

SWP

discussion bulletin

Published by the
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

116 UNIVERSITY PLACE
NEW YORK 3, NEW YORK

Vol. 22, No.3

March 1961

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SUMMARY SPEECH ON CUBAN QUESTION

By Tim Wohlforth

I think that we have had a very good discussion here because what is really important at this stage in the theoretical development of our party is precisely a serious discussion of the extremely difficult and complex problems that are raised not simply by the Cuban revolution but are raised by the development of the world over the last ten or fifteen years.

I think that Morris well summarized the new situation. The strength of the workers states. The weakness of capitalism. The virtual complete disorganization of the vanguard, the Trotskyist movement, which is related to a general passivity in the industrial working class. At the same time a breakthrough, a growth of the colonial revolution and the inability of capitalism to keep the colonial revolution at all times within capitalist bounds.

All of this has created a number of developments, all of which have had a general effect of strengthening the planned economies, the deformed or degenerated workers states as against capitalism. This of course is quite important in the sense that it weakens our enemy, imperialism. It's precisely why the Cuban revolution occurs.

The weakening of our enemy is to the good as long as it strengthens us -- namely, if it contributes to the building of the Trotskyist movement. Yes, the Trotskyist movement. Let's not fall for all of those somewhat slippery regroupment phrases which are quite good tactically at one time or another as long as we know all of them mean one thing: We want to build the Trotskyist movement, the Leninist movement, regardless of what label we put on it. We still want to build that movement and whether we've got a million members or two members it's still the Trotskyist movement that we're going to be building because that's the only movement that's going to stop the capitalists.

All of this, what I call the extremely favorable objective development in the world, is very fine as long as it doesn't disorient the subjective force in the world -- the world Trotskyist movement. And I don't raise this just as a possibility because it's already occurred and that's the nature of Pabloism. That's what deep entrism means. That's what the disillusion, not only of Pablo but the people who went through Pablo's movement, that found Pablo too radical for them, that's what it means. That's how it affected them. And that is the danger.

Because all this objective moving of forces amounts to a hill of beans, comrades, if we don't build the revolutionary movement in our country, if we don't build it in Europe, we don't build it in England, we don't build it in Japan. It amounts to a hill of beans. Because the objective onrushing of "natural" Marxists is not going to topple world capitalism. And that again I think Morris pointed out when he said it takes more than a Castro to topple capitalism in a country like France.

A lot has been said today about the question of facts, methodology. I think what Shane said is absolutely correct. Absolutely

correct. Namely, you've got to have facts and if we understand Marxism at all, you know Marxism is a reflection of reality, that is a reflection of fact. It is an organization of facts so as to predict what will happen next. Theory is a reflection of facts, and all facts are implied theory. There's no question about that. And that is why we always go to the facts and then attempt to interpret them.

But we don't always just go to the immediate facts we see before our eyes. We go to the facts of history too, that are summed up in a hundred years of Marxism. Those theories are based on the most advanced thinking of the working class through a hundred years of experience and we don't easily discard the fact of the past because of an immediate impression of the present. Though we're very happy to discard the fact of the past after a serious study of the present and we find that it doesn't simply jibe. That is all I meant.

I get the impression from Joe's Theses that its basic methodology is a rather empirical one. I may be wrong in that. But that's the impression it creates with me. A certain attitude of "Well, we just go along, doing our work. We need a theory so we can argue with other people because they seem to have theories and that embarrasses us. Nice to understand things while we're going along. You know things are proceeding in Cuba, it looks like a workers state, so we call it a workers state. Maybe soviet forms would be nice (doesn't say soviet forms are essential), they would be nice, because they look nice and we'd be able to sell the revolution better throughout the world -- " That is the methodology of empiricism.

The question that Tom raised -- the question of workers state. Of course, he's absolutely right. Whether a country is or isn't a workers state is not determined in our theory solely on the basis of the rule of the working class immediately by exercising its dictatorship through democratic forms. We have found that lacking democratic forms, the dictatorship may still be exercised indirectly through the continued existence of the planned economy in what we call degenerated or deformed workers states.

But what we haven't yet discussed in our theory is the achievement of a healthy workers state, without the dictatorship of the proletariat, without the organization of the workers councils as the government. It is precisely that that I want at least to pull back from.

Now when I say that the state is transitional in Cuba, by definition, if the word transitional means anything, it means that its nature is going to very shortly be settled. Let me put it this way. The question of leadership does enter into it in this sense: If our boys were running the show, we wouldn't ask them how many factories they nationalized. We wouldn't put any pressure, take it easy, take your time, work out whatever deals you want. The working class is in power, you control the works, you can pace it, pace yourselves a bit.

But our attitude when our boys aren't in power is we're not ready to leap in any second and throw around the labels. That was why the party, on the question of China, took a little time before calling it a workers state. A little time. You don't have to take a lot of time, I'm not asking you to take as much time as the party took then. It just means that when the conscious will of the working class organized through an independent Marxist party is not the government of Cuba, and that is my thesis, then one should just be a little careful before rushing in and slapping on the workers state label.

