubans: "Having a right and exercising it are two different things. One does not necessarily follow from the other." If he objects to such a harsh penalty, the military court can well reply: "Having a right to advise the Cubans and exercising it are two different things. One does not necessarily follow from the other." We can hear Healy's immortal reply as he refuses a blindfold: "What kind of right is it if you can't exercise it?"

(*) How microscopic does Healy think the island is? The U.S. resorted to U-2 spy planes and the violation of Cuban air space to discover them.

The irony of his advice is that only a few weeks before, the ultra-left spurs were being dug into Dorticos for declaring that his government had no intention of exporting revolution or of taking action against the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo. A couple of weeks before that The Newsletter shook its finger warningly against the Cubans considering "any attempt to establish normal relations with the U.S. government." And only two issues before Healy's article, in the number that went to press on the eve of Kennedy's ultimatum, The Newsletter warned that Khrushchev might cut off Cuba's supply of arms, "arms vital to the defense of that country against U.S. imperialism." The Newsletter alerted its readers to the evident dangers in that quarter: "Any such compromise must be firmly opposed by all those, ..., " etc., etc. Apparently Gerry Healy didn't get around to reading the column on Cuba that week. Or perhaps by "arms vital to the defense of that country against U.S. imperialism," with its stockpiles of nuclear "deterrents," The Newsletter had something only quantitative in mind like 40,000 tons of bows and arrows and flint tomahawks. Thus the Kremlin betrayed by sending defensive equipment of too superior a quality.

Perhaps Healy is right, but the fact that the White House chose the rocket bases as the excuse for pushing to the brink of nuclear war was partly accidental. Before that they obviously weighed seizing on Soviet aid in building a fishing port as a cause for going to war. As I write this, the stationing in Cuba of planes capable of carrying bombs is the pretext for maintaining the blockade. If this today, then tomorrow in a new crisis something else. In every case it will be an instance in which the Cuban government exercises its sovereign rights. The real reason, of course, is that Cuba is a workers state, a fact which Healy cannot bring himself to admit. U.S. imperialism, more realistically, has recognized its existence and consciously and calculatingly made it a major policy to end this standing affront, challenge and threat to the capitalist system. If a plausible pretext is lacking one will be manufactured. The facts are absolutely conclusive on that.

Healy's position is a concession to the pacifist view: don't provoke the warmongers! As if they are not always provoked by their intended victims, if for no other reason than by their weakness.

The major lesson to be drawn from this is that in an acid test what looked like 24-carat ultraleftism can reveal some surprising opportunist streaks.

Position of the French Section of the IC

* The leading comrades of the French Section of the International Committee share with the National Committee of the SLL the view that Cuba is not a workers state. They differ on two fundamental points, however. Unlike the British comrades, they believe that dual power exists in Cuba; and they hold that the Castro regime constitutes a "Workers and Peasants Government." Moreover, in contrast to the SLL's top leaders, they recognize the logic which has compelled the majority of the world Trotskyist movement to consider Cuba to be a workers state. Their criticism is not against the justifiability of extending to Cuba the same basic approach that was used in the case of China, Yugoslavia, and the East European countries. What they maintain is that since Cuba is not a workers state -- according to their estimate -- something must have been wrong in the preceding position. We must, therefore, dump all the work done up to now in estimating the character of the state in China, Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe and start over again. What they propose as a substitute, they have only intimated; perhaps they will soon offer us something more substantial.

In a certain sense they have thus proceeded in a more sophisticated and methodical way than the National Committee of the SLL. They are prepared to acknowledge most of the facts which the British comrades consider to be an unbearable or indecent sight. They are willing to admit the consistency of the workers state position. Thus they rectify the most repelling crudities of the SLL position. With the same sharp eye for avoiding what is grossly absurd, they take what they consider to be valid in the views of their allies -- that Cuba is not a workers state -- and insist that it be carried to its obviously necessary conclusion; namely, revision of the hard-won theory of the world Trotskyist movement back to 1948 and earlier. They state this quite frankly:

"And we rejoice that the discussion on Cuba inevitably entails returning to this former discussion and the elaboration of a new analysis of the nature of the buffer states, of Yugoslavia and China, questions on which we are 'revisionists' insofar as -- the discussion on Cuba demonstrates it -- these comrades today, in basing themselves on the characterizations adopted in 1948, at times place in question the very principles that served as the foundation structure of our international movement."

