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Contents

	<u>Page</u>
1. THE TRANSITION FROM BOURGEOIS TO WORKERS STATE IN CUBA -- by Allen Taplin	1
2. "POLITICAL TOGETHERNESS" OR STRUGGLE? By Rose Jersawitz and Fred Mazelis	3
3. DANGER SIGNALS IN CUBA -- by Trent Hutter	12
4. THE NATURE OF THE STATE IN CUBA By Shane Mage	25
5. THE CONSCIOUS ELEMENT IN SOCIAL PROCESS By Tim Wohlforth	36
6. REMARKS ON "THE CONSCIOUS ELEMENT IN SOCIAL PROCESS" -- by Arthur Phelps	40

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THE TRANSITION FROM BOURGEOIS TO WORKERS STATE IN CUBA

By Allen Taplin

Underlying all the structural changes in Cuba is the class struggle which continued uninterruptedly through them, and is still going on. At what point in this struggle can it be said that the workers took state power?

The thoroughgoing nationalizations of August-October 1960 reveal a qualitative change which can now be undone only through protracted civil war. The social effect of the nationalizations was to destroy a decisive section of the bourgeoisie as a class having state-protected ownership rights to the surplus-value produced by the nation's workers. The government took their legal right and the militia took their physical right. Unlike nationalization in such countries as England, where it serves only to make more efficient surplus-value extraction in the rest of industry, the Cuban nationalizations were thoroughgoing, extending "to the nails in their boots."

Neither a bourgeois nor a petty-bourgeois government would take such actions. The present state can represent neither those expropriated nor the small numbers of capitalists who continue to run their businesses. Only a workers government would, or could, do such things. Does this mean then that a workers state must have already been in existence? In a way it does. While the nationalizations mark the new state as definitely established, it didn't by itself create the new state.

In searching for the date of establishment the important thing to note is the progress of the social struggle. In the government, the break between the classes came to the surface with the break in the coalition and the establishment of the militia. The formation of the militia indicates that a workers state power -- though perhaps not yet fully in existence -- was surely in the process of becoming. It shows that a workers state was being established through the class struggle. While a workers militia is only one of the forms through which the content of a workers state is expressed, it is surely one of the most important of those forms.

It is not always incumbent upon Marxists to locate a qualitative social change on some specific date. Sometimes it can be located, as on October 25, 1917, when a supremely decisive event occurred on a single date. It would have taken a civil war to change the state power after October 26. But sometimes qualitative changes can only be understood if the slower aspects of their development are noted. (Even natural physical changes occur both abruptly and slowly at the same time. Water for instance turns from liquid to solid ice all at one temperature, 32°F., but it never stops losing heat during this time. In fact it takes much molecular movement, great heat loss, to accomplish this seemingly abrupt change.)

A formula for the transition to the workers state in Cuba would go like this: it began with the new state-form of the militia, the state became firmly established with the new state-form of the nationalized industry, and will reach a higher and

"POLITICAL TOGETHERNESS" OR STRUGGLE?

By Rose Jersawitz and Fred Mazelis

The tactical problems and differences experienced by the party in its recent political work represent differences in political approach reflected theoretically in the opposing views on the Cuban question at the plenum of the National Committee. We find this difference in political approach nowhere more clearly defined than in Joe Hansen's summary speech to the plenum:

"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." (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 16.)

The comrades who associated themselves in the minority document have had a totally different approach. Their approach has been based on the understanding that the leadership of the Cuban revolution, while sincere and honest, is not a Marxist leadership, and has much to learn if it is to lead the revolution to ultimate success. The minority point of view is very adequately stated by the following excerpt from a previous party discussion:

". . . it must clearly be understood that we cannot recruit from the Stalinist circles on the basis of attempting to demonstrate that we have a better program for the realization of common aims (emphasis in original). To the contrary we must prove and demonstrate that ours is the sole correct program and leadership and that the Stalinist program and leadership can lead only to betrayal and defeats." (Emphasis added.) (Internal Bulletin, Vol. 15, No. 1, February 1953, p. 22.)

The above was excerpted from a document by Comrades Ring and Stevens, written in the midst of the discussion and political struggle which led to the Cochranite split in the SWP. We think that, while Castro cannot be classified as from "Stalinist circles," the entire Cuban revolutionary leadership and those it has radicalized can be compared in general political approach with many of the leftward-moving elements emerging from the Communist party and its milieu in the recent period. The general political approach toward the Cuban revolution should be as is outlined by the above statement. It is obvious from Joe's plenum summary that it is not.

Our tradition has been to tell the full truth as we see it. We do not pull any punches in our disagreements with other tendencies. When other tendencies have been friendly, when they have

been moving towards us, our tradition has been to make our criticisms known in a friendly manner. Of course, it is obvious that precisely when a regroupment of tendencies or our tactics toward this regroupment are involved, it is especially important to clarify just what the differences are. Furthermore, a difference in approach which involves a hesitancy to utilize the entire Trotskyist program in the course of general propaganda, is a difference in "tone" which reflects a political difference.

This difference in tone is in part what has distinguished us from the Pabloites. They often refrain from clear criticism of Stalinists and certain left Social-Democrats. In the Belgian general strike the Pabloites avoided criticizing the "left" section of the strike leadership. In articles in the Fourth International, they have handled the Chinese CP leadership with kid gloves. The nature of Pabloism in the matter of political tone and what it reveals is further indicated by the complete documents of the 6th World Congress of the Fourth International.

The political approach of the Cochranites was implied in part by what was quoted above. The following excerpt from the same article is also instructive:

"If, on the other hand, the danger of sectarian decay is viewed simply as a theoretical possibility -- then a more rounded view should be taken. Why take for granted only the danger of sectarian decay? One can speak with at least as much validity of the theoretical possibility of the danger of opportunistic efforts to break out of our isolation. Actually it has been largely in periods of proletarian upsurge that history has demonstrated the danger of lagging behind the masses in sectarian isolation from them. Periods of reaction and isolation usually witness the development of opportunist tendencies to leap beyond the limits of the situation and over the head of the mass movement. This is an expression of impatience with the historic process and of a desire to find short cuts to success." (Internal Bulletin, Vol. 15, No. 1, p. 23.)

We think this is a very perceptive comment, and we believe that the position of Comrades Stevens and Ring in the present discussion represents precisely "impatience with the historic process and a desire to find short cuts to success."

* * *

How are the differences in political approach reflected in the day-to-day political work of the party, and in the party press? In our political work the differences have been expressed primarily in the arenas of regroupment and the defense of the Cuban revolution. In the press they have been reflected by what we consider to be a general dullness of political theory and analysis.

The treatment of Kerala and Tibet are cases in point. The Militant reprinted some articles, in one case (Tibet) from the newspaper of the Ceylonese LSSP, and in the other case (Kerala) from the newspaper of the Indian Trotskyists. In the case of

Kerala we added two articles to the editorial which we reprinted from the Indian Militant. The paper dealt well with the specific political questions involved, but did not generalize these questions, did not use Marxist theory in arriving at a worked-out view of these questions and the role of Stalinism. There is a difference between immediate appraisal and an analysis which permits us to predict the course of events even before "all the facts are in." We seemed to be making the error of believing that these questions were primarily questions for those on the scene and not for us. This recalls an exchange between Prof. Stanley Moore and Murry Weiss at a symposium on Deutscher's "The Prophet Unarmed," sponsored by the YSA in the fall of 1959. Moore, who writes occasionally for Monthly Review, remarked in answer to a comment from the audience that Lenin's chief error was that he thought he could analyze situations and give advice to revolutionists all over the world, and that he should not have interfered in such questions. Such a view has nothing in common with a Marxist approach.

Some time before this period, in the middle of regroupment, the review of John Gates' book in the Militant was in our opinion an example of the kind of error that was being made with increasing frequency in that period and is now being repeated on a different issue. The review did not clearly differentiate political positions. This occurred long after the "open approach" became unnecessary and a positive hindrance in clarifying the political situation and recruiting the best elements from the CP and the Gates' milieu. It was an example of softness toward opportunism.

