

# INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

No. 6

July 1970

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION  
ON REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY IN LATIN AMERICA

by Joseph Hansen

(Published as a fraternal  
courtesy to the United Sec-  
retariat of the Fourth  
International)

20 cents

**SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY**

Page 2 :

was blank in the  
original bulletin

- Marty

Feb 2014

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION  
ON REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY IN LATIN AMERICA

by Joseph Hansen

Events of sufficient importance have occurred since the last world congress of the Fourth International to provide some significant tests of the position on Latin America adopted by the majority of the delegates at that gathering.

On the conclusions concerning the bleak perspective facing capitalism in Latin America and the general economic, social, and political instability of the continent, conclusions upon which all the delegates were in agreement, the resolution has stood up well. Little needs to be added to what was said in April 1969.

On the central axis of work for the subsequent period, over which a division of opinion occurred, with a substantial minority opposed to adopting a strategic orientation of preparing for and engaging in rural guerrilla warfare for a prolonged period, things stand differently.

It is worth recalling the enthusiasm of some of the delegates at the congress over this orientation.

"Best Chance of a Breakthrough"

In a contribution to the pre-congress discussion, "An Insufficient Document," Comrade Livio Maitan declared: "What is expected from us from now on is that we demonstrate in practice the historical value of our movement and we will be judged essentially on this basis. This can appear, at bottom, to be an elementary truth, but it is a question of inspiring our whole activity with this recognition. It is a question more precisely of determining in what countries we have the best chance of a breakthrough and subordinating everything to the elementary necessity for a success in these countries, and even, if necessary, in a single country. The rest will come later." (International Information Bulletin, January 1969, Part 2, page 17.)

Comrade Maitan listed several possibilities -- "(youth movement in France, antiwar movement and youth movement in the United States, South Africa with a certain time) and we must unquestionably make an effort in the direction of India...."

But of the prospective areas, Comrade Maitan was of the opinion that "we must place everything above all on a sector of Latin America and you know very well which one. We must exploit the preparatory period of the congress to convince the entire movement to operate in practice, every day, with this perspective. Permit me to express myself a little paradoxically: it is necessary to understand and to explain that at the present stage the

International will be built around Bolivia."

Comrade Maitan did such a thorough job of convincing the majority of the delegates that the state of mind of some of them verged on euphoria. Thus one delegate was of the opinion that the immediate perspectives were so brilliant that for the first time a congress of the Fourth International was actually discussing the possibility of taking power somewhere in the world!

The Defeat in Bolivia

On July 14, 1969, only a few months after the world congress, a turncoat who had betrayed Che Guevara's guerrilla front in Bolivia was shot in his home in Santa Cruz. The Ejército de Liberación Nacional headed by "Inti" Peredo issued a statement that he had been executed as "an act of justice." The government struck back with extreme ferocity, staging a nationwide witch-hunt in which some were killed, many tortured, and hundreds imprisoned. On September 9 "Inti" Peredo was killed. The guerrillas had suffered a crushing defeat. Intercontinental Press carried extensive accounts, including reports on the involvement of our comrades and their victimization. It is not necessary to repeat in this article what was published in Intercontinental Press.

At the next congress, the Bolivian comrades will no doubt tell the full story of what happened and draw whatever lessons they think ought to be drawn. It is to be hoped that they will be able to clear up several obscure points, particularly the policies followed by "Inti" Peredo.

For instance, in an interview published in Punto Final in June 1969 just before the guerrilla front went into action, "Inti" Peredo made the following declaration: "The ELN maintains the principles established by Che. We hold valid the thesis of the need for a guerrilla foco in the current situation in Latin America. Because of this we announced that we would return to the mountains. We will build an armed force. We are not trying to form a political party." (See Intercontinental Press, March 2, 1970, page 170.)

Peredo was thus on public record as opposing party building and favoring foguismo. Were Peredo's views known to the Bolivian comrades when they participated in the front which he led? Even for those who believe in the strategy of guerrilla war, as opposed to the strategy of building a Leninist combat party, it should have been obvious that the foguista concepts held by the head of the Bolivian guerrilla

front doomed the possibilities of success.

But Peredo, it must be believed, was operating according to foquista concepts at the time of the world congress of the Fourth International, although it was not reported there. In retrospect we can see still more clearly what illusions some of the delegates were laboring under in believing that by throwing the Trotskyist movement behind Peredo's guerrilla front in Bolivia the Fourth International could make a historic breakthrough within months, after which the rest would follow.