Now I think people are raising a false issue if they think that the essential difference that I have with the majority of the Political Committee and with many of the comrades here, is precisely this question -- when we slap the label "workers state" on. I don't care that much. I agree that the majority of industry is nationalized. I personally feel that capitalism cannot be restored in Cuba, through what I would call typical bourgeois restorationism, that is simply handing the factories back to the landlords. I don't believe that they're going to reverse the agrarian revolution. I rather see the danger, or rather the inevitability, without the intervention of the conscious working class, of a Thermidorean development. Some sort of a bureaucratic regime which separates itself from the masses. And this regime then making a deal with capitalism.

And then a long-range degenerative process which could lead, as Sweezy pointed out in that quote I mentioned earlier, to the predominance of the world capitalist market over Cuba, without denationalizing a single industry. I don't think they will denationalize any industries. Who denationalizes industries anymore, you see, except in Britain? In the colonial countries, no one denationalizes anything anymore.

If America were to march in there and take it all over today, I don't think they would denationalize much -- denationalize a few things. You can't get away with that anymore in this crazy world. We used to speak about that in Soviet Russia -- the danger of setting up capitalism. You can't do that anymore. Can't have bourgeois restorationism in the old way. It's a rough world, you know, the way the ball bounces, you just can't do it the way you used to do in the old days.

The way they've got Yugoslavia now, for all effects and purposes, it doesn't do much good that they happen to have the industry nationalized. They're going to enter into the Outer Seven. They're going to enter into one of the capitalist trade blocs, that's what Yugoslavia is going to do. The workers in Yugoslavia are faced with the problem of inflation. The windows are filled with any consumer goods you can buy in Paris. The world capitalist market is determining in many ways the problems of the Yugoslav workers. And Yugoslavia is having to make industry more efficient so it can compete with the European free trade market. That's what can happen.

That doesn't mean that capitalism has been restored in Yugoslavia, but it's not the world's most progressive workers state, either.

So that's not the problem. If the comrades want to call it a workers state, call it a workers state. I just don't want to jump to a conclusion to call it that right now.

But what is essential is our view that there can be a Thermidorean reaction in Cuba without a political revolution. That's a political conclusion from our political theory. It is a danger to the party that comrades see the irreversible flow of the Cuban revolution and don't see any danger of retrogression. They don't see any danger of falling back.

The fact that Harry, for instance, reacts so strongly to what I thought was an extremely mild presentation by Shane in the Young Socialist, of the possibility of deals on the part of Stalinism. And that we should warn of the possibility that Cuba might go along with a deal in order to stabilize international relations. Maybe we were wrong on this, comrades, but that is what makes this discussion so interesting. We'll find out very shortly who's right and who's wrong. Just remember in case we're proven right, and then re-think some of these other questions.

Now Carl asked, "Haven't things changed since you wrote your document in August?" Of course they've changed. I think I dealt with that in my report, which dealt almost entirely with what's happened since August. Industry is nationalized. Of course it's nationalized. I made that very clear. I don't consider the possibility that bourgeois restoration could take the form that it could have taken before May (the more direct, classic form). But our essential designation is correct.

The real issue before us is none of this anyway. The real issue is the question of the role of the party, of the independent working class in Cuba. Here we have an extremely grave difference. To put it in its most categorical sense, to see the gravity of the difference, on the one hand we have a group in the party which believes that the Castro forces are a revolutionary working-class party though maybe not yet a Trotskyist party. They think we ought to regroup with it. On the other hand, there are us "old" orthodox Trotskyists (I was thinking of the comment a comrade made to those unable to deal with the "new reality" because of twenty years of isolation in the party) who hold to the concept of the independent role of the working class, who are skeptical to say the least of Pablo's concept that the revolutionary pressure of the masses can transform, not the movement, but the petty-bourgeois leadership of that movement.

This is our difference. One group orients toward the leadership of the Cuban revolution, hoping to convince them to become Trotskyist (all they do in reality is move closer themselves to the ideology of the leadership). On the other hand, there are those of us who would orient towards the ranks of the movement toward the working class, toward the rank-and-file workers in Cuba.

We just raise this simple concept in the broadest possible way, in its least sectarian way. Workers, be independent! Keep a little bit of skepticism toward the leadership. Organize independently! Keep the banner of Trotskyism independent from the banner of Castroism. Support Castro in every progressive act. But do this fundamental thing which Trotsky said to do under all conditions and at all times. And that is keep your identity independent. I don't want to go into the question about entrism into the 26th of July Movement. That's absurd anyway, because, as far as I understand, the working class and the peasants are organized in their own independent organs anyway. To work in the 26th of July Movement doesn't mean anything, because you can go down to the co-operative council and function in that or in the militia, and so on.