So much did the press slide into the uncritical approach to some of the elements from the CP periphery with whom we had been working, that the Berkeley-Oakland branch of the SWP in August 1959 felt obliged to send a letter to the Political Committee criticizing the editorial, "A Welcome Thaw," in the August 10, 1959, Militant. The opening sentence of the editorial referred to the then current thaw in the cold war as ". . . a victory for the forces of peace over the warmongers."

* * *

How has the party intervened in new situations? We think it has shown a healthy ability to take advantage of new opportunities. The clearest examples of this kind of party work are the work in regroupment and in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. In all of this work the party has rejected sectarianism. Notably in regroupment the party resisted the sectarian approach of the Marcyites, whose criticisms of regroupment were made within the framework of a desire to cut the party off from this arena. Our criticism of party work both in regroupment and in the Cuban defense arena can be generally stated in the following way: Although the party has successfully rejected sectarianism in this work, it has acted as though there was no longer any danger of opportunist errors. It has ignored very real and concrete tendencies toward opportunism in our ranks; it has ignored the necessity for a reaffirmation of Trotskyism. Perhaps our struggle with the Marcyites had something to do with this reaction. Whatever the causes, some comrades can only see a danger from sectarianism. Many comrades deny in prac-

tice the possibility of opportunist mistakes. This attitude has been reflected in our press as shown above.

Our work in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee has the same major validity which the regroupment tactic had, but the same mistakes are also being made. There has been an extraordinary hesitancy in New York about selling the Militant at public Fair Play meetings. The local has often restricted itself to one person distributing old Militants and comrades selling "The Truth About Cuba." We should, however, aim to reach the Fair Play milieu with more than old newspapers and a propaganda pamphlet on the Cuban revolution. The general political line should be there with sales of our newspaper and magazine. Although this may seem to be a small tactical error, it reflects a wrong attitude.

In discussion in the New York Local on our Fair Play work many comrades have emphasized that we are not neglecting our work of reaching Fair Play members and giving them our ideas so that we may recruit the most conscious people. This personal contact work is fine. What is also important, however, and is being neglected, is the public presentation of our program in a propagandistic fashion.

We refer above to reflection in the press of softness to opportunism. One more example of this is especially important -- the treatment of Huberman and Sweezy. These academic Marxists have basically not changed their spots. We welcome their support and defense of the Cuban revolution, but this in no way invalidates the crucial errors which they make. Actually, Huberman and Sweezy have incorrectly concluded that the Cuban revolution is a justification of their theory that a revolutionary Marxist party is not a requirement for a successful socialist revolution. Trotskyism has a position directly opposite to this: A conscious Marxist leadership is essential for the success of a genuine social revolution in the epoch of imperialist decay, for the consolidation of what we have called a "healthy" workers state which is building socialism. The Cuban revolution has not invalidated this concept. We expect to see this position counterposed to the revisions of Marxism made by Huberman and Sweezy. This is particularly important because so many of our contacts in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee are influenced by the ideas of Monthly Review.

These are some of the mistakes that have been made. Our approach should take into account that Fair Play's program is and should be limited to defense of the Cuban revolution on a minimum basis. The committee cannot be expected to have all the "necessary" slogans at a given picket line, nor can a Fair Play for Cuba speaker be expected to have all the necessary arguments and theoretical clarity in debate with Social-Democratic and other sophisticated opponents of the Cuban revolution. Both of the above wrong ideas have been put forward by some comrades. They don't understand that it is our job to provide by means of a transitional approach the advanced political leadership in defense of the Cuban revolution. Not understanding this, comrades neglect our role, as has been shown above; the overall result is that, instead of recruiting Fair Play members to Trotskyism, comrades take on more

and more of the political coloration of Fair Play, which means in essence at present more and more of the political coloration of Monthly Review and similar groupings.

* * *

In the first period of the Cuban revolution, we think the press handled it quite well. We supported the overthrow of Batista and all of the progressive measures of the revolutionary government. At the same time we analyzed the program of the Castro leadership and frankly expressed where we thought it was lacking. In recent months, as we know, largely as a result of pressure from imperialism, widespread nationalizations have taken place in Cuba. The revolution has taken enormous and qualitative steps forward since it triumphed almost 2½ years ago. Is this any reason, however, for ceasing to state where the program of the 26th of July Movement is lacking? Shouldn't we continue to say what must be done to advance the revolution? This is how we best defend the revolution, particularly when it is fighting for its very existence.

The euphoria of the Cuban revolution has resulted in an inability to criticize the Castro leadership. Instead of presenting ourselves as the Marxist vanguard with a program for the Cuban revolution, we have uncritically observed and tail-ended the "natural" development of the revolution. Does this mean that the Cuban revolutionary leadership is "naturally Trotskyist" as well as "naturally Marxist"? Is the crisis of our epoch no longer a crisis of revolutionary leadership? Will the unfolding of objective history produce the required leadership? Lenin put it more eloquently in "What Is to Be Done?" in his polemic against the Economists and their hangers-on. (In the conclusion to Chapter 2): "Our grandfathers, in their old-fashioned wisdom used to say 'Any fool can bring forth children,' and today the 'modern Socialists' in their wisdom say 'Any fool can help the spontaneous birth of a new social order.'" Further, Lenin states: ". . . what else is the function of Social-Democracy (this term had of course a different meaning at that time) if not to be a 'spirit' not only hovering over the spontaneous movement but also raising the movement to the level of its programme?" (Emphasis in original.) Finally in polemicalizing against those who exalted onrushing "elemental outbursts" and overemphasized the objective factor in history, he states: ". . . those who have determined always to follow behind the movement like a tail, are absolutely and forever ensured against 'belittling the spontaneous element of development.'" Lenin continually emphasized (in the midst of revolutionary upsurge throughout the world) the need for ". . . an uninterrupted organization having continuity with the past and capable of leading the whole movement." Comrades who doubt that this criticism is at all applicable should examine our body of theory, a history which we must utilize. They should reread "What Is to Be Done?" and the last six months' of the Militant.

Recently Joe Hansen went to Mexico City to observe and report on the Latin-American Conference for National Sovereignty, Economic Emancipation, and Peace. Articles appeared in the March 20 and

27th issues of the Militant. Was there an analysis of the conference in these articles? No. The articles reported, making clear the "popular front" approach of many at the conference. "In political coloration, the conference extended from the left-bourgeois radicalism of former President Lazaro Cardenas to the terrorist inclinations of underground revolutionary fighters carrying on armed struggle against such dictators as Stroessner of Paraguay." The articles did not discuss the nature of Popular Frontism. Instead they described how the conference was "eager to present a united front against U.S. imperialism and in defense of the Cuban revolution." The second article went on to quote Vilma Espin de Castro: "We don't export revolutions, but neither are we able to prevent the example of Cuba from extending beyond our frontiers and revealing to brother peoples of our America and of the world that imperialism is not invulnerable and that when a united people decides to obtain its full liberty and its total independence there are no forces which can stop it." (Emphasis added.) If this reflects the view of the Cuban leaders, they have apparently not fully assimilated the lessons of their own experience. The term united people in the context used, at a conference attended and greatly influenced by Cardenas and others like him, can only mean the popular front concept, although it was presented most likely out of a naive sincerity, not a reformist ideology. The lessons of the Chinese and the Spanish revolutions are of course instructive on this point.

Though we support the general aims of this conference, we must point out the role of Cardenas and bourgeois nationalist figures like him. We must point out why we feel the defense and extension of the Cuban revolution must go beyond the politics of the Cardenases of Latin America, why the cause of the Cuban revolution should be the cause, not of all Latin America in a clearly multiclass sense as the Stalinists present it, but of the workers and peasants of Latin America opposed to their imperialist masters and their own bourgeoisies. The articles in the Militant pointed out none of this. The reporting of the Mexico City conference seems to throw overboard or at least hold in abeyance our opposition to the popular front.

The discussion at the plenum was also revealing in terms of the attitude of some comrades toward the Leninist conception of the revolutionary party. No one has repudiated this concept -- but many comrades seem to be revising or ignoring it.

Comrade Stevens attempted to deal with the question of the party at the plenum:

"I think that in the Theses implicitly, together with the need for soviets, is the need for an independent, conscious vanguard party of the workers. And even implicit in it is that this may come, in part at least, from the July 26 Movement." (Emphasis added.) (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 6.)