#### Minority Favored Guerrilla Warfare as a Tactic

To prevent being misunderstood, let me recall the position taken by the minority at the world congress. The minority did not reject guerrilla warfare per se. On the contrary it recognized that under certain circumstances engagement in guerrilla warfare can prove advantageous. In my article "Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America," I stated:

"A section of the Fourth International may find that at a certain stage of the revolutionary process in its country, it is necessary and productive to engage in guerrilla war, as a specific form of armed struggle. The proviso is that it be conceived as a tactic entailed by political considerations, not as a new-found formula guaranteeing quick or certain success, and that it be within the means available to the section. This holds, it should be added, not only for Latin America but for similar areas elsewhere." (International Information Bulletin, February 1969, page 14.)

This was rejected by the majority, and with particular insistence by Comrade Maitan. I will consider the possible reasons further on. I wish to stress here only that the minority at the world congress favored guerrilla warfare as a tactic which sections of the Fourth International might find useful at the right time and right place in furtherance of political aims related to revolutionary strategy as a whole.

A necessary condition is the development of leaderships in the sections of high enough level and sufficient experience to be able to make correct political judgements on guerrilla war as on other important tactical questions. Whether such leaderships actually exist can only be determined, of course, by how they conduct themselves, including how they assess their victories and defeats.

Besides the defeat suffered by our movement in Bolivia, another serious defeat was suffered in Argentina, where the

official section (El Combatiente) was hard hit in Rosario. Two accounts of this have been published in Intercontinental Press, but little can be said about the lessons to be drawn in the absence of an official report from the leadership of the section. It is to be hoped that an objective assessment can be made available as part of the internal discussion on Latin America.

#### "Absolutely Clear" in Peru and Bolivia

The majority resolution on Latin America failed to stand up well in another area. To justify converting rural guerrilla war into a strategy, it was argued that the Latin-American ruling class, operating hand in glove with U.S. imperialism, left no other alternative open. Against the ferocious violence of the ruling class, nothing could be done except to turn to guerrilla struggle.

As the resolution put it, after acknowledging the mass mobilizations that occurred in 1968: "Nonetheless, revolutionary Marxists cannot conclude from this that the 'classical' variant calling for a progressive rise and broadening of the mass movement and its structuring and reinforcement through traditional organizational forms before it reaches the armed struggle has been revalidated. In the international context, after all the experiences of the last decade and in face of an increasingly brutal repression by the native ruling classes and imperialism, such a variant is not the most probable. In reality, the adversary is in nowise ready to allow a mass revolutionary movement to organize more or less legally or normally, not only because in the given economic and social conditions a general mobilization even for economic goals would threaten disastrous consequences for the system, but also and above all because the men in power no longer underestimate the dynamics of mass movements, even when they start off with limited objectives. The experience of Bolivia, where all forms of normal organizational activity are continually stamped out, as well as the experience of Peru, where the repression has not let up since 1962, especially in the countryside, are absolutely clear." (Intercontinental Press, July 14, 1969, page 720.)

The main spokesman for the majority, Comrade Maitan, has been compelled in the light of subsequent events to make a considerable shift. In his article "Cuba, Military Reformism, and Armed Struggle in Latin America," which appeared in the April 20, 1970 issue of Intercontinental Press, Comrade Maitan had no choice but to admit the appearance of reformist regimes in Latin America.

Moreover, not as a freakish, isolated occurrence: "The Peruvian and Bolivian events and the orientation adopted by Velasco Alvarado and Ovando Candia -- who are trying to give the impression that they are the initiators of a revolutionary-democratic renewal and a struggle against the imperialist grip on their countries -- deserve attention not only for their intrinsic importance but also because they express a tendency which might materialize in other countries as well. In fact 'Peruvian' currents are taking form increasingly in other places and it is symptomatic that in the ranks of the revolutionary movement itself some are predicting and even hoping that these currents will come to power."

Still more: "To complete the picture, American imperialism...adopted a cautious wait-and-see attitude toward the Peruvian regime and, in spite of everything, toward Ovando as well. The outline of a more flexible line for Latin America was, moreover, presented in the Rockefeller report."

Comrade Maitan draws an absolutely clear conclusion from the current developments, although it is the opposite of the equally absolutely clear conclusion in the antecedent majority resolution: "All of this confirms the fact that there are important forces, and forces of a different nature, which have a stake in a positive development of the experiments in progress in Peru and in Bolivia. This implies also that in certain conditions similar experiments might be undertaken in other countries."

In short, a big change may be in the making. Who knows? "I am considering potential tendencies which may or may not crystallize. However, the important thing is that these tendencies exist, are operating, and already constitute one of the elements in the political interaction in Latin America."

Did these potential tendencies exist at the time of the world congress? A delegate who ventured to express the thought that such a variant was conceivable, in some areas at least, met with stern reproof. But events compelled Comrade Maitan to shift his view. Ironically the events occurred in the very countries cited in the majority resolution as definitive proof that all variants other than "increasingly brutal repression" had been excluded.