Keep yourself independent, that's all. In other words, don't carry out a Pabloite deep entry into the 26th of July Movement, identifying yourself with its leadership uncritically. If you want to fool around with it, at least do it as Burns does in the British Labor Party.

I think our comrades are going to be in for a great shock. I just hope they learn from that shock. For if they don't, then we are going to be in trouble in this party.

Now, what are we for? Very simple. Someone raised the question (and this is where the dangers of the position of the Political Committee begin to express themselves): "Well, you know, the working class is exercising its power not in the most direct way but in this roundabout way through this method and that method. . . ." That's when you start to get into trouble. There are the democratic organs of the working class in Cuba, that's very true. But they're not the state power. And the whole concept of Leninism, the whole struggle against intermediary centrist forces, during the unfolding of the Russian Revolution from February and October was precisely the above concept. It's not enough to have the democratic organs of the workers. It's not enough even to say, "We go along with the leadership as long as the leadership expresses the will of the democratic organs of the working class." No, he said that was not enough. You must make the democratic organs of the working class the state. That was the essence of his whole argument in the Russian Revolution.

There's nothing that scares me more than comrades who say that the workers have had the state in Cuba since October 1959 because they were armed. That should scare everybody. We've had fifty workers states since the end of World War II if that is the criterion. In Iraq, in Bolivia. Today you can't turn around without bumping into armed workers. You can't do anything in this world without arming the workers. They held the arms in Bolivia for seven years. For at least seven years now they've been holding the arms. There was no power in Iraq except the armed peasants and workers, that's all the power there was.

That is dangerous, comrades. That is dangerous. Furthermore, implied in that is the concept that you can establish workers power without the workers party. That's what's implicit in that. The

only way the comrades can get around that theoretical hump is by declaring this petty-bourgeois party (they're a pretty darn radical petty-bourgeois, and they're good people and they're decent people, wonderful, and they're intelligent and they mean well) to be a revolutionary workers party. Look what you do to reality, then. You talk about reality. Look what you do to our theory. Look what you do to Trotskyism, when you make Fidel a member of world Trotskyism, in effect. He's up for membership, the way you present it.

I'm voting against it. I'm telling you that right now. I'm voting against it, even if he applies.

The comrades report to me, "You know, they're revolutionaries." I know they're revolutionaries; they've made a revolution; I know they're revolutionaries. The one characteristic of all revolutions in the modern epoch is what Mills calls revolutionary euphoria. People are marching down the street with guns, and they think they're the power. Of course they think they're the power. They're not the power until they learn to seize revolutionary power through the revolutionary party. All revolutionaries think that; the Russian workers thought they had power in February. They thought they'd won -- it was all over. The crazy Bolsheviks (and not even all of them) were going around saying, "You don't have power." "Yes, we've got power." And then what happened? The July Days -- bam, bam, bam, and they found out they didn't have power. They thought they had it. They all think they have power.

You don't have power until you organize the working class and peasants into the state power. And that's what we have to do here -- the essence of Trotskyism and of Leninism and of Marxism -- the whole reason why we're in the business. And if we lose sight of that we're headed for trouble. And we can't cover it up with a bunch of regroupment formulae.

"Regroup with Fidel." "Fidel is an unconscious member of the Fourth International." He sure is unconscious about it. No, that won't work. In the meantime, all this euphoria, all this objective moving and onward marching of history and unrolling millions of people amounts to a hill of beans unless we build the hundred, the two hundred, the thousand, two thousand in all these crazy advanced capitalist countries. Maybe if we're intelligent enough we can build a couple of hundred in some of the Latin-American countries. The danger of the Cuban revolution that we should be watching in our press -- and we aren't -- is that you can do it the quick way. You don't need the hundred years of tradition. You don't need the theory. You don't need the study.

And Guevara deals with it in the Studies on the Left article. His first question is a quote from Lenin on the need for revolutionary theory. His answer is very simple. "You don't need it, man, you just learn it as you go along. You take the hard knocks and you learn." I'd feel sorry for Fidel if Lenin were alive when I think of what he would say to this! If there ever was a man who felt the utter necessity for consciousness, realized the power of our opponents, it was Lenin. We must not forget that; we must not train our movement, the comrades in our movement, in a slipshod approach to this question.

Then to identify consciousness, the consciousness of a revolutionary party, with a couple of prosocialist remarks in Bohemia, and the fact that they supported us in our election campaign, a few things like that, that's not consciousness. They'd be pretty dumb by now, having nationalized industry, if they didn't start talking about socialism. What do you expect? And they have an orientation. This is what Guevara says: "Basing itself on the giants, Marx and Engels, and developing with successive steps and with personalities like Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, and the new Soviet and Chinese rulers, it establishes a body of doctrine -- and, let us say, examples to follow." That's very good, isn't it? I mean, Marx and Engels are good. Lenin is good. Stalin and Mao Tse-tung, two leaders of Russia and Communist China, are examples to be followed by the empirical minded?