Comrade Stevens recognizes the need for a revolutionary Marxist party in Cuba, which is more than many comrades have said, particularly in the branch discussion. The error that he makes is

that he implies that the question of the vanguard will resolve itself automatically with time. This is not so. A different attitude towards the present leadership is required if we are to orient towards and assist in building a Marxist vanguard in Cuba. We must give up relying upon the objective reality to completely transform Castro into a Marxist. This is the Pabloite method for "building" the party. Is this yet another major area on which we now agree with the Pabloites? If so, we have not adequately assimilated the lessons of the split in the world Trotskyist movement.

Comrade Harry Ring stated the following in his remarks to the plenum:

"Now I am, however, for what Tim called a 'Pabloite line' in Cuba. The only difference between my feeling on the matter and that of the Pabloites is that I don't propose to give away anything programmatically to the Fidelistas. That in adapting ourselves towards them, so to speak, in orienting ourselves towards them, we do so with the very firm purpose of winning them over to our program, rather than liquidating our program, as has been the case with Pablo in relationship to Stalinism and other tendencies." (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 17.)

Of course the Pabloites don't intend to give anything away programmatically to the tendencies to which they adapt either, but that is somehow the way in which it works out. It works out that way because we cannot have it both ways. We must have either the approach which Harry presented in 1953, and which was quoted above, or the approach he presented at the plenum. Either we have the better program and the Pabloite line in relation to Cuba, or we have the sole correct program and the orthodox Trotskyist method of approach.

Comrades B. Farmer and C. Fine made similar remarks in the plenum discussion. Comrade Farmer discusses the Chinese and Yugoslav revolutions in connection with the Cuban revolution, and says the following:

"And that even though they were led by parties that weren't revolutionary in program, that the events and the struggle led them step by step through a process that we call permanent revolution to establishing workers states." (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 14.)

And Comrade Fine makes the following point:

". . . we never made it a condition that you must have a revolutionary party as necessary to characterize a country as a workers state, after they've begun planning and after they've developed monopoly of foreign trade.

"These have been the standard criteria for designating a number of countries as workers states." (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 27.)

These remarks are correct in a certain sense. These comrades are correct to go back to the Chinese and Yugoslav events, rather than glorying in the euphoria of the Cuban revolution and completely ignoring the role of the party. They leave one important concept out, however. They do not deal adequately with the deformation of the Chinese and Yugoslav workers states, owing to the fact that they did not have the required revolutionary leadership.

Farmer mentions the concept of deformation, but leaves it abstract. Even though these comrades have examined the Chinese and Yugoslav events, the characterization of the Cuban state as a workers state remains a totally new concept, and in our opinion, an incorrect one. In Cuba for the first time, a new kind of workers state has been set up without the aid of a revolutionary Marxist party, and this workers state is not deformed as in China or Yugoslavia, but is instead a transitional workers state, an undeveloped workers state, or a workers state which is in the process of developing further, as it has been variously described.

There are comrades who imply that a healthy workers state has been established in Cuba, and they have made a crude and unjustified revision of our theory. But what of the new concept of a developing workers state? We believe it is a concept which is perhaps more consistent with our theory, but it serves no useful purpose whatsoever, and has indeed proved harmful in obscuring the immense need for a Marxist leadership in Cuba. The concept of a developing workers state does not help us to better defend the Cuban revolution. It hinders this defense by leading to the view that the development of a healthy workers state is almost inevitable along with the transformation of the July 26 Movement into a Trotskyist movement (in essence, even if not in name) "in the course of struggle." This new concept leads to a fundamentally incorrect analysis of the tasks of the Cuban revolution and how they will be fulfilled. The minority point of view, on the other hand, defends the revolution by advocating the deepening of the revolution as the only way to consolidate the social transformations which have taken place, and establish a healthy workers state characterized by soviets and a revolutionary Marxist leadership. Barring the restoration of imperialist domination, the revolution can choose the paths of the deformed or healthy workers state. Until this choice is definitive, it is meaningless to apply the label workers state just as it was meaningless to apply this label prematurely in China. Meanwhile it is our task to concentrate on the advocacy of the political power in the hands of workers and peasants councils, and the setting up of a revolutionary, democratic centralist party. The development of soviets and the revolutionary party means in essence the development of the healthy workers state.

* * *

We feel the problems raised here are serious, and think that the development of the party in the past period goes a long way to explain them. It is clear from the above that we believe the majority has a Pabloite conception of the Cuban revolution. While the party has rejected Pabloism on other questions such as the Chinese revolution, it has clearly and drastically erred on Cuba.

The basic cause of this error is the extreme difficulty which a Bolshevik party encounters in striving to remain healthy through long periods of isolation and capitalist prosperity such as this one. This is the problem we are facing today. In a period such as this, there is a tendency for comrades to become pessimistic about the revolutionary potential of the working class (as have Huberman, Sweezy, and the New Left). In this mood the party blurs its program and looks for short cuts in recruiting new forces. This is just another way of stating what was quoted above, what was stated in our party eight years ago, at the time of the Cochranite fight and the subsequent split in the Fourth International. We believe the majority position represents the same opportunist error with which we were dealing at that time, particularly on an international scale. This error is at present an inconsistency among many correct concepts. We have before us a choice between the world views of orthodox Trotskyism and Pabloism, a choice which has been brought into focus and sharpened by the Cuban revolution. The extension of the majority view of Cuba to the rest of the world would be, we believe, the adoption by the party of the erroneous world view of Pabloism.

April 20, 1961.

DANGER SIGNALS IN CUBA

By Trent Hutter

Cuba cannot be called a capitalist state anymore. What we call a workers state is always a transitional form, and our terms "degenerated" or "deformed workers states" imply that a workers state is not necessarily a state in which the workers actually have political power. The economic infrastructure determines whether or not a state is a workers state. We defend workers states, even degenerated and deformed workers states, against imperialist attacks, just as we defend a union, even a bureaucratized one, against bourgeois attacks.

Let me first add a few more elementals of our movement: A successful revolution is indeed possible without a Bolshevik party. But without a revolutionary Marxist party a victorious revolution will soon be threatened by a degeneration of the new regime. Cuba does not at all contradict this.

Proletarian democracy is not a luxury. It is a decisive factor. Our movement always considered it a decisive criterion. We must always demand it lest we betray the working class. Workers democracy is an indispensable, organic part of the socialist idea. A workers state without workers democracy is bound to degenerate, and Cuba is no exception. The case of Commander William Morgan, the handling of "revolutionary justice" in Cuba clearly are symptoms of beginning degeneration, and I refuse to go along with the Militant's policy of either endorsing unreservedly the Castro propaganda line or refraining from comment. The Militant reads on the Cuban question like a New York edition of Revolution. I refuse to ever relegate to the attic, even temporarily, the principle of proletarian democracy.

What Is Workers Democracy?

It is true that Fidel has armed the Cuban people. But we tend to overrate the political significance of this move, important as it undoubtedly is. It is natural that the comrades who visited Cuba were much impressed by the encouraging spectacle of a victorious revolution, of the people in arms. Yet one comrade has said quite correctly that armed workers may well imagine they hold power and actually lack political control.

Fidel's ruling with the aid of giant mass meetings and four-hour television speeches is definitely not workers democracy. It corresponds to the classical methods of demagogic dictatorships. When Castro shouts "Do you want this?," and the crowd yells "Yes" or "No" -- whatever is required -- is that proletarian democracy? No, it is just the opposite. Do you think anyone in those crowds could express a view different from Fidel's? The orator asks a question, the crowd answers -- these propaganda tactics were used by Dr. Goebbels in his speech at the Berlin Sports Palace after Stalingrad to rekindle German morale. . . .

Proletarian democracy is not simply the rule of the majority. After all, the majority of the German people more or less supported Hitler from 1933 at least until Stalingrad. I believe that the great majority of the Cuban people support Fidel. That does not mean his regime is democratic. (Hitler also used the argument: "What regime could be more democratic than mine, since the overwhelming majority of the German people are behind me?")

Proletarian democracy spells the right of political minorities inside the revolutionary movement to express themselves freely. Proletarian democracy spells institutions that permit and guarantee free discussion of all questions connected with the aims of the revolution, its tactics, the administration of the workers state in the largest sense, its policies, laws and their application. In other words: workers' and peasants' assemblies of some kind -- some form of soviets. Or assemblies of the freedom fighters of the 26th of July Movement who made Castro's victory possible. There would be no revolution without them; should they not be allowed to control it? Unfortunately, they aren't.