The lesson to be drawn from this is the danger of thinking in absolutes, especially where tactics are involved. It was "absolutely" excluded that U.S. imperialism could adopt flexible tactics. It was "absolutely" excluded that the indigent bourgeoisie had any alter-

native tactics they could resort to but the most brutal repression. Therefore the revolutionists had "absolutely" no choice but to elevate guerrilla warfare into the main axis of their work and engage in it no matter what the thinking of the masses or the state of the mass movement might be.

#### A Tactical Question After All

In conjunction with this, another welcome turn is to be noted in Comrade Maitan's article. He now places more stress on "the need for preliminary political and organizational work" before engaging in armed struggle.

"And without such preparation," he states, "any attempt at armed struggle will be condemned to isolation and failure. There would also be the danger of forgetting that there are periods when an effort to develop mass work and to create the instruments for this must have absolute priority."

He even makes a notable concession to the view that engagement in guerrilla war is a tactical question: "For example, it would be absurd in Peru today to rely primarily on preparing a new wave of guerrilla warfare, failing to understand the need for deepgoing activity of political clarification and to exploit all the possibilities which, despite everything, the new situation offers for stimulating mass movements and establishing links with them. This is also true on a different scale and probably for a markedly shorter period for Bolivia."

Perhaps the biggest shift since the world congress has taken place in the position of the Bolivian comrades. In a unanimous resolution passed in November 1969 (published in an English translation in the April 13, 1970 issue of Intercontinental Press), the Bolivian comrades adjusted their position as follows:

"The military's operation to rescue the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state has forced it to relax the repression of the unions. Having failed in its attempt to destroy the unions, the government is now moving to animate the unions with the aim of hitching them to its cart. This makes possible a certain democratic leeway which must be utilized to the maximum. We must provide the driving force for a reorganization of the entire workers movement from the individual unions on up to the COB, based on an independent class line. But trade-union reorganization must be combined with a struggle for a program of economic social, and political demands. We must resume the struggle from the level it had reached when the repression came."

In resuming the struggle in the indicated way, the Bolivian comrades outlined in their resolution the main points of "a transitional program providing impetus to a mass mobilization." They spelled this out in specific detail in the statement they issued to the mine workers congress held at the Siglo Veinte mine the second week of April (published in an English translation in Intercontinental Press, May 11, 1970).

Our Bolivian comrades made a correct turn in resuming activities in accordance with the method indicated in the 1938 Transitional Program. Trotskyists throughout the world will feel gratified that the Bolivian section was able to make this readjustment.

In practice our Bolivian comrades in this instance handled involvement in "rural guerrilla warfare" as a tactical question to be judged in the light of the ups and downs of their national situation and in relation to their own needs and opportunities. But this was one of the key points the minority sought to establish at the world congress as a general concept of our movement.

What is primary in revolutionary strategy, the minority maintained, is building a combat party; resorting to guerrilla warfare should be regarded as a secondary, tactical question. That the Bolivian comrades found themselves compelled to act as they did, departing from the majority line which they had whole-heartedly subscribed to and sought to carry out, offers a certain lesson.

#### Still, It's More Than a Tactic

It is strange in the light of this experience that both Comrade Maitan and the Bolivian comrades should still insist on the correctness of the majority position.

In their November 1969 resolution mentioned above, the Bolivian comrades assert: "Guerrilla warfare is still a valid method. The blows suffered and the losses of men and equipment are not important. However painful, all these losses can be repaired. The important thing is to be clear on the fact that there is no other path for real revolutionists."

Again: "Despite the defeats suffered, we reaffirm the validity of guerrilla warfare. Therefore, the duty of every Marxist-Leninist revolutionary is to join in this conception. Giving life to the guerrilla movement and the revolutionary army is intimately bound up with revolutionary mobilization of the masses; this will be the culture medium of the guerrillas, as Che said. Guerrilla warfare is the continuation by other means

of the class struggle; it is the culmination of the mass movement."

Comrade Maitan speaks even more clearly in his article, "Cuba, Military Reformism, and Armed Struggle in Latin America." Having just agreed that "it would be absurd in Peru today to rely primarily on preparing a new wave of guerrilla warfare," and having just conceded that this also holds true for Bolivia -- the two countries that served as prime exhibits for an opposite view at the world congress -- Comrade Maitan reaffirms the majority position. He restates the thesis that constituted the heart of the majority position at the world congress:

"The fundamental perspective, the only realistic perspective for Latin America is that of an armed struggle which may last for long years.... Even in the case of countries where large mobilizations and class conflicts in the cities may occur first, civil war will take manifold forms of armed struggle, in which the principal axis for a whole period will be rural guerrilla warfare, the term having primarily a geographical-military meaning and not necessarily implying an exclusively peasant composition of the fighting detachments (or even necessarily preponderantly peasant composition). In this sense, armed struggle in Latin America means fundamentally guerrilla warfare."