We, for our part, acknowledge that this methodology is inherently superior to that of the National Committee of the SLL, since it recognizes in principle the preeminence of reality; and we will add that the British comrades might profitably study the coherence and lucidity with which their French allies argue their case in "Draft Report on the Cuban Revolution." It is regrettable that the authors of the Trotskyism Betrayed document chose to brush this contribution rudely aside, not even referring to it, still less discussing its views in their opus. However, the French comrades may, with good reason, have felt grateful for this lack of consideration.

As I see it, the position developed in the "Draft Report" rests on four main errors: (1) Substitution of "Workers and Peasants Government" for "Workers State"; (2) refusal to recognize a qualitative change in the character of the state in Cuba; (3) misunderstanding of the main criteria used in characterizing the buffer states; (4) abuse of an analogy with the Spanish Revolution of 1936-39. I will consider these in their order.

The authors of the "Draft Report" agree that the break up of the coalition government in Cuba in July 1959 marked a change of decisive character in the regime; it was qualitative. This position, in my opinion, is unassailable. The turn proved to be an essential link in the chain of Cuban events. The new regime that replaced the coalition undertook a series of measures, directed against the interests of the landlords, native capitalists and imperialists that clearly advanced the class interests of the Cuban campesinos and workers. These measures took effect in all fields, economic, social and political. Their outstanding characteristic was disarmament of the bourgeoisie and armament of the masses. Deep inroads were thus made in the old state structure. The correct label for such a government is "Workers and Peasants," a petty-bourgeois formation foreseen long ago by Marxists. Our Transitional Program noted the possibility of such governments appearing in our epoch, as well as the possibility of their going "much farther" than they originally intended. When the Cuban "Workers and Peasants Government," in reply to the aggression of U.S. imperialism, expropriated landlord and capitalist properties on a major scale, in September-October 1960, then instituted a planned economy and completed the destruction of the old state apparatus, it obviously went beyond anything foreseen in any of the theoretical or programmatic writings of Marxism in the period before World War II, including the writings of Trotsky. Whatever label may be put on the resulting state,

we are up against a hard fact which Marxism must account for on pain of confessing incapacity to deal with reality. If our opponents will concede for the moment that what we have before us is a workers state of some kind or other then what is new in life and what must therefore be reflected in theory is that a "Workers and Peasants Government"; that is, a petty-bourgeois government, can go so far as to establish a workers state. (4)

(4) The conditions under which this has occurred, together with the limitations of the resulting workers states, that is, their "deformation," have been discussed concretely in the cases of the buffer countries, Yugoslavia and China. The conditions which made possible a similar development in Cuba have been discussed but it is still too early to draw final conclusions on the limitations. As for what the particular pattern of these overturns of capitalism signifies for the general necessity in our epoch of constructing a revolutionary-socialist international, this question was raised at the time of the discussion over the buffer countries -- most sharply, if I remember correctly, by leading comrades in the SWP. The general conclusions drawn at that time remain completely valid. First of all, it is far easier for the proletariat to come to power in a backward country than in an imperialist center. This was well understood by the Bolsheviks, but it is still truer today. The relative decline of world capitalism in relation to the rise of the Soviet Union, plus the enormous revolutionary ferment on a global scale has made the grip of capitalism much weaker in the backward areas than it was even a few decades ago. Experience has demonstrated that forces which are socialist-minded but not Bolshevik can come to power and undertake a series of measures that in certain circumstances go so far as to transcend private capitalism, providing the base for a workers state. Such a state, however, testifies to its specific origin by deviating from the Leninist norms. These new possibilities, however, have not eliminated the need for revolutionary-socialist parties. What they really demonstrate is the richness of revolutionary openings and therefore the bright perspective facing revolutionary socialism in these areas. Could anything be more instructive than the turn of the Castro leadership towards Marxism-Leninism in the very course of revolution and its acknowledgement of the need for a revolutionary-socialist party?

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Likewise valid is the conclusion drawn in the 1948 discussion of the absolute necessity for construction of revolutionary-socialist parties in the advanced capitalist countries. In fact experience would seem to indicate that the difficulty of coming to power in the imperialist centers has increased if anything since the time of the Bolsheviks. This is due not solely to the perfidious role of the Stalinist, social-democratic and trade-union bureaucracies, but also to the lessons learned by the bourgeoisie in the defeats they have suffered. Consequently, to win in the imperialist centers, construction of a revolutionary-socialist party has become even more imperative. None of this, of course, is of much concern to the ultraleft sectarians whose politics consists of little more than parrot-like repetition of a stock of revolutionary phrases. To repeat these phrases in Cuba with a semblance of plausibility, they are forced to deny reality. In a country like Britain they make up for this by repeating them thrice.