Proletarian democracy also means that all public officials with political responsibilities are elected by the workers and poor peasants, and that they can be recalled and replaced any time if they do not work satisfactorily. Government controlled from below. In Cuba we see government from above, a political dictatorship. Yes, I am not afraid to pronounce this fateful word, which our comrades seem so reluctant to use concerning Cuba. To many, the Castro regime has become a holy cow. They desperately try to find excuses by vaguely speculating on some forms of democracy which are supposed to exist somehow, somewhere in Cuba -- but they have not been able to find them. Nor has anyone else for that matter. (What happened to our Marxist tradition of complete and accurate analysis?) Some comrades mention democratic organs that exist on cooperative farms or farmers' cooperatives and in other economic units; but these are not political organs. They help to organize production, as, for example, various committees and the unions do in the Soviet bloc countries and China, although I presume the corresponding Cuban committees may be less bureaucratized up till now. But that is not proletarian democracy. The Cuban workers do not determine government policies through Soviets and elected government officials. Nor do they elect representatives who carry out economic planning on a national scale.

Proletarian democracy also spells free unions. Under Batista the government ran the unions through its stooges. But after Fidel's victory the workers freely elected new leaders. The Castro government has since removed and imprisoned quite a few of these and replaced them with its own stooges, many of whom happen to be Stalinists. Who will deny this? And who will believe the propaganda story that the leaders elected by the workers after the revolution's triumph were agents of imperialism and reaction? The Castro government constantly interferes in the union's internal affairs and has imposed upon them its pro-Stalinist lackeys as leaders through obvious pressure. Lenin realized that even in a workers state the unions have to be independent from the state. They certainly are not independent in Castro's Cuba, despite

Castro believed in putting intellectuals with a doctor's degree in as many key-positions as possible. This reliance on intellectuals may be characteristic of Castro's bourgeois background. His policy is very much dominated by the thought "for the people but without the people" -- despite grandiose gestures of friendship for the workers and peasants. Being a sincere revolutionist nonetheless, he felt already in 1959 that he had to dissolve the coalition with the liberal intellectuals representing the bourgeoisie in the anti-Batista opposition, since the bourgeoisie was fighting his social reform program. The Cuban Stalinist party was numerically rather small; but a number of younger Cuban intellectuals sympathized with Stalinism; and when Fidel had to discard the bourgeois liberals, when the bourgeois intellectuals turned away from the revolution, Fidel's negative attitude toward workers' democracy was an added boon for the pro-Stalinist intellectuals.

When the imperialists' hostility drove Castro to an alliance with the Eastern bloc and China, it was inevitable that the influence of Khrushchev's (and Mao's) adherents and agents in Cuba should grow, and while the Castro regime still does not identify itself fully with the Kremlin regime, it has drawn much closer to the Stalinist world. And while we warmly welcome Soviet and Chinese aid to Cuba, we also must be aware of the dangers of depending on Soviet aid which has to be bought dearly where there is no competition between American and Soviet economic aid. There is no doubt in my mind as to the indirect and direct political Soviet pressure to which Cuba is exposed. It is useless to point out how small the Stalinist party is in Cuba: The Cuban Stalinists get a big boost through Soviet aid, and Soviet Stalinism does not merely work through the Cuban Stalinist party.

A commission of Mexican intellectuals reported on March 6, 1961, that the sale of Boris Pasternak's novel "Doctor Zhivago" is now forbidden in Cuba. I have not yet been able to check on the veracity of this information. If it is true, it is a most alarming symptom of Stalinization. In any case, it is a fact that all the anti-Stalinist revolutionists in high military positions (and here I mean, of course, supporters of the revolution's social program who opposed Stalinism, no bourgeois liberals) were not merely eliminated from their commands but in various instances sentenced for "treason" by revolutionary courts. Without ever examining the evidence -- or lack of evidence -- many comrades seem to endorse these sentences, although we ought to be particularly suspicious of frame-up trials. Some leaders may turn traitors in any revolution. But is it probable that so many authentic heroes of the partisan struggle should betray what they fought for, and -- what a coincidence! -- all of them anti-Stalinists?

The only major legal political party in Cuba is the Stalinist party. While all the non-Stalinist newspapers were forced to close down or were taken over by agents of the government -- and this does not apply merely to the former right-wing press -- the Stalinist daily Hoy appears unhindered. What about the 26th of July Movement? Isn't it a party, too? No, comrades, it isn't. After January, 1959, every attempt of prominent members of that movement

to transform it into a political party was rebuffed by Fidel, Raul and "Che" (Guevara), and that is how the situation has remained. The leaders of the Cuban revolution do not wish the 26th of July Movement to become a party with elected delegates, conventions, debates, resolutions -- and a potential threat to Stalinist penetration. The 26th of July Movement today mainly has some local functions, collaborates with the new administration that came from its ranks, provides propaganda and applause brigades but does not play a truly political role on a national scale. It is ruled from above and does not act as an autonomous body that would help in shaping national policies. There has never been so far a national debate of the movement's veterans on the goals and ways of the Cuban revolution. When the magazine Bohemia came out in favor of a similar assembly -- a suggestion that the Militant approved of -- pressure on its editor was considerably increased, and since this spelt the end of his expressing his thoughts freely in his magazine, he soon quit. But the Stalinist party and Hoy merrily go on. While the Militant did come out in favor of Bohemia's suggestion of an assembly of Cuban freedom fighters, it never criticized the subsequent suppression of what remained of freedom of the press inside Cuba's revolutionary movement.

Since when has Stalinism ceased to be the "syphilis of the labor movement"? Since when are we trying to minimize a manifest Stalinist penetration which can only bring about catastrophic results, if unchecked? Since when are we hanging on to the workers' shirrtails instead of showing them the way? Since when is proletarian democracy hardly worth talking about any more?

The possible difference between pro-Stalinist or Stalinist elements in Cuba and the Kremlin brand of Stalinism is no convincing argument. The decisive criterion is the question of workers' democracy. There are noteworthy differences between Moscow and Belgrade and between Moscow and Peking, as well as between Peking and Belgrade. But while some very timid steps toward workers' democracy were taken in Yugoslavia, no one will seriously claim genuine workers' democracy exists in that country. Stalinism is not the same in Moscow, Belgrade and Peking. It is probably more reactionary in Moscow than in either Belgrade or Peking. Yet all three regimes bear the basic features of Stalinism: the rule of a bureaucratic caste, the dictatorship of a leader who represents the bureaucracy's interests.

The leaders of the Cuban revolution have not yet hardened into a bureaucratic caste with special material privileges. They have shown remarkable idealism and material integrity. But without proletarian democracy, without any effective control from below, the danger of bureaucratization certainly exists. There are other forms of corruption than material corruption, and it is above all of those other forms that I am thinking at this moment. "Absolute power corrupts absolutely" -- and I am afraid that Fidel, Raul and Che Guevara are becoming somewhat power-drunk. (There is no guarantee at all that material corruption, too, will not arise later unless proletarian democracy wins.)

Cuba's pro-Stalinist leaders and Stalinists are not coming out for workers' democracy. This is a decisive criterion. They are still Stalinists or pro-Stalinist elements. And while their international outlook may indeed differ somewhat from the Kremlin's, let us not forget that the Kremlin is more powerful and that they often have to give in to Khrushchev, whose good will and economic and arms aid they badly need. Cuba's independence from Stalinism is decreasing, not increasing. The dangers at this moment are a civil war fomented by imperialism (counterrevolutionary units are operating in various areas, supplied with American weapons and equipment) and the undermining activity of Stalinism and pro-Stalinist currents from within. The Fidelista leadership has moved closer towards Stalinism because Stalinist intellectuals increased their already considerable influence in the government apparatus after the bourgeois liberals had left, because economically the regime depends so much on Soviet and Chinese assistance and is exposed to pressure from the Kremlin, and because there is a natural affinity between Fidel's authoritarian concepts and the Stalinists'.