In the balance of his polemic, Comrade Maitan seeks to put his unnamed opponents in the position of either being against armed struggle in principle, or of making a false dichotomy between mobilization of the masses and engagement in armed struggle, or of raising false problems such as the interrelationship of tactics and strategy. Above all, he insists that the key question facing the revolutionary movement in Latin America is to work out in advance the concrete forms which the armed struggle in the coming years is likely to take.

On this he appears to feel that he, along with the "great majority of Latin-American revolutionists," has already come up with the correct answer. In a single sentence Comrade Maitan states the gist: "If you take account of the geographical facts, the demographical structures of the majority of the population, and the technical and military considerations stressed by Che himself, it follows that the variant of rural guerrilla warfare on a continentwide scale will be the most probable one."

That's an accurate statement of the majority position, including the intimation that its original inspiration is to be found in the tactical prescriptions which the Cubans sought to substitute for

the strategy of building combat parties in Latin America.

### The Discussion Among the Guerrilla Fighters

Other changes have occurred in the situations facing our movement in Latin America besides the ones in Peru and Bolivia. Since the last world congress, the configuration of the revolutionary vanguard has undergone significant alteration.

The most important development is undoubtedly the discussion opened by such figures as Héctor Béjar on the lessons to be drawn from the guerrilla experience. As thinking revolutionists, they cannot help but wonder what has gone wrong. Why is it that more than ten years after the Cuban revolution not another success has been registered in the entire continent? It is surely not due to lack of courage or audacity, to lack of commitment to armed struggle, to failure to regard the Cuban revolution as the great model to be emulated.

As a first approximation in making an analysis, some of the revolutionists have sought to locate technical, or perhaps political, errors. Not a few, as was to be expected, have been found. But then the Cubans made not a few technical and even political errors, yet succeeded. The Cuban experience demonstrated that it is possible to commit considerable errors without ending in disaster. Nevertheless, throughout Latin America, attempt after attempt in countries of the most varied kind and with leaders of the most varied temperaments and skills have ended in defeat.

One of the reasons adduced is the more intensive repression exercised by U.S. imperialism. But if this were the reason, then it is clear that a more effective and powerful strategy than the one used by the Cubans is required.

Inevitably the most conscious revolutionists are haunted by the feeling that something is eluding them in their efforts to discover what has been going wrong.

It is very instructive to see how in their efforts they continually touch on questions directly connected with the problem of building a combat party. This stands out with the utmost clarity in Héctor Béjar's analysis, although he continually turns away from that road. Moreover, in their efforts they are drawn, despite themselves, toward reading Trotsky.

This search for the correct reasons for the defeats suffered by the Latin-American revolution since the Cuban

victory is a very positive development. It shows that some important sectors of the vanguard, or at least some important cadres, have come to realize that action alone is not sufficient. Correct concepts -- a correct theory -- are also required. This is in marked difference from the Cuban revolutionists, who got along without much theory and who even decried theory.

The Trotskyist movement has every reason to foster this discussion and to offer answers of its own. Unfortunately the majority line is not conducive to this. History has settled the question, if we are to believe Comrade Maitan. Che was right. Guerrilla warfare is the solution, and an alternative strategy, reducing guerrilla warfare to a tactical problem, is a priori virtually excluded, including the Russian strategy in 1917 of which Trotsky, following Lenin, was the great practitioner and exponent.

### The Cubans Pause for Reflection

Another very important change in the Latin-American situation is the current reluctance of the Cuban leaders to become involved in "rural guerrilla warfare."

At the world congress, the majority counted on the Cubans continuing to do what they had done in the case of the guerrilla front opened by Che Guevara in Bolivia. This was a hazardous calculation, the minority maintained, because the full consequences of the defeat of Che had yet to be measured. In particular the Cubans might be in process of reassessing their line in Latin America in view of the repeated setbacks that had been experienced. If the Cubans were to undertake a reorientation, the minority pointed out, then the resources available to the small groups still committed to carrying out the old line would become even more limited. To plunge ahead despite this change in the situation could prove to be exceedingly ill-advised.

It is now fairly clear that what the minority called attention to at the world congress (and much before that in the leadership of the world Trotskyist movement) turned out to be an accurate political assessment. The changed attitude of the Cubans has now become one of the key questions in the discussion going on in the vanguard over revolutionary strategy in Latin America and what course to take. This has had its repercussions inside the Fourth International.