This is the precise point which the authors of "Draft Report" balk at. And recognizing very clearly that this conclusion cannot be avoided in view of the fact that it involves the same principle operative in China, Yugoslavia and even Eastern Europe, they very logically extend their negative position backward to include those cases.

By doing so, however, they at once involve themselves in a self-contradictory stand. They insist, properly so, on underlining the importance of the rupture of the coalition between Castro and the bourgeois figures installed in the government after the flight of Batista. This qualitative political change marked the appearance of a new kind of government. On the other hand they underline the importance of not recognizing any qualitative change in the economy or the state resting on that economy at any point up to now in Cuba.

It requires considerable dexterity to justify this self-contradictory stand. To the natural question that at once arises, "What kind of state exists, then, in Cuba?" they offer an ingenious answer. If it is not a workers state, then it must be a capitalist state. Since this is scarcely demonstrable, the authors of "Draft Report" maintain that what we have before us is a "broken-down, decomposed, phantom bourgeois state, controlled by the group of men around Castro" ("un etat bouregeois, delabre, decompose, fantomatique, controle par le groupe d'hommes qui entourent Castro").

What import this novelty has for Marxist theory is not discussed in "Draft Report." Perhaps the authors will return later to the profound meaning which phantom bourgeois states hold for our epoch. Meanwhile we are inclined to jog along with what the Castro government has succeeded in accomplishing, having at its control such a phantom in Cuba.

* There might be dialecticians who would contend that if you break down and decompose something until nothing but the ghost remains, it is no longer the same, having really undergone a qualitative change. The authors of the "Draft Report," to forestall such a criticism, argue that alongside Castro can be found the "elements of workers power," still appealing to the same leadership but "in reality always increasing their pressure toward more radical measures." As in Spain in 1936-37, the "Draft Report" contends, dual power exists in Cuba.

* Even if this were so, we would still be left with the phantom bourgeois state, this formless plasma of the spirit world. If, as materialists, we eliminate this wraith from consideration we are left with only a "Workers and Peasants Government" to which the "Draft Report" thus assigns the functions of a state. And this despite their recognition that it is a "serious error in method to confound the nature of the state and the nature of the government," of Nica

→ We come now to the second error, which, of course, flows from the first one. If Cuba is now a workers state, when did the qualitative change occur? In the SWP, the majority view is that the date was fixed by the massive nationalizations. This was the point of qualitative change. But the authors of the "Draft Report," holding that no qualitative change has occurred, are compelled to dispose of all possible dates. Those involving power are rejected on various grounds without specifying the real one which is that a revolutionary-socialist could not in advance grant political confidence to the Castro leadership in view of the limitations of its declared program. Fundamental economic criteria are likewise rejected, two grounds being advanced for this: (1) they are not sufficient in themselves; (2) even if they are sufficient in themselves this is true only if they are operative over a long period of time. These arguments really beg the question. Implied in them is the premise that the most drastic overturn of an economy has no qualitative meaning in itself, only a quantitative one.

The admission that a long period of time would ultimately bring qualitative considerations to bear alters nothing in the hidden premise, since it is not specified what economic measures, accumulating bit by bit would lead to the qualitative change nor what would constitute, on the economic level, the point of decisive change. Thus the protagonists of this view are left without a program specifying what they demand in Cuba in the economic sphere that would mark the clear emergence of a workers state. All their demands are of a political character involving the nature of the power, the lack of institutions of proletarian democracy such as workers councils, etc. Consequently they end up like the National Committee of the SLL and the minority in the SWP with a mere political definition of the workers state. To justify this in Marxist theory they are forced to fall back to the generalized norms stated by Lenin before further concretization was made possible by study of the reality in a degenerated workers state. *

This completely unhistorical approach calls for its payment in the history of our movement. It forces our French comrades to demand complete revision of our position on the series of deformed workers states. They argue that the destruction of the capitalist economy, the nationalization of the key sectors of industry and the introduction of planned economy were not sufficient to prove that the bourgeois state had been smashed and that it had been displaced by a workers state. They contend that two more essential criteria must be added.