Well, if you want such people in the Trotskyist movement that's up to you. There is no real immediate danger to our party. If our party was in Cuba that would be the end of our party. I mean its dissolution, in the way it has meant with Pablo, into the Fidelista movement.

I urge the comrades to watch what happens in Cuba. See what direction Cuba moves. That's all. Just watch what happens.

And in addition to watching, remember a bit.

January 14, 1961.

SUMMARY SPEECH ON CUBAN QUESTION

By Joseph Hansen

First I would like to take up some of the observations by comrades who participated in the discussion. I was very much interested in Comrade Kirk's remarks -- the criticism he made of the leadership as displaying an empirical tendency -- and he noted the fact that I seem to be apologizing for our theoretical discussion. I want to apologize for seeming to be apologetic about this.

All I was attempting to do was to explain the fact that in the Cuban revolution we started out with political positions and that at a certain point, it became imperative from a political viewpoint to turn towards theory.

I think it's one of the strong points of the SWP that in nearly all questions that come before us we take a political position. We don't abstain, or it's very seldom that we abstain, and we generally immediately arrive at a political position. That's one of our strong points.

But I would agree with him that there is a tendency in our party towards empiricism, that's one of the things that we have to be observant about. As a matter of fact, it was called very sharply to our attention by Comrade Trotsky way back in the struggle with Burnham and Shachtman. So we'll do what we can to keep alert on that front. I'll make a bloc with him on that.

I'll also make a bloc with him on Latin America. I think that we have been a bit remiss -- in fact I'd use stronger terms than that -- in our responsibility in regard to Latin America. I hope that in the coming period we can make up for this. Surely that will be one of the good things about the Cuban revolution if it forces us to do this in spite of our love for the American scene.

Now on Comrade Bert Deck's position -- that in October 1959 he would like to put the date for the workers state. He hinges this, I think, on the fact that the state rests on bodies of armed men, on repressive forces, that they were organized and in power and the state force rested on them, on these bodies of armed men. I would agree with Bert that there began to be an alteration in the state from the very beginning when Castro came to Havana and smashed Batista's army and Batista's police force, and replaced them by these bodies of armed men. The state structure began to be altered, I think. But I don't think it was carried through to a conclusion, to a qualitative point of conclusion that we could recognize by October 1959.

The reason for this is that Castro smashed these forces for a political reason. It was to assure the victory over Batista. He had Guatemala in mind -- the experience of Guatemala. He didn't intend to be caught in that trap the way the Guatemalans were. This was the consciousness behind these bodies of armed men at that time and therefore it remained to be seen whether or not these bodies of armed men would become at a certain stage the guardians

of planned economy, a nationalized economy. That remained to be seen. And it was not until this occurred, in my opinion, that you could characterize Cuba as a workers state in the absence of a socialist consciousness in the leadership.

Now this leads to what I think is an error in Bert's position. He sees when Castro came into power -- and holding it to be a workers state more or less, at least definitively by October 1959 -- that a terrible "backsliding" occurred. Namely, Castro set up a coalition government with bourgeois-liberal democrats in the key positions. That was "backsliding." But if you take the viewpoint that when this party, or this Movement, came into power on January 1, 1959, that all it sought was to bring its revolution to its political consummation, then there was no backsliding. That was how it viewed the revolution at that point, that's why it put that coalition government into power. Therefore it becomes very necessary, in my opinion, in following the stages of the Cuban revolution, to see what happened to this coalition government and when it ended, what it was replaced by and what qualitative differences occurred in these stages.

It seems to me that it was correct to pay attention, to watch very carefully, to pay very close attention to this government that replaced the coalition government -- to see what it did -- because this may not be the last of this kind of governments in this world, given what's happening in the revolutionary movements abroad.

Fred asked the question about democracy in Cuba, the essence and the form, so forth and so on. I don't know if I can get into this in the brief time I have for a summary, but I'll try to take it up later in connection with another question. So I just want to leave that one aside and not refer again to Fred's question. I don't want anybody to think I don't try to answer questions.

Now I come to Tim's position, the position of the three comrades who hold the minority viewpoint. I don't know, maybe we can reach a bloc with Tim. He stresses the possibility of retrogression in Cuba. We have that in our majority document, the possibility of retrogression. It's there. He says that he doesn't object to accepting the label "workers state." O.K., let's make a bloc. I'll agree that there's a danger of retrogression if you'll agree to call Cuba a workers state. Fair enough? It doesn't matter to you; it does to me. Let's be agreeable here. Let's make a bloc.