In the resolution passed at the world congress, the first task assigned to the revolutionary Marxists in Latin America was: "Integration into the

historic revolutionary current represented by the Cuban revolution and the OLAS, which involves, regardless of the forms, integration into the continental revolutionary front which the OLAS constitutes."

The majority has now been compelled to modify this. In his article "Cuba, Military Reformism, and Armed Struggle in Latin America," Comrade Maitan writes: "First of all, it must be noted that not only has the OLAS, as an organization, failed lamentably but also that the role of the Cuban leadership in the Latin-American revolution is being increasingly disputed. I already mentioned the public attack on the Cuban leadership by Douglas Bravo's movement. But others are also expressing criticisms that follow more or less the same lines. In fact, most of the groups linked to Castroism are increasingly taking their distance from Havana, accentuating their independence. They now have a tendency to consider the relations they establish among themselves more important than their relations with the Cubans and what remains of OLAS -- more properly speaking, of the preliminary moves to establish this organization."

In order to maintain a correct attitude toward the Cuban revolution, it is of crucial importance to understand the pressures it faces and the courses open to the Cuban leadership. Some comrades in the Fourth International appear to be leaning to the opinion that a qualitative change has occurred and that Cuba ought now to be designated as a degenerated workers' state. Against this view, Comrade Maitan argues -- correctly so, in my opinion -- that while various things are disturbing, particularly the political influence of the Kremlin, the adverse developments have not reached the point of qualitative change.

It must be said, however, that Comrade Maitan's attempt to rebut the charge that Fidel Castro has given up internationalism is exceptionally weak: "Revolution in Latin America is still considered a necessary condition for the survival and development of the Cuban state itself. There is indisputably a turning inward on domestic problems and a pause for reflection. It is also probably that no initiative similar to Che's Bolivian campaign nor even like those previously in Venezuela will be attempted in the present stage. But there is nothing to support the assumption that in the event of the outbreak of a new wave of revolutionary struggle and armed struggle in a Latin-American country the Cuban leadership would adopt a reserved attitude or try to cool things down. Once again its active solidarity would be assured."

The guerrilla groups that charge the

Cubans with having given up internationalism point precisely to the lack of "active solidarity" in operations designed to further the strategy of "rural guerrilla warfare." Their point is well taken if you agree with them that "the only realistic perspective for Latin America is that of an armed struggle" and that "armed struggle in Latin America means fundamentally guerrilla warfare." However, that is precisely the viewpoint of the majority. Comrade Maitan reasserts it in the most emphatic way in his article.

Were he to participate actively in the discussion now being carried on between the Cubans and their critics on this point, he would in all consistency have to agree with those who are "taking their distance from Havana." For what is their basic point? It is simply that they are attempting to continue in accordance with the line previously followed by the Cubans. It is the Cubans who have changed, not they.

Shouldn't Comrade Maitan come to their aid by at least polemicizing with the Cubans, marshaling arguments to convince them to stop drifting in such a crucial matter as "rural guerrilla warfare" and to resume their old line?

#### We, Too, Should Pause to Reflect

It would be wiser for our movement, of course, to emulate the Cubans in their "pause for reflection," even if our conclusions are not the same as theirs.

Since the defeat of Che Guevara in Bolivia, the Cubans have faced a crisis in their international revolutionary orientation. The basis of the crisis is the failure of "rural guerrilla warfare" to win any successes. It has met with defeat after defeat.

In addition, despite all the prestige of the Cuban revolution and the immense advantage of holding state power, the Cubans even appear to have come out second in their factional struggle with the Stalinists on the continent.

Precisely because of their success in Cuba, it was difficult for the Cubans to see the negative consequences of their orientation placing guerrilla warfare above party building. How could it be that what had proved successful in one instance should prove disastrous in a series of other instances? The outcome of Che's venture proved conclusively that it was not a question of experience or know-how. What, then, is the correct solution to the crisis?

It would be a big mistake for our movement to exclude the possibility of the Cuban leaders, or at least some of



them. eventually arriving at a correct solution, It is true that the outcome is not guaranteed; the comrades who are ready today to write off the Cubans may have the satisfaction finally of being able to say that they were right. But one of the determinants in the outcome may well prove to be our own attitude toward the Cubans, particularly our explanations and the course we propose.

Thus both for the fate of the Latin-American revolution and the immediate future of the Trotskyist movement it is of the utmost importance to fight for a positive outcome to the dilemma facing the Cubans in their international revolutionary orientation.