"We think," they say, "that it is precisely here that one of the weaknesses of our analysis of 1948 becomes evident, and we will return to this later. However, undeniably, in the case of the European buffer countries, the criterion of 'nationalization' is inseparable from the criterion 'cultural assimilation' with a 'degenerated workers state': it is because the bonapartist state of the buffer countries is the instrument of the bureaucracy of a degenerated workers state that the Trotskyists were able to consider it as a deformed workers state, and the criterion 'nationalization and planning' is not, by itself, sufficient."

Precisely what is meant by "cultural assimilation" is not indicated. Do they mean "structural" assimilation? But that is just a condensed way of saying expropriation of the capitalists, nationalization and planning. Perhaps by "cultural" assimilation they mean liquidation of independent political trends, a process brought to its culmination in the purge trials of 1949 and again in the suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956? Or is it something as vague as a phantom bourgeois state?

On the other point, the authors of the "Draft Report" are, quite logically from their point of view, adding a political criterion to those we used in 1948; and, just as logically, making it the decisive criterion; "it is because the bonapartist state of the buffer countries is the instrument of the bureaucracy . . . ," they say. Not so. We rejected the criterion of power in 1948 since it would have signified that we considered the buffer countries to be workers states because of Stalinism and not in spite of it. Otherwise we would have ended in a position inconsistent with our position on the Soviet Union itself. We specified that labeling the buffer countries as workers states did not thereby imply political confidence in the bureaucracy. We opposed its bureaucratic measures. We conceded absolutely nothing to Stalinism.

Had the criteria now advocated by the authors of the "Draft Report" been adopted, what slippery footing we would have found! For example, so long as the Tito leadership remained a docile instrument, we would have had to call Yugoslavia a workers state. When it fought for political independence and broke diplomatic relations, thus no longer serving as the "instrument" of the Soviet bureaucracy, we would have had to switch and say: "Sorry, but a bourgeois phantom state is again haunting Yugoslavia." And when Yugoslavia was able to resume relations, we would have had to report: "Thank God, that ghost has been laid again."

As for China -- that would have been a spiritualist's paradise. When is a phantom not a phantom? Can you have half phantoms and quarter phantoms and so on ad infinitum?

The big advantage in such juggling of criteria, of course, is that you can avoid calling Cuba a workers state. I would agree that in some instances, at least, the authors of the "Draft Report" hit the nail on the head with their observation: "The disagreements go beyond words. It is in fact in setting up a conception of the Cuban Revolution as a whole that each one chooses a definition which, at bottom, epitomizes his politics." Of course, to maintain their novel position, the French comrades have to prove that no Soviet "cultural assimilation" has occurred in Cuba and that the Castro regime is not an "instrument of the bureaucracy of a degenerated workers state." Unfortunately, here our authors, seeking to establish a close analogy with the Spanish Revolution, depart from their admirable consistency and try to prove that the Castro government has gone a long way in succumbing to Stalinism; that is, in taking the road to a workers state, according to the criteria they now advance.

The fourth major error in the "Draft Report" is a concession to the Healy-Slaughter school of thought which can scarcely win our praise. For some obscure reason the French comrades insist on looking at Cuba primarily through the dark glasses of the defeated Spanish Revolution. An analogy has its uses but it inevitably breaks down if carried too far. Since the limitations of the analogy are not stated by the authors we are forced to determine them ourselves.

First of all, how can the countries themselves and the major situations confronting them be compared with much meaning? A key question in Spain was the colonies. The failure of the republican government to grant freedom to the Moroccans was more decisive in strengthening Franco than the military aid he received from fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Cuba, on the other hand, belongs to the colonial world and has just won freedom from an imperialist power. The situation is not one of a civil war involving a fascist threat but of an attempt by imperialism to crush a workers state and restore colonial rule.

The analogy between the counterrevolutionary forces is thus not very close. In Spain, Franco was fighting for power. In Cuba, the native Franco, Batista, has been overthrown and the native counterrevolutionaries, as the Cubans have scornfully said many times, could be handled by the children if it were not for the U.S.

Cuba has a revolutionary-minded leadership which the Spanish workers and peasants lacked. This leadership came to power in revolutionary struggle, proving itself in action. It demonstrated that it had drawn correct lessons from the experiences in Guatemala and Bolivia and that it was capable of learning from the experience of the Chinese Revolution. Finally, this leadership has proved its awareness of the duality of the Soviet bureaucracy as a source of material aid and as a source of political danger. When such a leadership proclaims that it has become "Marxist-Leninist," its words must be taken with the utmost seriousness even though it may not yet measure up to our norms.