I can't share Comrade Tim's suspicion of this revolution, his admonitions and advice that we should be afraid of it, especially a leadership like Castro's that happens to win a revolution. I listened to him saying that all we've got ahead of us is "trouble, trouble, trouble," that we should be aware of the danger of this revolution, and so on. I had just the completely opposite feeling. When I got down there in Cuba with Farrell Dobbs, I felt I was a fish in water. All my life I've been a fish out of water. Here it is, real water. Let's start swimming. Morris: "That's a long time for a fish to be out of water." Joe: "You're not a dialecti-

cian." Now I think -- someone passed me a note in relation to this -- in relation to a revolution, one revolutionary action is really worth a dozen revolutionary programs. I don't know who said that. Maybe there's some expert here on the works of Marx and Engels who knows who said that. /Tom: "I said that."/

I think that's the feeling all the comrades have when they go down to Cuba. The thing they see there is the revolutionary action and it's this revolutionary action that so impresses them, makes them feel as they do about the Cuban revolution.

I want to get onto the methodological question here, because it was raised by Tim in the very beginning and it has some interest, in my opinion. First of all, I think he makes an improper estimate of empiricism. There's one thing that Marxism, in my opinion, has in common with empiricism: It starts with the facts. We have no differences with the empiricists on that. We, like the empiricists, start with the facts. All Marxism is grounded on the facts, the same as the empiricists. There's no difference there. Where we do differ with the empiricists is in this: Their tendency is to stay with the facts, to stick with the facts and then when they attempt to generalize, one type of them never generalizes at all but simply keeps before it all the time the facts, without generalizing; another tendency will make an inadequate generalization, or a third kind will make an abstraction -- will make a generalization that is altogether too abstract. And that's where we differ with these various schools of empiricism.

But on the facts we do not differ. As a matter of fact, if you haven't read Capital, I suggest you read the first sentence and see where Karl Marx started. What did he start with? Anyone read Capital here?

Now I think Tim's basic methodological error is the following -- I'll list a number of places where he goes wrong on methodology, since it's been raised. His main error is that he isolates Cuba. He considers it in abstraction from the world scene. He leaves out the effect of American imperialism upon it, he leaves out the effect of the Soviet bloc on it, he leaves out the effects of the colonial revolutions. All these pressures, in which Cuba is locked. In other words, he begins abstractly. Now he accuses me of thinking in abstractions. He advises me somewhere or other, not to think in abstractions. I've got to confess that I'm guilty of that. Sometime around about the age of three, I suddenly realized that I was having an enjoyable experience -- abstractions were in my mind. And it was so pleasant that I kept it up year after year, year after year, until I finally read Hegel. There I discovered that it is not a vice. As a matter of fact, there is no other way to think except in abstractions.

No other way of thinking except in abstractions. So I plead guilty to that. The difference between Tim and me on this point is that he uses the most abstract abstractions and I think I use more concrete abstractions than he uses. For example: He will use the term petty bourgeois -- petty-bourgeois leadership, petty-bourgeois following. But he never qualifies it. He never gives me any dis-

tinctions in this abstraction. He never gives me any specifications about these abstractions. What kind of petty-bourgeois government? What kind of petty-bourgeois leadership? Is it radical? How radical? I just see this "petty bourgeois," sort of a gray abstraction that just says nothing that relates concretely -- concrete abstractions -- with the reality in Cuba.

And that is why it is that he misses the contradictory character of the phenomena we see in Cuba. You can make an abstraction of the Castro movement and with a sufficient number of abstractions, putting them together, you can see that this is a very contradictory movement, opposite tendencies. On the one side, tendencies leaning toward the bourgeoisie; on the other side tendencies leaning toward the working class, the proletariat. And you can pick up the New York Times or the counterrevolutionary press from Cuba and you can get the names of these different tendencies as they are moving away and separating from each other. All we can say of this is that if it is a petty-bourgeois tendency, it is one of a very contradictory character. And we have to name these contradictions and follow them.

And because he misses the contradictions in these different forces in Cuba, he also misses the dynamism of its movement. He doesn't see it in its origin, where it began, at least he sees where it begins, but he doesn't see it in the combination of its origin and where it is today and where it is going tomorrow. You've got to see that in a combination. It began petty bourgeois, democratic, bourgeois; it's moving to socialism at the present time. Now combine those. You get a very contradictory phenomenon, don't you. It's abstractions, of course. It's from those abstractions that we take our positions. He misses this dynamism of the movement, its flow and therefore he misses on his political approach to it. He ends up in a static position that's neither fish nor fowl. It's so abstract that he can't even name it. Can you be more abstract than that?

Now he makes quite a point of not having any labels for the transitional forms he admits are there. Comrade Robertson made a strong point about this. You have a moving, transitional process in Cuba, but we can't name it. Well, the question arises: A moving process going through transitions. Does it proceed in its movement through forms? Yes or no? Show me anything in this world that doesn't move through forms. I'd like to see that, I really would.

Everything goes through forms. All right. Is our language so impoverished that you can't name them? We can find a name for almost anything. I can even find a name if I think real hard that says "movement," can't I? What have I named when I've said "movement"? Something that's not fixed, something that's in transition. But I have no difficulty at all finding in the language a word for it.