Party Building in Cuba

Workers' democracy is an essential part of any truly socialist policy. There is no road to socialism without workers' democracy. A workers state without proletarian democracy is a deformed workers state. I have to condemn unequivocally any attempt to obscure this fact. Nothing would strengthen the Cuban revolution as much as proletarian democracy. A Bolshevik party is needed in Cuba to wage a consistent campaign for proletarian democracy, a revolutionary Marxist party in the forefront of the defense of the Cuban revolution. It would not just be nice to have a Bolshevik party in Cuba: There is a crying need for it. Fidelismo has gained so much ground in the SWP that some comrades seem to believe mistakenly this is to some extent a Cuban substitute for revolutionary Marxism in the present period, or is apt to automatically develop into revolutionary Marxism.

Whether a Trotskyist organization can continually operate legally in Cuba or will have to pursue an entrism policy inside existing legal Fidelista organizations is not for me to decide. (Incidentally, a Trotskyist group affiliated with the I.S. now exists in Cuba.) It seems to me Cuban Trotskyists have to protect themselves against a danger of Stalinist repression, Fidel's Stalinist friends will not like a budding Trotskyist movement.

The SWP's aim to be the Cuban revolution's best defender in the U.S. is entirely justified. But the unconditional defense of the Cuban revolution against imperialism is not identical with unconditional support of everything Castro does. The best interests of the Cuban revolution sometimes have to be defended against the Castro regime's authoritarianism and concessions to Stalinism.

It is correct that Trotskyism cannot hope to build a party in Cuba without being the revolution's foremost defender in North America and everywhere. But this does not mean we should not clearly underline the difference between our concepts and Dr.

Castro's. How can we ever hope to build a party in Cuba without first explaining why such a party is needed? Why create a new party if we approve of the entire set-up as it is at present, or if we seem to approve it unreservedly? One cannot build a Bolshevik party in Cuba by identifying oneself completely with all the measures taken by the Castro regime, or by keeping silent about points of disagreement. One can build it only by explaining that the methods used by the government are not always the best to defend the revolution, by coming out for workers' democracy, by making the workers understand the difference between Fidelismo and Bolshevism, between Stalinism and Bolshevism, between government from above and workers' democracy (which does not exclude a strong leadership), between revolutionary justice and frame-ups. We do not render a service to either our own movement or the cause of the Cuban revolution by simply endorsing the mistakes and crimes, too, of the Castro regime. Naturally, we often have to proceed with a certain tact, and we subordinate our criticism to the support and defense of the Cuban revolution. Our criticism is aimed precisely at strengthening the Cuban revolution; and this must always be clear.

Some comrades -- perhaps many -- believe that by practically refraining from criticism, by siding with Fidel and Che in each case, we have a chance to make them feel so friendly towards us, to make them value our help so highly that they will increasingly study Trotskyism and move closer to us, thereby transforming themselves into a revolutionary Marxist leadership. I am afraid this is an illusion. They do value our support in the U.S.; but on a world scale, Soviet aid is more important to them than the political support of the Trotskyists. And I wonder whether Fidel or Che will take the time to study the classics of Marxism. I am not under the impression that they will do so. They are no theoreticians. Their theoretical thinking is confused. And Fidel's willingness to learn has gradually been replaced by megalomania. A man who regularly engages in three- and four-hour speeches is not a man who will patiently listen and study. I cannot very well imagine Fidel relinquishing some of his almost absolute power spontaneously in favor of proletarian democracy.

But let me assume for a moment that the Fidelista leaders are capable of moving toward Bolshevism. How could we expect them to do so if we do not clearly explain the difference between their system and Bolshevism? -- if we do not differentiate between their authoritarianism and our concept of proletarian democracy? How can anyone believe they will move automatically in a Trotskyist direction through some obscure process, simply because we support them? Whatever automatic process there now is moves in the direction of Stalinism, although it may not be exactly the Kremlin brand of Stalinism. The assumption that they are moving to the left politically, toward workers' democracy, because since 1959 they have been moving to the left in the social and economic field is erroneous. We have seen repeatedly, since World War II, that overthrowing capitalism, setting up a workers state, does not automatically imply a development of workers' democracy. (Yugoslavia, China.) Even the arming of the people does not necessarily mean the workers and peasants are in control. In capitalist Switzerland the people

are armed as they are in Cuba; there is no standing army, no caste of professional officers. The Swiss Army, which is relatively strong, is entirely of the militia type and every citizen able to bear arms has his weapons and munition at home, ready at a moment's notice to join the defense force of his country.

The friendly article on the SWP and its candidates that appeared in Bohemia during our election campaign is used by some comrades as a pet argument. I have read that issue of Bohemia entirely, not merely that one article. It proves that the Cuban regime appreciates any support it can get in the U.S., that it praised the only presidential candidates who support the Cuban revolution. But it does not prove that the Fidelista leaders are moving in the direction of proletarian democracy. The same issue of Bohemia contained an article on the Russian revolution giving some credit to both Trotsky and Stalin, an article that was a warm political tribute to the Mexican Stalinist painter Siqueiros, a would-be assassin of Trotsky and one of the Kremlin's most vicious agents, and a laudatory article on Cuban Stalinist diplomat Dr. Carlos Lechuga. I don't see any Bolshevik party-building in this.

The Question of Revolutionary Justice

If there still existed doubt as to the Castro regime's moving toward Stalinism, the frame-up trial and execution of Commander William Morgan ought to have dispelled it. For a frame-up trial it was: Not a shred of convincing evidence was offered by the prosecution. It is very probable that Morgan never supplied anti-Castro rebels with arms or anything else. Even if he had wanted to, he never could have done it with any chance of success, and he knew this: The G-2, Castro's secret security police, had its eye on him for some time. But why should he have wished to help overthrow a regime in which he had so big a stake? He had saved Castro from an invasion attempt sponsored by Trujillo, had lost his U.S. citizenship, married a Cuban girl, acquired a farm, which he was busy developing. His entire future was linked to the new Cuba. I want to remind those comrades who visited Cuba that they were quite enthusiastic about him after their return. Now, however, not one of them dares to defend him. Uncritically, they repeat the Fidelista propaganda phrases about Morgan the traitor, the adventurer. Only yesterday they admired his feats as a partisan chief, his courage, his idealism.

More than anybody else, Trotskyists ought to be wary of frame-ups. The treason trials that the Cuban regime has been staging are a mockery of any justice, including revolutionary justice. The defendants do not get enough of a chance to defend themselves. The Morgan trial in particular, whose details seem to have been ignored or overlooked by many comrades, was a ghastly caricature. It reminds me of many Stalinist frame-up trials in the USSR and Eastern Europe. There was not one piece of evidence that any serious court would have considered sufficient to sentence anyone.. Morgan was regularly seeing a few of his former comrades-in-arms: Conspiracy!. . . The truth is that these were men living at his farm, hence he saw them all the time, naturally. Was there anything wrong with seeing his friends and co-workers living at his

house? And that was the kind of "evidence," reminding me of the late and unlamented A. Vishinsky, that served to liquidate Commander Morgan.

The former partisan chief affirmed to his very end that he had been, and still was, loyal to Fidel. He also emphasized this in his last will, written immediately before his execution and smuggled out by his Cuban lawyer. I have never heard of a courageous man -- and who can deny Morgan's courage? -- lying in the last hours of his life when facing death, lying about his most decisive actions. In his last will he also wrote that he was completely innocent of the crime he was accused of and that his only "crime" was to have been "the last anti-Communist in the Cuban Army with the rank of Commander" (the highest rank at present). Morgan was shot for political reasons, and Fidel certainly knew it. When Morgan asked him for a last interview, Fidel refused; and at the hour Morgan was shot by night, Fidel attended a reception in honor of a visiting Chinese delegation.

After embracing the officer commanding the firing squad, Morgan died with the same courage he had shown in battle -- more courageous than Fidel who could not bring himself to face his victim.