To this we must add that the world setting today is completely different from what it was in 1936-39. In place of the entrenchment of European fascism, the Soviet Union has consolidated a position as one of the two primary world powers. The Soviet economic structure has been extended deep into Europe. China has become a workers state. The colonial revolution has brought hundreds of millions to their feet. De-Stalinization has altered the capacity of the bureaucracy to impose its will in flagrant

fashion as in the thirties. The analogy breaks down here especially in leaving out of account such experiences as the rebellion of the Yugoslav CP, the uprising in East Germany, the attempted political revolution in Hungary and the current differences between the Russian and Chinese CP's. Where does the parallel to the break up of Stalinism exist in the Spanish situation? The revolutionary stream today is not running in the direction of Stalinism. In all of Latin America to one degree or another the Communist parties are in deep crisis over the Cuban Revolution -- above all in Cuba. All these differences in conditions point unquestionably to the validity of the conclusion that the outcome of the revolution in Cuba is far more promising politically than it was in Spain.

An analogy cannot substitute for analysis of reality itself. It is a gross error in methodology to conclude that because the Spanish Republic was not a workers state, therefore Cuba is not. To determine the general characteristics of the Cuban or any other revolution we must begin by considering it individually; that is, ascertain the facts; for, as we learn from Hegel, the individual is a combination and manifestation of the general. On doing this, we see at once that the analogy between the Spanish and Cuban revolutions is destroyed by the different outcomes of the two, which in turn confirms that different means were operative in the two revolutions. The Spanish Revolution was defeated for internal reasons, primarily the counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism. The Cuban Revolution was victorious, sealing its victory in the establishment of a workers state. A revolutionist must be able to tell the difference between victory and defeat! The immediate future of this workers state does not hinge on the outcome of a civil war in the face of native fascism but on successful resistance to the diplomatic, economic and military aggression of a foreign imperialist power. Is that not so? For additional light on how best to meet this threat facing Cuba, the Spanish Revolution offers little. We must turn to other analogies such as the comparison with the Russian workers state when it was battling imperialist intervention.

As for the subsidiary points in "Draft Report," these can be safely left aside. There is much quibbling about "nationalizations" in general, for instance, which is beside the point in considering the specific nationalizations in Cuba. Undue credit is given Miro Cardona for actions taken while he was in government and their real import is missed. Other errors of this kind could be cited. A major one, the alleged take-over of Castro's forces by the Cuban Communist Party has been sufficiently exploded by events. The meaning of the attacks on the Cuban

Trotskyists is exaggerated and placed at the wrong door besides not being properly balanced against the ideological influence which Trotskyism exercises in a significant sector among the Cuban revolutionary vanguard.

The accusation that the appreciation of Cuba as a workers state has led the SWP to adopt "centrist, opportunist and liquidationist positions" is a premature announcement of our death. It also displays a rather disturbing lack of appreciation of the political logic flowing from the conclusion that a workers state has been established under a non-Stalinist leadership. This has opened up fresh and most encouraging perspectives for party building in both Latin America and the United States, although it has also brought some new and difficult tactical problems. The first experiences in this respect have already been favorably recorded both by the SWP and the Latin-American Trotskyists. If our French comrades are doubtful about the favorable reports on what has been gained in the main bastion of world imperialism, perhaps they will listen with more open minds to what our comrades in Latin America have to say about their experiences. These are much more pertinent to the discussion on the Cuban Revolution than the highly questionable analogy with Spain. The Latin-American Trotskyist view may also provide a good antidote for the ill-considered policy that would have us undo everything since 1940.

Cuba and Reunification

I have tried to demonstrate that the National Committee of the SLL proceeds in the Cuban Revolution from assumptions hardened into dogmas; that is, they brush aside or disregard facts that cannot be fitted into their preconceived framework and throw out of focus those that do seem to exemplify their preconceptions. Elevated into a principle, this subjective approach turns everything upside down -- the Notion is made supreme over the mundane world of material events. We are not surprised that the same method is applied to the problem of reunifying the world Trotskyist movement. Nor are we surprised that the SLL leaders even take pride in their methodological consistency; "The SWP criticism of the SLL starts from the Cuban revolution," they observe. "In doing so, it reveals its whole mistaken method. We must begin from the need to establish Leninist parties in every country, and in the first place to defeat revisionism."