From this standpoint, Comrade Maitan's insistence on the sovereign virtues of "rural guerrilla warfare" is disorienting. In his article "Castro, Military Reformism, and Armed Struggle in Latin America," he reduces the key problem of the Latin-American revolution to that of sketching "the concrete forms armed struggle will take." As a contribution, he sketches various forms, trying to put them into a kind of logical order and to assess the chances of their being seen in Latin America in the future. This is a barren exercise in the absence of the political context, particularly the party-building context, of the forms. Above all, he is attracted to guerrilla warfare. "Guerrilla warfare," he says, "has proved at the same time necessary and effective in all kinds of experiences over the past fifty years in Asia and Africa, as well as in Europe itself during the Nazi occupation (above all in Yugoslavia, in Italy, and in France)."

The only conclusion the Cubans could come to on reading that, if they are utilizing their pause for reflection to really think things through, is that the Trotskyists have become more "Cuban" than the Cubans and that they are advancing arguments that hardly point forward.

#### The Basic Problem is Political, Not Technical

What the Fourth International should do by every conceivable means is insist on the primary task at the present stage. This is to begin at the beginning -- to assemble sufficient cadres to start serious construction of Leninist combat parties.

This requires a sustained polemic against all the tendencies that stand in the road or that threaten to divert the work. The main one, of course, still remains Stalinism, which has gained a reprieve in Latin America because of the persistence of the Cubans and others in seeking to lift rural guerrilla warfare

into a strategy in opposition to the strategy of party building.

It also requires some concrete examples of what we mean when we talk about engaging in revolutionary politics. And some concrete examples, anywhere in the world, of what we mean when we talk about building a Leninist party.

This is so elementary that one feels embarrassed to have to insist on it more than three decades after the founding of the Fourth International. Yet this is the real situation, and there is no point in blinking it. A few further words should be said about this in the interests of rearming our movement.

#### Once Again, the Meaning of Cuba

The most decisive turning point in the long ideological struggle against the pernicious influence of Stalinism was the Cuban revolution. Viewed in historic perspective, the leaders of this revolution represented the first contingent of a new generation that was able to appreciate the positive meaning of the Russian revolution and the existence of the Soviet Union, yet was repelled by Stalinism.

This contingent came to power in Cuba through means that had long ago been superseded in the arsenal of revolutionary Marxism. That this could actually occur was solely owing to the default of Stalinism in combination with objective conditions for revolution that were exceptionally favorable.

Our movement hailed this development, defended it with all our energy, and sought to further and to extend the Cuban revolution.

The absence of a revolutionary Marxist party in Cuba did not disconcert us because we understood the uniqueness of the combination of circumstances that had made the success possible. We considered that the logic of the revolution, if it were not to fall back, would impel the development of such a party in Cuba in the long run and that the same would hold true in Latin America as a whole. Our basic line therefore remained promulgation of the theory and practice of building revolutionary Marxist parties as the correct revolutionary strategy.

We faced some difficult tactical problems. While the Cuban revolutionists had succeeded in bypassing the Cuban Communist party, they were forced into reliance on the Soviet Union for material aid because of the efforts of U.S. imperialism to crush the revolution. Without that aid the Cuban revolution, as

a matter of simple fact, could not have survived. Nevertheless an overhead political cost was involved. The Cubans were undoubtedly made aware, if they did not sense it themselves, that one of the conditions for receiving material aid was to keep "Trotskyism" at a distance. Stalinism was thus able to play a certain role in Cuban affairs. The resulting unhealthy state of affairs reached its height under Anibal Escalante.

A further complication was that the cause of the Cuban revolution was taken up with the greatest enthusiasm by the youth everywhere. This was an extraordinarily heartening development with its clear portent for the future. However, these revolutionary-minded youth did not understand the basic political reasons for the Cuban success; they sought for the explanation on the side of skillful technique in the use of arms.

The Cubans fostered this lack of understanding, wittingly or not, since they never assessed their own revolution in the light of the default of Stalinism. To have done so, they would have had to settle accounts with Stalinism -- to which the Kremlin would have responded by cutting off material aid.

Moreover, the Cubans in their own international revolutionary orientation insisted on the priority of skill in the technique of armed struggle. Their contempt for theory and hostility to party building were additional negative elements.

All of this fostered ultraleftism and even an antipolitical attitude among the youth drawn into the orbit of the Cuban revolution, particularly in Latin America. It should be added that, like many youth on first coming to revolutionary views, they were inclined toward ultraleftism to begin with. They thus evinced a strong predilection for sheer action violent action, even by small isolated contingents, without consideration for the political necessity to calculate everything they did and said in relation to the problem of reaching the masses and organizing and mobilizing them on the necessary scale.

This was where the revolutionary-minded youth were to be found, this was what they were like, and the Trotskyists, if they were not to lose contact with the new generation of revolutionists, beginning with the Cubans, had to go through the experience with them.