Now what word do we use in the case of Cuba? For the kind of thing that is in movement -- in movement from capitalism to socialism? "Workers state." Does that mean the process is finished? No. If you think that, it means you just misunderstood the term,

that's all. We use that term in order to describe a moving reality. Is that so difficult, so hard to think of a word like that? Of its content?

So the cry to watch out for labels is -- rather, falls, on a very barren ground. Now the same thing holds all up and down the line. We get an abstraction like this: A state which we cannot name which can move in either of two directions without a revolution -- or a counterrevolution. You can have a sort of degeneration that occurs without any counterrevolution or you can have a positive process without any revolution.

I can't possibly conceive of anything that's more abstract than that. No revolution, no counterrevolution, can move in either of two directions and you cannot name it. That's almost as bad as Kant's "unknowable thing in itself," isn't it? Nobody knows what a thing in itself is.

Then we come to the question, what kind of government, what kind of state permits that kind of process? What kind of state is it? That's something really novel in this world, isn't it? The kind of state that can permit this process to go toward revolution or counterrevolution, I mean towards socialism or back toward capitalism without a revolution or counterrevolution? What kind of a government, what kind of state, permits that? No labels at all. You can't think of any.

Finally, we come to this question, along the same lines. These bourgeois democrats -- the comrades of the minority admit -- have carried through some very, very profound changes. Now can they do this and still remain bourgeois democrats? Is that possible in this world? We get no answer to that at all. We're left with the beginning as bourgeois democrats, admissions are made that they have made great social changes, and then we're left without any designations whatsoever of this phenomenon. In other words, we're given the worst possible kind of an abstraction.

Same way on the question of trade. Trade can go either way. Towards the Soviet Union or towards the United States. It can occur this way: The U.S. State Department might get smart, by some fluke, and if they get smart by some fluke, what will happen? Trade will resume with the United States, the revolution will unwind.

What is more abstract than "the State Department getting smart"? How does this occur? What forces cause it to do that? Just ask one little question: What would be the effect in Latin America if the State Department got smart and resumed its relations with Cuba? Imagine little Cuba with a victory like that! What would happen in the rest of Latin America? Now. Does the State Department think of that, realize it? I rather think they do. It's a very, very real world, and there are no flukes like that. The truth of it is that Cuba puts both the United States and the Soviet Union on the spot. It's not just the United States and the Soviet Union that run this world; it's also revolutions in this world that are breaking through all over. They are of very great

concern to both the Soviet leadership and the U.S. leadership.

Can the Soviet Union simply disregard this and make a deal without paying any attention to the effect this would have on Africa, on the rest of Latin America, the Middle East? They have very powerful political considerations for watching out in carrying out such a policy. So the thing that concerns the Soviet Union is the effect on the rest of the world and what concerns the United States if it tries anything down in Cuba is how it affects Latin America. And these are very, very real forces.

I want to go fast here, because I have only ten minutes left and it's hard to give a four-hour speech in that.

Comrade Shane's parallels with Bolivia -- completely abstract, completely abstract. He leaves out little items like this: the depth of the revolution in Bolivia and the depth of the revolution in Cuba. He leaves out the role of American imperialism in Cuba and its role in Bolivia. He leaves out the intermediate link of Guatemala and the experience that Guatemala gave to the Cuban revolution. He leaves out of account too the relative difference between the leadership in Cuba and the leadership in Bolivia. He leaves out of account the political commitment of the Castro leadership to the course they have taken. They staked their heads on this course. That's left out of consideration. Because of that, we naturally leave out also, since it doesn't follow from such abstractions, we leave out completely the question of a civil war, an invasion which would be required to turn things over in Cuba. Not in Bolivia.

All these things are left out, you see, so that we get a barren analogy between Bolivia, an abstraction -- Cuba an abstraction. And that's the extent of the analysis that's involved here.

There are a lot of good points here I'm going to have to pass up. Let me come to the question of party building.

Murry made a very good point, I thought, that the Stalinists, that is the Soviet Union under its current leadership, cannot trap these new leaderships. I think he was dead right about that. What happened in Cuba was the by-passing of the Stalinist movement and that's a tremendous world fact now.

That relates to the observation Comrade Morris made that before 1917 you could not have envisaged a leadership like this carrying through a successful revolution. As a matter of fact, historic records show that you could not before that, because it was this kind of thing that Auguste Blanqui tried in France, in those years before the Paris Commune. It was an experience, you see, that was already tried.

So. Here we have this kind of a leadership in this kind of a situation. We have to explain how it could occur, which we did our best to. And this is a new factor that has to be taken into consideration now when we come to the question of party-building, and especially party-building in Cuba.

How do we proceed in Cuba? We'll get down to practical cases now as to how we proceed. What do we do in Cuba to build a revolutionary-socialist party? The first thing we try to do is to find a point of agreement with whatever revolutionary-minded forces there may be in that country. In other words, we seek points of support in the working class there or in allies of the working class in Cuba. So, our first problem therefore in presenting ourselves to these people, with our name and address, 116 University Place, is to present ourselves in the most favorable possible light. Number one: As defenders of the Cuban revolution. And that's what we've tried to do.