Let us pause a moment right there. We are given a blueprint in which the subjective side is listed first; moreover,

not program in general but the "defeat" of a challenge to the program; still further, a specific variety of challenge -- "revisionism," by which they mean revisionism in the opportunist direction, not the utraleft. (The SLL leaders seem to work from a revised copy of the general blueprint which conveniently leaves out the need to defeat ultraleftism.) Next in order comes general application of the general blueprint for establishment of "Leninist parties" in "every country." (Granting them the benefit of the doubt, we assume that they mean concretely by this the construction of the world party of the socialist revolution, the Fourth International). Only after descending this ladder do we come to the need to establish the concrete development of the revolution, which in reality must constitute the foundation for everything else in Cuba.

This methodology is rigorously applied even in the structure of the SLL manifesto, "Trotskyism Betrayed." The Cuban Revolution which constitutes the acid objective test for every tendency that proclaims itself to be revolutionary is subordinated and relegated to the mere level of one example among many, an example of minor importance in view of Cuba's relative economic weight in the world. On the other hand, the struggle against revisionism, as interpreted by the leaders of the SLL, is given first place in the document both qualitatively and quantitatively. To justify putting the real problems that face the world Trotskyist movement upside down in this way, it is necessary to magnify the danger of "revisionism" in inverse ratio to the reduction of the importance of the Cuban Revolution. In turn this necessitates construction of a kind of demonology inside the world Trotskyist movement symmetrical to the Holy Scripture they make of Leninism. Disregarding or misinterpreting facts -- in perfect parallel to their approach to Cuba -- the SLL leaders picture the relationship between the IS and the IC as if absolutely nothing had changed since 1953. Well, not absolutely. The SLL leaders acknowledge that some change has occurred. As they see it, the differences have -- deepened!

To prove this they would have to demonstrate that the IS, instead of satisfactorily clearing up the political differences that appeared to us to lie behind the organizational dispute of 1953-54, had developed them into a system or at least gone far down that road. It is promised that this will be done in the course of the projected discussion, but as yet little has been forthcoming beyond repetition of the points of difference of almost a decade ago.

A weakness of such glaring proportions in the SLL position requires compensation. Thus our dead-end factionalists picture the IS today as a monolithic group committed to revisionism but also committed to covering up its revisionism with diabolical cleverness. However, since theory and practice are intimately related, as we know from Lenin and others, it is possible to expose these revisionists. Hence every sentence written by anyone adhering to the IS is scrutinized under the microscope for evidence of the hidden revisionist concepts which must lie behind them. Not even leaflets put out by this or that group of comrades in this or that local situation escape the sluths. A phrase torn from a leaflet distributed at the Renault plant in Paris in defense of Cuba against U.S. imperialism serves for elevation to front-page attention in The Newsletter in London, so hard-pressed are the leaders of the SLL to find evidence of the revisionism of the IS.

In this fantasia of ultraleft sectarianism, the course of the SWP takes on sinister meaning. The plain truth is that the SWP noted the facts concerning the declared positions of the IS on the important issues of the day. It noted its stand on the Hungarian uprising, on political revolution in the USSR, on de-Stalinization. It noted especially that the IS had assessed the main stages of the Cuban Revolution in the same way as the SWP, the Canadians and the Latin-American Trotskyists; that is, by utilizing the basic conclusions made in the particular cases of the buffer countries, Yugoslavia and China. Thus the real situation in the world Trotskyist movement was that the political differences had been narrowing for some time and new grounds for common action had appeared. Most important of all, the IS in its majority and the IC in its majority had passed the acid test of the Cuban Revolution. This opened a highly encouraging possibility for healing old wounds and reuniting the world Trotskyist movement on the most solid basis in its history. Whatever differences remained could surely be contained in a common organization under normal rules of democratic centralism. It was impossible to escape the conclusion that objectively the correct course was to press for reunification. The dispute over who was right in 1953-54 should not be permitted to stand in the way of joining forces in common assault on the problems of today. To proceed in a less responsible way would constitute a default in leadership. These simple, elementary considerations, which are ABC to Leninists, are given a different explanation by the leaders of the SLL.