#### The Extraordinary Value of Hugo Blanco's Work

In taking this course, we made no concessions in principle. In the imperialist centers we stood on our own Trotskyist

program in the first line of defense of the Cuban revolution. It is enough to recall what the Trotskyists in the United States and Canada did in helping to organize and advance the Fair Play for Cuban Committee. Our comrades in Europe and India and many countries in Latin America were similarly active.

Our first big advance came in Peru through the work of Hugo Blanco, carried out with the active participation of Argentine comrades like Daniel Pereyra and Eduardo Creus under the leadership of Comrade Nahuel Moreno.

Regarding engagement in guerrilla warfare as a tactical question, these comrades at first made an effort along the lines of the Cuban model. Through hard practical experience they soon learned that it had disadvantages. Working directly with his own people, whose Quechua language he spoke, Hugo Blanco discovered more effective means of mobilizing them on a broad scale. Around the slogan "Land or Death!" Hugo Blanco established a nucleus of cadres who succeeded in building a peasant movement that shook Peru. Some, who were outside this work, have charged that Hugo Blanco was inspired by "syndicalist" notions. Others said later that he overlooked the necessity for "armed struggle." Neither allegation is true. Hugo Blanco was inspired by Trotskyist concepts and he did not hide them.

The movement was defeated, owing to two reasons. The first was that it was left in the lurch by the leftist organizations in the cities, which were dominated primarily by the Stalinists or had other reasons for antipathy to Hugo Blanco's political approach. The second reason for the defeat was the absence of a Leninist combat party on a national scale.

Héctor Béjar has bitterly criticized the Stalinists and those influenced by them for the historic opportunity they let slip by denying aid to Hugo Blanco's movement. On the question of the absence of a combat party, Héctor Béjar holds a position heavily influenced by the antipolitical conceptions of the radical Latin-American youth who came most directly under the sway of the Cuban ideology. In his opinion, "premature" organization of a political party can doom a revolutionary cause.

Hugo Blanco has criticized himself for not devoting more attention to the problem of party building on a national scale. He is correct in seeing the negative results of not having on hand an already constructed party; but how much more he could have done along these lines personally under the circumstances is not easy to determine by anyone not intimately

involved in the events. In any case, it hardly behooves those on the outside to lay too much stress on how Hugo Blanco might better have directed his activities. He was very young, he was gaining invaluable experience in mass work, he was learning by leaps and bounds, he was making a historic contribution. Above all, he was not opposed to party building. He was in fact imbued with a clear theoretical concept of its necessity.

The outcome of this experience was that Hugo Blanco emerged as Peru's most outstanding revolutionary figure. The Fourth International is not exaggerating when it stresses this. It is acknowledged without debate by the most varied sources, including those in the enemy camp.

In presenting Trotskyism to the radicalizing youth of Latin America from 1962 on -- that is, the youth in those countries who were especially caught up with the concept that guerrilla warfare and only guerrilla warfare offered any hope for success in carrying out the socialist revolution -- the world Trotskyist movement was in position to point to the work of Hugo Blanco.

The meaning of Hugo Blanco's course lay not solely in his personal example and his valor. Others have been similarly valorous and similarly dedicated. For the world Trotskyist movement, for the Fourth International, the value of what Hugo Blanco did lay in his political line as developed in the living struggle in Peru.

Through the example of his work, Hugo Blanco gave incomparable assistance to the Fourth International in those years when young revolutionists, inclined under the influence of the Cubans to make a principle of guerrilla action, demanded that we show them something in practice matching what we had laid out on the level of theory and program.

The value of this example has not lessened with time. Just the contrary. Hugo Blanco's reputation is looming ever larger, as is shown by the estimate made of his work by Héctor Béjar in his essay which won the Casa de las Americas prize for 1969. If we are to engage in self-criticism it ought to be for not doing more in publicizing Hugo Blanco's work in recent years and in seeking better to emulate it.

#### The Danger of Adaptation

In deliberately turning in the direction of the youth aroused by the Cuban revolution and becoming involved with them, our movement faced the danger of adapting to their primitive political level. That danger had to be accepted, the alternative being a sectarian withdrawal from the scene of struggle in the

manner of the Healyites, who simply walked away from Latin America and defense of the Cuban revolution. It appeared, however, that the majority of cadres in the world Trotskyist movement were of sufficiently high political level to reduce the danger to a minimum.

The greatest pressure toward adaptation came in the beginning, and we saw some instances in the immediate aftermath of the Cuban victory that were quite painful. This was the case, for instance, with Comrade Bengochea and his group who split from the Trotskyist movement to set up a guerrilla front in Argentina in isolation from the masses and as an alternative to party building.