Comrades, let not the Fidelista propaganda talk you into slandering William Morgan! Remember how the Stalinist parties, when they were about to expel someone for political reasons, frequently accused him of having stolen a typewriter belonging to the organization. Morgan's death was not enough. Afraid of the voice of truth, the regime also arrested his wife. And who can still claim there is no secret political police in Cuba? One of the Bolsheviks' biggest mistakes after the victory of the Russian revolution was the creation of the GPU. It was to become an instrument of arbitrary, undemocratic, bureaucratic rule, as any secret police must, a weapon of counterrevolutionary forces. But the Bolsheviks had the excuse that they practically had to start their building and defending of the workers state without historical precedent and were liable to make quite a few mistakes under the circumstances. In fact, it is astonishing that they did not make more in those years. If Fidel were really interested in Bolshevism, he could learn from the experience of the Russian revolution, its achievements, its soviets under Leninism -- and also its mistakes. But he doesn't, while it was part of Trotsky's greatness that he was always able to learn even from his own past mistakes (for example in the trade-union question).

Of course, special measures have to be taken in a civil war situation such as now exists in Cuba. But the revolution's best protection would be proletarian democracy, not secret police activities; revolutionary justice, not political frame-ups. Revolutionary justice has to be justice, not an ugly distortion of justice. The end does not justify the means. If the means are lies and crimes, the end, the aim itself changes in the process. For Jesuits and Stalinists the "end" justifies the means; but we are neither Jesuits nor Stalinists. We do not serve a totalitarian church but the world working class, the toilers everywhere. We

serve mankind; and you cannot serve mankind if you do not respect man. Let us never forget that lesson of history, that lesson of Stalinist crimes. Criminal means produce their own historical consequences.

There is an enormous qualitative difference between the Cuban war-crimes trials in 1959 and the political frame-up trials in 1960-61. Batista's torturers and hangmen who butchered thousands deserved their fate. They were common criminals. I defended the war-crimes trials against the bourgeois hypocrites who had never denounced Batista, and I am sure I was right in doing so. But trials like the Morgan frame-up are an entirely different matter. It is sad indeed to see these developments in the Cuban revolution, and I fully understand the reluctance of many comrades to admit the frame-up character of the Morgan trial. But we are Marxists, and we always have to proceed from a correct analysis of the situation. Whether the Morgan trial was a Stalinist frame-up permitted by the pro-Stalinist Fidelistas or a Fidelista frame-up playing into the hands of the Stalinists -- there is not much difference. In any case, it clearly shows that the Castro regime has been moving closer to Stalinism.

Civil War

A new civil war is raging in Cuba while I write this article. More than ever, the Cuban revolution needs the support of all its friends. The SWP's policy of defending the Cuban revolution unreservedly against imperialism is absolutely correct. Yet the defense of the Cuban revolution also must include a defense against errors, shortcomings and -- I am sorry to say -- crimes of its own leaders. We must be the living conscience of the world working class. This is no empty phrase. The mistakes and crimes of the Cuban leaders weaken the support the revolution could get from Latin-American workers in this country; and even in Cuba quite a few adherents of the 26th of July Movement, quite a few veterans of the Sierra Maestra are worried about increasing Stalinist influence. We should no longer minimize or ignore it but make the demand for workers' democracy part of our defense of the Cuban revolution, which is threatened by imperialism and Cuban counter-revolutionaries, as well as by Stalinism from within.

In 1959 the great majority of New York's 800,000 Spanish-American workers hailed the Cuban revolution. 1960-61 their majority has turned away from it. Why? They certainly hailed Fidel's social reforms and were indifferent to the lost investments of U.S. capitalists. They certainly welcomed Cuba's independence from imperialism. But they condemn the political executions, the dictatorial character of the regime, the Stalinist influence. I know how the Spanish-American workers feel. They have strong humanitarian and individualist traditions. They are not prepared to overlook frame-ups and a policy of executions. Their indignation at Batista's atrocities does not make them willing to accept new political death sentences without fair trials. "If at least they would get prison sentences. But why does he (Castro) have them shot? That isn't right. He is a dictator." This is what I have been hearing many times from Spanish-American workers. You cannot

reach these workers unless you explain patiently our position on the Cuban revolution, on workers' democracy and on Stalinism.

Some comrades will now remark that these workers are influenced by the imperialist propaganda of the Spanish-American press and radio stations. That is not the point. The question is: Which aspect of imperialist propaganda has found a response among these workers? They are very sensitive to questions of individual rights, and they oppose capital punishment in general. I cannot blame them. Executions solve nothing. I cannot get upset about the execution of authentic war criminals and mass murderers. But that doesn't mean I like the death penalty as a system. In principle, I am opposed to capital punishment and even more so to political executions. Even the shooting of real traitors and counterrevolutionary terrorists by the Castro regime is not an efficient way to protect the revolution. These executions have not discouraged a single counterrevolutionary from participating in an anti-Castro invasion or in terrorist acts. On the contrary, they have made their determination more grim, more bitter, more cruel.

Fidel's Foreign Propaganda

I shall not strain my readers' patience by going into the many shortcomings of Castro's foreign propaganda, although I could mention quite a few. Suffice it to say that these mistakes, in the last resort, are based on insufficient familiarity with Marxist methods of social and political analysis, on a brand of nationalism that thinks too rarely of appealing to international working-class solidarity and on an inclination toward some of the Stalinist patterns. Thus, for example, Fidelista propaganda aimed at Puerto Rico has failed on the whole because it was based on some generalities and preconceived patterns without a correct analysis of that country's actual social and economic situation to start from, and because the majority of Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico reacted to developments in Cuba in a similar way as Puerto Ricans in New York did. Last year, *Revolucion* published about Puerto Rico a special supplement that distorted Puerto Rico's socio-economic development, gave a false impression of the Puerto Rican situation and was resented by most of the Puerto Ricans who heard about it.

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

However, one comrade who was willing to discuss with me asked me what advice we could give the Cubans on how to make headway in

Puerto Rico, how to make their propaganda more successful there. My answer is: In the first place, our concept of internationalism includes the right of self-determination, and it is up to the Puerto Ricans, and to them alone, to determine their own political status. It is not the Cubans' business at all. And if the Puerto Ricans are to be attracted to the ideas of the Cuban revolution, the Cubans will have to introduce genuine proletarian democracy in their republic and end the political executions first. Fidel's economic and social reforms alone impress the Puerto Ricans less than many comrades believe because important economic and social reforms have been carried out in Puerto Rico in the last ten or thirteen years (land reform, industrialization, schools, housing, etc.), and they hardly need the Cubans for that. Puerto Rico's living standards are higher than Cuba's.

The Cuban revolution is a momentous event. With all his mistakes and shortcomings, Fidel is already a historical figure, embodying the Latin-American masses' hope for a better life and the idea of a future Latin-American Federation. The people of Cuba are not willing to give up their social conquests. We must help them in the defense of their revolution. And in this defense revolutionary propaganda is a weapon they have not used too skillfully. (Castro in Harlem was one of the brilliant exceptions.) If Cuba were to move toward workers' democracy and if Cuba's propaganda were based on international proletarian solidarity and on an honest Marxist analysis of prevailing situations, the Cuban revolution could win millions of additional friends in the Americas and in Western Europe. It needs them, too.

After Batista's overthrow many radicals and liberals presumed the Cuban revolution would soon spread to the Dominican Republic and overthrow the Trujillo tyranny too. Yet it has not done so until now. The Generalissimo completes his 31st year in power. An underground opposition exists in the Dominican Republic; but the majority of the Dominican people are afraid of exchanging Trujillo's dictatorship for a Stalinist or pro-Stalinist dictatorship. In Nicaragua, the Somoza dictatorship is still intact, and so is the reactionary regime in Guatemala, a base for Cuban counterrevolutionaries. Why has the Cuban revolution not spread like lightning? Perhaps those comrades who prefer to echo Revolution on all these issues should not have prevented me from analyzing in two articles (Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic) the present situation in the Caribbean, the socio-economic facts, class relationships and political superstructure of two countries.

Fidel recently talked of "defending our socialist revolution." Its best defense, together with military preparedness, is to move in a socialist direction, not only in the socio-economic but also in the political field. The best defense is a revolutionary socialist defense, fully employing political weapons as well as military ones. This defense must include vigorous resistance to the Stalinist virus.

Revolutionary Cuba is in danger. In this article I have tried to indicate some danger signals to which, in my opinion, the SWP has not yet paid the attention they deserve.