Number two: As explainers of the Cuban revolution and as explainers of its relation to the whole world revolution and the struggle against American imperialism. That's what we've been trying to do.

We've been trying to do that in the Militant since January 1, 1959. In other words, we have been party-building in Cuba right along, and I don't know if anybody noticed it. Apparently, some comrades didn't notice it.

What were we doing with those articles? Just writing for the fun of writing? The fun of observing the Cuban revolution? In a pig's eye. We were working there with a design, we were always writing with regard to its influence in Cuba, that is, party-building influence.

Hence, the next thing we try to do is through this process to attract by the power of our ideas and the power of our example to attract forces that are the most like us in Cuba. So we also look for that kind of forces in Cuba. We look for forces that are moving in our direction. And our attitude toward them is very, very friendly. We don't start out by saying, "Now watch out! You've got a revolution in Cuba! Trouble, trouble, trouble! Beware of Castro! He's bourgeois. His following is petty bourgeois!" You don't begin that way in Cuba. We have to have the utmost friendliness toward these forces down there.

We have a decided advantage in relation to the whole Castro movement. They don't shoot us. That's a big advantage, isn't it? They don't shoot us. They don't put us in prison. /Tim: "Wait a little longer." Joe: "Well, don't get yourself shot before that point comes, you know. You can be afraid of death, but there's no point being too afraid, too long in advance. That's a sign of old age, not youth."/

Now let's take an example or two that were brought up in the discussion here of our relationship with this movement. Comrade Tim makes a big point that Guevara makes himself out to be a natural Marxist and that from this viewpoint, Hitler too was a natural Marxist. I listened to that and I couldn't comprehend what this would mean. Hitler was a fascist, wasn't he? He never admitted to being a Marxist, never admitted to being sympathetic toward it; as a matter of fact, he was at the opposite pole. What's Guevara? Is he like Hitler in that sense? A natural Marxist, like

Burnham's dialectical fox? No, Guevara is a revolutionary figure, a leader of a revolution that has overthrown American imperialism, fighting tooth and nail to hold the island there, and he's moving in the direction of Marxism. What should we do about that -- say, "Well, Hitler too is a natural Marxist." What kind of an approach is that?

Guevara admits that they were dim on theory but that they stumbled into some laws that were proclaimed by Marx. He admits the importance, therefore, of Marxist theory. This means nothing? "Trouble, trouble, you've got to watch out, he'll throw us for a loop."

Let me give you an example of the kind of "Stalinism" that Guevara advocates. It's easy to pick out a remark of his where he says the great leaders you've got to follow are Mao, Stalin, so forth and so on. When he was in the Soviet Union he issued a statement hailing the Declaration of 121 Parties. You see things like peaceful coexistence was a good thing, and he made some other similar remarks. When you read them for sense you say, "Well, they're very diplomatic as to relationships with the Soviet Union." But he went a step further. He said this: "In Moscow they have tremendous appreciation of the Cuban revolution. They think the Cuban revolution shows the pattern for Latin America. They're very much in favor of having our revolution continue." Remarks along those lines. He says: "Our revolution in Cuba is comparable to the one in the Soviet Union in 1917." Now, is that Stalinism as we knew it before? There's a little different content there, isn't there? So what Guevara says not only has the effect of bringing Stalinism into Cuba but it also has the reverse effect of bringing the Cuban revolution into the Soviet Union. Are you against that? I think it is very good. I wish they'd publish his book in the Soviet Union about guerrilla warfare. I hope they do. I hope there's enough pressure from the inside to force them to do something like that.

Now Tim's approach is that the greatest internal danger in Cuba is the character of the leadership and he adduces from this that they would not have proceeded beyond the agrarian reform had it not been for imperialism. Dead right. But they were under the pressure of imperialism. And therefore they moved in the direction that they went. You cannot substitute for the reality an abstraction that is completely imaginary, taking abstractions to I don't know what nth degree of abstraction. Our way of meeting this danger that resides in the petty-bourgeois character of that leadership is to meet it. Get closer to them. Be friendly with them insofar as they're moving in a revolutionary-socialist direction as they have in some of these tremendous things.

The minority approach is to abstract all this from politics, to abstract the whole thing from the real situation that exists there. A remarkable example of this is their attitude toward the Cuban Communist party. They accuse us of feeling that the Cuban Communist party is reformable, so why throw it into the document. What's their answer? No policy toward the CP in Cuba? What kind of an abstraction is that? Remove yourself from the reality. The

Cuban Communist party exists! It's faced with a revolutionary victory. There are various currents in it. Shouldn't we turn in that direction too as well as the Castro movement? I think we should. All the forces that exist in Cuba we should look around for. The fact that we put the Cuban CP in there, in the document itself, shows that you made a wrong deduction when you said that we're concentrating on the Castro movement. It's not true that we're concentrating just on the Castro movement. We're interested in any force in Cuba which is interested in the problems of the revolution. You can't get more abstract than to refrain from having a policy toward the Cuban Communist party. It exists, you know.