According to their interpretation, the SWP, drifting into the wake of Pabloism, has decided to accept its revisionist views; that is, in the Cuban Revolution, for instance, to acknowledge the facts and assess them in the light of the Trotskyist analysis of the buffer countries, Yugoslavia and China. But this course, with its logical consequences, constitutes "betrayal" in the eyes of the SLL leaders. How is such a miserable end to be explained in the case of the SWP which in its entire long history has never betrayed but always upheld the program of world Trotskyism? The explanation can only be that the SWP has "degenerated"; otherwise the SLL leaders are proved to be in error and how can that be, since they begin with the need to defeat revisionism? Thus the SWP is crossed off; or virtually crossed off. That is why members of the SWP are now privileged to read in the factional documents of the SLL, perhaps with some astonishment, that their party is racked by a deep crisis, having made opportunist concessions to the imperialist environment, above all in its approach to the Cuban Revolution. Not by accident, consequently, the SWP wants to unite with "Pabloism"; and that, as the SLL leaders see it, is the real explanation for the present efforts of reunification.

The logical concomitant to the SLL view that "revisionism" -- as represented chiefly by the IS -- constitutes the main danger facing the world Trotskyist movement, is that unification of the Fourth International is excluded. It is excluded until such time as the SLL view sweeps the ranks of the world Trotskyist movement and wins a majority. This confronts the SLL with a rather sticky contradiction. The elevation of anti-Pabloism into the First Commandment blocks unification. On the other hand, the desirability of winning a majority of Trotskyists to its views forces the SLL to consider how to gain a favorable hearing. Thus, while it bridles at the prospect of unification, it wants discussion. To get such a discussion, the SLL leaders are forced to recognize that the overwhelming sentiment in the world Trotskyist movement is in favor of unification. They must go even further and appear to bend with this sentiment. Hence the initiative they took in the IC to go to the IS and propose formation of a Parity Committee. In doing this the SLL leaders had to admit the eventual possibility of unification; more concretely they had to recognize the need and advisability of engaging in common actions with the IS whatever may be the views on unification, early, delayed or never at all.

In the process of reunifying the world Trotskyist movement, the proposal for a Parity Committee was objectively called for. The SWP did not look into what subjective motives the SLL leaders

might have had in making this proposal but weighed it on its objective merits, attempting in this case as in all others, to utilize the Marxist method of beginning with the reality of the situation. The IS responded in similar fashion to the initiative of the SLL leaders. Thus the Parity Committee was born.

No sooner did this committee meet, however, than the top leaders of the SLL began raising among IC adherents the ugly question of a new split. Naturally they point an accusing finger at the SWP and the IS. It is typical of dead-end factionalists to begin preparations for a split by raising the issue in the form of an accusation. In this case it also reflects the consistency with which the SLL leaders apply their methodology of inverted thinking.

The accusation has two variants: First, that "the Pabloites consider their participation in the Parity Committee as a maneuver to obtain the support of the SWP." That is, they "are using the Parity Committee as a means to get closer to the SWP in order to drag it more rapidly into their orbit." The "Comment" containing this charge was "approved unanimously" by the National Committee of the SLL after the very first meeting of the Parity Committee. Why then did the SLL leaders open the way to such a deadly maneuver? Why did they propose a Parity Committee if it would help the Pabloites in their Machiavellian scheme "to get closer to the SWP"? Or did the well-meaning but bumbling leaders of the SLL fail to see such a possibility when they proposed the Parity Committee? They can scarcely argue that they failed to receive friendly notification. The SWP hailed the initiative as an important step toward reunification. The IS accepted it with the statement that it would participate in accordance with its declared aim of seeking early reunification.

Second, that the SWP has in mind maneuvering to present the discussion to be conducted under Parity Committee auspices "as one which promises early unification, but that this is prevented by the attitude of the SLL and its co-thinkers." Moreover that the SWP leadership is prevented from pressing for early reunification by its members and its past tradition; therefore it regards the Parity Committee proposals as a means of making an official approach to the Pabloites without appearing to break from the IC. However, according to this inside dope, the SWP has been preparing the political ground for such a break. Once again, then, why did the top leaders of the SLL obligingly facilitate such a dastardly move by proposing formation of the Parity Committee?

The fact is that most Trotskyists throughout the world, including the SWP and the IS, hailed the formation of the Parity Committee in good faith as a big step in the direction of reunification. Why the initiators of the Parity Committee should suddenly present it at its very launching as the vehicle of splitting maneuvers cooked up by the SWP and the IS is difficult to conceive, unless we are again being presented with an example of inverted thinking.