In order to defend the Cuban revolution as best we can, we -- the SWP as such and its press -- have to defend it, not as Fidelistas, but as Trotskyists, as revolutionary Marxist socialists who stand for democratic socialism. Let us never throw Trotskyism, Bolshevism enriched by the experience of the Russian revolution and more recent world events and upheavals, overboard. Cuba needs it. The Americas need it. The world working class needs it. Let us keep the principles and experience of our movement in mind and never dim our demand for workers' democracy.

April 17, 1961.

THE NATURE OF THE STATE IN CUBA

By Shane Mage

"We cannot imagine democracy, not even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions." (State and Revolution by V.I.Lenin, page 46.)

* * *

Introduction

This article was in part written in the course of the heroic struggle of the Cuban people to repel the invasion launched April 17. This battle has now terminated victoriously, but greater trials still confront the Cuban revolution. That half of the armed counterrevolution which was not committed to the invasion can still be used for sabotage and harassment -- and for the first time, stung by defeat, the U.S. imperialists are openly threatening a full-scale invasion.

The overriding duty of our movement at this point is clearly defense of the Cuban revolution on all the fronts where it is under attack. As the best defenders of the Cuban revolution it is our responsibility to have the keenest awareness of all the menaces to the revolution, whether hidden or visible, whether emanating from enemies or professed friends, whether military or diplomatic. Our greatest contribution to the Cuban revolution can be the clarity of our understanding and the frankness and directness of our expression.

April 22, 1961.

* * *

The present discussion in the international Trotskyist movement on the Cuban revolution has tended to focus on the question: should our movement now declare that a workers state has been established in Cuba? This emphasis is entirely justified, not because the label chosen for the Cuban state has great importance in and of itself but because for revolutionary Marxists the questions of the state and the character of the proletarian revolution have always been decisive theoretical touchstones. It is virtually inconceivable that a serious political question should not center on the nature of state power, and particularly is this true in the case of the Cuban revolution.

At the outset certain aspects of the question should be made unqualifiedly clear:

1. On the essential question of the defense of the Cuban revolution against every form of counterrevolution fostered by our own ruling class there are absolutely no differences within our party or world movement.

2. Our defense of the Cuban revolution includes the defense of the present regime headed by Fidel Castro against every and all counterrevolutionary tendencies, no matter how "leftist" or even "socialist" some may paint themselves.

3. We all recognize that the Cuban revolution is an authentic social revolution, expressing the aspirations of the Cuban workers and peasants and which has throughout had its course shaped by the enthusiastic and vigorous participation of the Cuban masses.

These are very substantial areas of agreement. Nevertheless, the disagreement on the nature of the present Cuban state is far more than a purely terminological one. The most pressing and immediately important issues raised are our estimate of the nature of the dangers faced by the Cuban revolution; the principal tasks confronting the revolution at the current stage; and the best way in which our movement can intervene politically to defend the Cuban revolution and aid its further progress.

Moreover the questions raised concerning the specific case of Cuba are not isolated from deeper and more general questions of revolutionary theory and politics. The split with Pabloist revisionism which began with the bureaucratic "expulsion" of the majority of French Trotskyists in 1952 was and is based on a profound difference on the nature of the present world situation, the role of Stalinism, and the role of the Fourth International in relation to the revolutionary movements in the colonial countries. These questions are to a considerable degree implicit in the differences over the nature of the Cuban state.

* * *

The heart of the NC majority's position is the tenth of the "Draft Theses": "When the capitalist holdings in the key sectors of Cuban economy were taken over by the government (in August-October, 1960) Cuba entered the transitional phase of a workers state, although one lacking as yet the forms of democratic proletarian rule."

In my opinion this proposition expresses a basically incorrect methodological approach -- that of looking at the unfolding and changing Cuban revolution in terms of a set of fixed stages each marked off from the others by abstract criteria. I believe, on the other hand, that the Cuban revolution must be viewed as a developing revolution, whose dynamics are determined by its internal contradictions and the international context in which those contradictions work themselves out. Our theoretical discussion in terms of abstract categories can be really meaningful only if it is based on a dynamic and fully dialectical analysis.

What then are the basic contradictions determining the shape that the Cuban revolution has taken, the concrete forms in which we see it today? Without going into an exhaustive enumeration,

I would maintain that the following series sets forth at least the most essential points on which our analysis of the Cuban state should be based.

1. The contradiction between the original aims of the Cuban revolution and its immanent tendencies as a permanent revolution. The entire program of the Cuban revolution up through 1959 was a purely bourgeois-democratic one. Its goal was to destroy the Batista dictatorship, to give the land to the rural population, and to free Cuba from its colonial dependence on U.S. imperialism. However, the latter two measures could not be undertaken without incurring the fiercest opposition of U.S. imperialism and of its client, the Cuban bourgeoisie, and on the other hand, without the immediate mobilization of the workers and peasants in support of the revolution. Hence from the outset the class struggle tended to break through the formal bourgeois-democratic program, forcing the government, under pressure from the workers, to "intervene" one industrial or agricultural establishment after another. In this process of continual interaction it is the counterrevolution that has played the initiating role, forcing government and masses to make ever deeper inroads into private property as the first necessity of revolutionary self-defense.

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

The July 26th Movement began as a middle-class revolutionary tendency. It was defined as such not merely by the uniformly petty-bourgeois social origin of its leaders and their bourgeois-democratic program but above all by their ideology, their relation to the working class, and their organizational conceptions; concretely, by their empiricism, their independence from the working class, and their preference for military forms of political organization.

In the course of the revolution the July 26th leadership, losing the support of the bourgeois and middle-class layers that originally were its primary base, has found that the only internal force on which it could count was the militant worker and peasant masses. Through the organization of the militias, factory advisory councils, and rural cooperatives the masses have gained a powerful lever of democratic control over their daily existence. Correspondingly, the Castro leadership itself has taken great strides toward a proletarian position.

Nevertheless, in decisive respects that leadership has yet to transcend its middle-class nature. Ideologically it remains empiricist, and such Marxist ideas as it has adopted have been generally introduced in a perverted Stalinist form. The leadership has so far guarded its independence from the workers by refusing to institute forms whereby the working-class base can exercise direct control over the leaders. This is particularly evident in Castro's failure to develop the July 26th Movement into a genuine party, in which

the leadership would be directly responsible to the proletarian rank and file. The command attitude toward the workers is also shown by the bureaucratic way in which changes in the trade-union leadership have been carried through.

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

Despite its vast potential agricultural wealth, Cuba remains a backward country, not yet self-sufficient in any major product of mass consumption. The possibilities for a speedy and substantial increase in the standard of living of the Cuban peasant or worker depend on the maintenance and expansion of free international trade. For Cuba isolation means, if not death, at best dire poverty.

One of the aspects of backwardness in Cuba is the economic predominance of agriculture. The notable feature of the agrarian reform in Cuba was the deliberate choice of the large-scale cooperative as a basic form of rural property: this fact shows that the agrarian revolution in Cuba has started from a higher level than in any other country, including China and the USSR. Nevertheless the cooperative, which produces for sale on the market (the world market in the case of Cuba) and in which the income of the cooperators depends on the market price, is not a socialist property form. Under conditions of protracted isolation and poverty, the cooperatives could very well develop in a capitalist way, in antagonism to the city workers and exerting enormous pressure for submission to U.S. capitalism as the price for return to the U.S. market.

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

The facts of geography indicate the necessity for a close tie between Cuba and the U.S. A half century of U.S. colonial domination virtually integrated Cuba in the U.S. market. Cuba's efforts to free itself economically inherently constituted a direct attack on U.S. imperialism and the U.S. responded to them as such. In the space of a few months nearly all the established trade relationships between the two countries were destroyed by the unilateral action of the U.S. government.

The economic boycott, together with the effects of the intense military pressure, sabotage, and terrorism are a crushing economic burden for the Cuban revolution, as they are indeed meant to be. Cuba cannot resist this pressure alone -- it requires outside assistance in the form of economic aid from the Soviet bloc and political support from revolutionary forces in the Americas.

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

The Soviet Union came to the aid of Cuba by taking its sugar crop in return for oil, munitions, and essential industrial products. This aid was indispensable to the survival of the revolution. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Soviet foreign policy is based not on international proletarian solidarity, but on the specific interests of the parasitic caste of privileged bureaucrats which holds totalitarian power in the Soviet Union, China, and other self-styled "socialist" countries.