Now, further than building the party in Cuba. We don't go to Cuba as teachers. We don't go there to tell them about the importance of the Socialist Workers party in this country, how much more important it is than their revolution in Cuba. That's the wrong approach. We don't go there to tell them how to make a revolution. We don't have one behind us and they have one. You're at a disadvantage. We don't tell them how to run their revolution. They're running it and we aren't. We go there as learners because there's a lot to learn in Cuba and they're very, very sensitive about that, especially someone from America with their typical arrogant attitude toward Latin America. You've got to go there as a learner, not as a teacher.

If you do that, take that kind of approach -- it's very politically important to take that kind of approach -- if you take that kind of approach, then you have the possibility of discussing with them some very big problems that affect their revolution. Like how to fight American imperialism, about how can we help them to extend their revolution in Latin America, about certain things to watch out for in relation to the Soviet Union since we've had long experience along those lines. That's the kind of approach we've been taking toward them and it's paid off.

I think there's a tendency in the comrades here when they think about the building of the party in relation to Cuba -- they've got everything upside down. They act from the organizational side, don't they? You know, you've got to have a party with members, cards if you're not in the underground, and it's open and so on. You start from the organizational side.

Our approach has been the other way around. To start from the conceptual side, the programmatic side, the explanation of world reality and where the Cuban revolution fits in. We've been doing that in our paper, with as big headlines as we could possibly get, mailing as many as we could to Cuba. That's how we approached this. But our tendency has been -- I mean the tendency of many comrades -- is to take a narrow, organizational view as to how to organize the party.

I just want to indicate one other big mistake that I've noticed in this. When Castro came to the U.N. they had this reception for him at the Hotel Theresa. Some of our comrades were up there and during the evening they sat down and began to talk to the

Cuban revolutionaries there. Our comrades were amazed. Every point that they took up about capitalism, about imperialism, monopolies, the need for revolution, not only did they get agreement from these people, but they got enthusiasm. What was the reaction of our comrades? "My God, come down to 116 University Place. How about signing you up for the party?"

They didn't actually go that far but the feeling was, "What a hot contact this diplomat is! What a hot contact this army commandante is! Why he's the kind of contact we've been waiting for all our life." And the conclusion was, bring them in the party so they can organize a party down there just like ours.

You see, they already have their own movement, with a successful revolution behind them and you have to realize this when you approach them. That's the big consideration when you come to the organizational side.

That's the reason why, in the Militant, and in this document, there is a certain abstractness to what we say about the party. It's abstract, because we leave out the organizational questions, the organizational side, and at this stage we hammer on concepts, on the defense we are making, on showing in every possible way, through our whole paper, what Trotskyism is, what Trotskyism stands for, our debate with the CP, the social democrats and all that. They read the whole paper, you see. They read the whole magazine, pamphlets, and all like that. And this has the effect of bringing into their own thinking the concepts we think they would find valuable.

That's the kind of approach that we have. I think it has paid off very well. The evidence cited of our election campaign and the effect that it had down there; those who go down there and see the standing of the Militant and that sort of thing. That's what's actually happening. So it's a gross falsification -- I don't want to say falsification, that's a factional word -- it's a misunderstanding of what we're interested in down there to say that our whole policy is designed to win Castro over to the SWP. It's not that at all. All we're trying to do is to present Trotskyism to them in the most attractive possible way. And as things begin to break down there, we'll play it by ear and I think you can depend on us to play it pretty good.

The motion that the majority has is to approve the general line of the Theses with the exception of paragraph seven.

January 14, 1961.

PLENUM VOTE ON CUBAN QUESTION

Motion by Majority: To approve general line of "Draft Theses on the Cuban Revolution," with exception of Paragraph 7.

Motion by Tim: To support general line of minority memorandum, "The Cuban Revolution and Marxist Theory," with particular reference to -- (a) the petty-bourgeois nature of the Cuban leadership; (b) the transitional nature of the Cuban state; (c) the need for an independent Marxist party in Cuba.

Roll Call Vote

For Majority Motion

Regular: Dobbs, Stein, Hansen, Murry, Roberts, Kerry, Wood, Farmer, Porter, Myra, Alvin, Blake, Sloan, Lang, Anderson, Sharon, Kelly, Warde, Kirk, Fine 20

Consultative

Alternates: Lavan, Harry, Frances (with statement), Stevens, Dee, Dick, Bert (with statement), Fred, Tom L., Reed, Ball 11

Control Commission: A. Farmer, Aubrey 2

Total For Majority 33

For Minority Motion

Regular: None 0

Consultative: Tim 1

Total For Minority 1

Statement by Bert and Frances: "A workers state was established in Cuba in October 1959. The decisive turning point was accomplished with the formation of the peoples militia which followed the break of Castro forces with the bourgeois democracy."

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