What is most ridiculous and unbecoming in this pose is that the SLL top leadership has been developing political positions which in the key case of the Cuban Revolution are completely at variance with the rest of the world Trotskyist movement, including their closest allies in France. It is quite doubtful that they would seriously contend, in the light of the evidence, that their position on Cuba represents that of the majority of the IC. They are thus preparing the political ground for anything but an attempt to bring harmony among the adherents of the IC. On the contrary they have been placing the SWP, and anyone in the IC who thinks that the stand of the SWP on Cuba and unification has merit, under increasingly heavy fire. They have proclaimed that the SLL represents a separate tendency, one even that has declared war on all opponents to its positions. "The Socialist Labour League," they say, "is not prepared to go any part of the way with this revisionism, and will fight it to the end." And, "It is in the construction of the revolutionary party in the USA itself that the necessity of defeating the SWP leadership's revisionism is most urgent." In short, the political split has already been carried out by the SLL. As for relations between the SLL and the IS, it is superfluous to speak of a break, since the SLL leaders openly proclaim their hostility in the face of comradely overtures from the IS and are scarcely diplomatic about indicating that they visualize no reunification so far as they are concerned unless it takes place on the basis of their ultraleft sectarian views. But since this is unrealistic what course remains open but to go it alone and to begin as early as possible to prepare the grounds for it?

It is in the light of such considerations that we must evaluate their language which, while it scarcely displays much originality, carries not a small ballast of epithets, especially in relation to the SWP. We are offered the curious paradox of furious intensification of ultraleft factional war against all who hold the position that Cuba is a workers state, the SWP, in the first place; while, bending to the pressure for unity, Healy, with commendable civility, sits

down with the representatives of the IS in the Parity Committee. By this public show, you see, he makes a kind of record in favor of reunification.

Is someone's duplicity showing? I do not think so. Deviousness is hardly the explanation. Comrade Healy happens to be a superb fighter who has been in many a bout. At the sound of the bell he has learned to start swinging at once with savage jabs and hooks, cunning counter punches and deceptive weaving. Sometimes this occurs when his opponent is not in that corner of the ring; sometimes, even, when Healy himself is not in the ring. One's admiration for such delicately poised reflexes is tinged with a certain pity. Please, won't the National Committee of the SLL consider adopting a very simple course to stymie the enemy's treacherous maneuvers which they unwittingly facilitated? To save the SWP from being dragged away from the SLL into a fate worse than death, let Healy patiently stand by the American comrades. You, too, all of you, stay with them in their mistaken enterprise of trying to unify the world Trotskyist movement. As loyal friends and comrades, who have shared many vicissitudes over the years, go through the experience with them, painful as it may be. Block the splitters by the easy, sound tactic of accepting their offer to unify!

Even from the viewpoint of the narrow factional interests of the SLL this would seem much the wiser course. Certainly you have a much better chance of winning a majority of Trotskyists to your views by persuasion inside a united movement than by attack from the outside. You are doubtful about respect for your democratic rights in a united movement? But this betrays a feeling of extreme weakness in relation to the IS. Does this reflect the reality in regard to numbers or is it lack of political confidence? Or perhaps the internal regime of the SLL cannot be offered as a model example of what you mean by the "democratic" part of democratic centralism? In any case, as the unification process continues, the problem of democratic guarantees for minority tendencies will certainly come up under the proper point in the agenda. From a realistic assessment of all that has been learned by both sides since the experience of a decade or so ago, there can be little question that this demand will be satisfactorily met within the general principle of adherence to democratic centralism. The conditions of 1951 or 1953 no longer exist.

On the other hand the leaders of the SLL may decide that they can best preserve the texts of Lenin in all their purity -- the texts in which Lenin fought revisionism -- by drawing

all the necessary organizational conclusions from their present isolationist political course. There are precedents for this in the British Marxist movement, including British Trotskyism. However, not one of these ultraleft experiments make very happy reading today -- that is, if you judge them by the facts. A repetition at this time of day could scarcely prove any happier.

In the school of Leon Trotsky and James P. Cannon -- which is also the school of Lenin -- I was taught that important as the books are and for all the time that must be put into mastering them, what is decisive is the revolution itself. A revolutionist who misses the test of revolution is a failure no matter how well he can quote the texts. That is why the Cuban Revolution -- not the ultraleft preoccupations of the National Committee of the SLL -- provides the yardstick by which to measure their pretensions to Leninist leadership.

We suggest that the National Committee of the SLL take another look at the Cuban Revolution. "'In the beginning was the Word' ... The Word? ... 'In the Beginning was the Act.'"

November 20, 1962