Strangely enough at first sight, it was only when the Cubans themselves initiated their "pause for reflection" that a majority in the top leadership of the Fourth International fell victim to the disease and elevated "rural guerrilla warfare" into a main strategy in Latin America, passing a resolution to that effect at the last world congress.

We are faced, inevitably, with the question, "How could this happen?"

A possible subjective explanation is that the central leadership feels that our movement faces unparalleled opportunities and that we must not "miss the boat." As Comrade Maitan phrased it in his contribution, "An Insufficient Document": "Our capacity for political analysis and overall theoretical generalization...will be a major trump card in the future, too.... More particularly, our role will be appreciated at its true value by the new movements if we are in position to express in time and better than any other current their real needs and to outline solutions to the problems which they raise."

As an abstract statement, this is unassailable. Concretely, however we have seen what Comrade Maitan meant: It is to express in time and better than any other current the best technique for conducting "rural guerrilla warfare."

Again, in the same document, Comrade Maitan specifies: "But it is only by successes or revolutionary struggles at the head of a mass movement in one or several countries that we will be able to surmount our difficulties and present contradictions. What is expected from us from now on is that we demonstrate in practice the historical value of our movement and we will be judged essentially on this basis."

Concretely we can now see better what he meant. The Fourth International, in Comrade Maitan's opinion, can overcome

its present difficulties only by engaging in "rural guerrilla warfare" better than anyone else, and "we will be judged essentially on this basis."

"Rural guerrilla warfare," Comrade Maitan seems to feel, offers a surefire means by which the Fourth International can win an early breakthrough in Latin America and, no doubt, elsewhere. If others have failed to derive the full benefits of "rural guerrilla warfare," it is because they were not as good technicians as the Trotskyists can prove to be under the guidance of the majority.

In other words, reacting to the demand that the Fourth International produce a major organizational success in the immediate future, the majority leaders have looked for shortcuts and have found one -- they believe -- in "rural guerrilla warfare."

They appear to view the formula as widely applicable. This is perhaps the reason they refused at the world congress to accept the evaluation of guerrilla warfare as a tactical matter. The majority, of course, acted consistently in refusing to concede on this even if it meant creating a rather sharp division among the delegates. If "rural guerrilla warfare" is elevated into a main strategy, it ought to be viewed as a matter of principle, precisely as the minority views the priority of party building as a principle.

Thus two concepts concerning the main road of the revolution were adumbrated at the congress.

The source of the pressure for elevating "rural guerrilla warfare" into a principle is clear. It is the guerrilla fighters, particularly in Latin America (with the Cuban currently counted as they pause for reflection), and significant sections of the radicalizing youth, that is, those who have not yet gained political experience and who have made a mystique out of the fate of Che Guevara and who don't know much about Hugo Blanco's example.

The course prescribed by Comrade Maitan and made official in the Latin-American resolution represents a concession to ultraleftism. This is how it must be characterized objectively.

If we consider this happening in the context of the development of the Fourth International in recent years, we can better see why it occurred when it did. Our patience with the ultraleftist mood among sections of the radicalizing youth, our understanding of the origin of this mood, and our tactical flexibility in dealing with it enabled us to recruit sufficient cadres so that when the radicalization of the youth began on a mass scale internationally, we soon began recruiting by the hundreds wherever we had well-established parties or groups. In France, for instance, our movement experienced dramatic growth in the May-June 1968 period. It was precisely following this exhilarating expansion of forces that some of the leaders of the Fourth International above all Comrade Maitan, began adapting to ultraleftism.

In Latin America at the same time, successive defeats of the guerrilla fronts and the shrinking of the forces available to the various guerrilla movements appeared to offer exceptional opportunities to Trotskyists and others willing to make an immediate major commitment to guerrilla action. Some of the comrades who were convinced of the extraordinary gains to be made on the quick wanted more than a tactical view of engaging in guerrilla warfare. They wanted total commitment of the movement as a whole, the elevation of engagement on the guerrilla road into a principle.

It was this combination that provided Comrade Maitan with his majority at the world congress.

Consistent application of the course charted by Comrade Maitan would prove disastrous for the Fourth International. The line could hardly be confined to Latin America or even the colonial world generally, for the same ultraleft tendencies to which the adaptation has been made are operative in the imperialist centers. Fostering an ultraleft course in Latin America would surely be paralleled by permissiveness toward ultraleftism, if not worse, in the imperialist centers. In fact, there is evidence that this has already been occurring in the quite different context of conditions in Britain.

The adoption of a resolution by a world congress elevating "rural guerrilla war" into a main strategy should therefore be regarded as a grave development. After full discussion on the issues in all the sections of the Fourth International, every effort should be made at the next world congress to rectify this error.

June 26, 1970