The essential interests of the Stalinist bureaucrats are expressed in the policy of peaceful coexistence -- that is, in the perspective of a deal with U.S. imperialism in which the world would be divided into spheres of influence. In preparing for such a deal the Kremlin naturally seeks to strengthen its own power position, to cause disruption within the U.S. camp, and to acquire as much bargaining room as possible.

Cuba figures in this strategy as a passive object of negotiation, as a bargaining point. To the extent that the dynamism of the Cuban revolution tends to transcend this status and place obstacles in the way of the entire peaceful coexistence line, Cuba is a source of embarrassment and irritation to the Kremlin. Thus the policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy is aimed not at furthering the development of the Cuban revolution but at using Cuba to extract concessions from the U.S.

Soviet aid was a lifeline to the Cuban revolution. But at the same time the economic dependence of Cuba on the Soviet Union is a powerful instrument of pressure on the Cubans to submit to a policy contrary to the essential interests of the revolution. The influence of the Cuban CP within the Castro government is of no consequence in itself, but can have decisive importance as a channel through which Stalinist political pressure can be exerted within the revolutionary leadership itself.

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

The primary reason why U.S. imperialism has been restrained from a full-scale military attack on Cuba thus far is the enormous revolutionary potential throughout Latin America and the vigorous sympathy of the masses everywhere for the Cuban revolution. This situation is reflected in the opposition of certain Latin-American governments (most notably Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and Argentina) to the efforts of the State Department to isolate Cuba diplomatically. The Cuban revolution properly welcomes this political aid.

Nevertheless it represents primarily efforts of capitalist regimes to deceive the masses by adopting a "leftist" position in foreign affairs to compensate for reactionary domestic policies. To allow this strategem to succeed would be a setback for the Latin-American revolution, and thus in the end weaken the defense of the Cuban revolution.

The necessity for diplomatic relations with capitalist states is imposed on every revolutionary regime in a capitalist world. The Bolshevik revolution had the same necessity in its early years. Before the rise of Stalinism the Bolsheviks were scrupulously careful to maintain a rigid separation between the policy of the Russian state and that of the Communist International. But in Cuba the absolute confusion between the government apparatus and the July 26th Movement renders the problem of relations to bourgeois regimes considerably more difficult.

7. All the above contradictions are interrelated, and all are linked to the general contradiction of the revolution at its current stage: The contradiction between the anticapitalist nature of the Cuban revolution as expressed at every point of its development and the fact that the proletariat has thus far failed to take leadership of the revolution through the establishment of workers councils as institutions of state power and the formation of a mass revolutionary-Marxist political party.

This is the general contradiction because a progressive resolution of all the others hinges upon it. The formation of soviets and the emergence of a Marxist leadership are necessary to endow the Cuban revolution with a program conforming to its essential nature; to assure democratic control over the nationalized economy and resist bureaucratization; to maintain unity between workers and peasants while mobilizing the full energies of the masses for the tasks of economic development; to resist the conjoined pressures of U.S. imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy for submission to the U.S.; and to promote the rapid extension of the revolution.

* * *

Since, we maintain, the unfolding of the specific internal contradictions can as well lead back to capitalism as toward socialism, it is not yet possible to place a definite label upon the Cuban state: the nature of the Cuban state is not yet determined by history. The destruction of the repressive forces of the old

Cuban state, together with the arming of the masses, opened the possibility of development to a workers state without necessarily having to replace the revolutionary government (though not without the need for a violent and bitter struggle against the U.S. armed counterrevolution). But whether the transition thus opened is to result in the creation of a workers state or in a return to capitalist rule in a new form is a question that is now being decided. It is still too early for us to pass final judgment.

* * *

What then is the real content of the difference over whether to call Cuba a "workers state"? The first question is what norms do we use in our analysis of the workers state as a social institution?

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

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

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

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

In stating that Cuba became a workers state with the nationalization of industry in August-October 1960, the draft theses make the mistake of mechanically applying the criterion for the degeneration of the revolution to a revolution still in its ascending phase.

This, to be sure, is a very easy mistake to make -- why, after all, should we have much more rigorous standards for Cuba than for China, say, or Albania?

Nevertheless, the analogy, though tempting, is misleading. The East European states carried through their social transformations on the borders of the Soviet Union and under its domination, and China is virtually a continent in itself. In all these countries what led us to consider them workers states was not nationalization of industry in itself but the fact that they were by this means decisively torn from the capitalist orbit. By nationalization, planning, and the state monopoly of foreign trade they gained the ability to develop their economies independently of (though not at all in isolation from) the capitalist world market. Cuba, on the other hand, is a small island 90 miles off the U.S. coast whose economy has historically been dependent on that of the U.S.

The theses state that in Cuba "only civil war can now restore capitalist property relations." This is a key point and, if true, definitely establishes Cuba as a workers state. But is it true? Certainly only civil war can now restore the land and mills to their former owners. But capitalist property relations can be restored in other ways.

As this is written the Cuban revolution is fighting for its life against the armed counterrevolutionary onslaught -- it would seem that Kennedy, at least, is convinced of the necessity for "civil" war to restore capitalism. The outcome is yet uncertain; indeed at this writing the real dimensions of the invasion are completely obscure. Still the possibilities in the present situation are distinctly relevant to our theoretical question.

In the hypothesis of a counterrevolutionary military victory, virtually inconceivable without direct and substantial U.S. military action, this question would become moot and be replaced by quite different ones. We therefore confine ourselves to the two other main possibilities.

If the Cuban revolution succeeds in completely and decisively crushing the counterrevolutionary forces, the victory could have profound consequences. Fidel Castro has called the Cuban people to arms in the name of the "socialist revolution": military victory on this basis in a decisive test against all the native counterrevolutionary forces would probably lead directly to the definitive establishment of workers and peasants rule in Cuba. Moreover it would have powerful revolutionary effects throughout Latin America and thus materially change the balance of power between U.S. imperialism and the Cuban revolution.

It is the third possibility that raises real problems: what if the present test leads to an indecisive outcome? In this eventuality the stage would be set for the diplomatic intervention of the great powers, through the U.N. or in some other form, with the avowed purpose of eliminating the "threat to the peace" presented by the Cuban civil war.

What would be demanded of Cuba in such negotiations? In exchange for a "normalization" of relations the U.S. most likely would make three major demands: (1) recognition in some form that Cuba is within the "hemispheric" (i.e., U.S.) sphere of influence, not the Soviet sphere. (2) A general amnesty, at least de facto, for the counterrevolutionaries. (3) Payment of meaningful compensation for U.S. property expropriated by the revolution.

This is not Wall Street's "optimum" program -- that is represented by the military counterrevolution. But it is nonetheless a program for the restoration of capitalism in Cuba. Even if not a single peso of state property was denationalized, in a Cuba economically backward and exhausted, dependent on the U.S. market and obliged to make large annual dollar payments for "compensation," "interest" and "debt amortization," state property would in essence constitute a means for the extraction of surplus value from the Cuban proletariat and peasantry and its transfer to U.S. capitalists. A state that played this role would be a capitalist state and would be forced to resort to harsh suppression of the workers and peasants.

Would the Castro government accept such a deal, under the all-out pressure of Stalinism, and be able to impose it on the Cuban people? Unless we can answer clearly and categorically no we must admit the possibility that the present Cuban state would develop into a capitalist state.

Some comrades have denied this possibility on grounds of the arming of the masses and the unquestioned revolutionary integrity of Fidel Castro. But as long as the armed masses merely constitute an armed mass, without their own elected leadership, their own democratic institutions of political rule, as long as their struggle is not animated and led by a mass Trotskyist party, the ability of the armed masses to intervene consciously and autonomously at the decisive moment is subject to grave doubt. And if we put our faith not in the proletariat but in the individual leader, however inspired and heroic, we are in fact placing the revolution at the mercy of the assassin's bullet. The revolutionary individual is no substitute for the mass revolutionary party, which does not yet exist in Cuba.

Given the isolation and economic backwardness of Cuba, given the reality of the counterrevolutionary menace, given the international position of counterrevolutionary Stalinism, the danger of bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution is unavoidable. And insofar as the government and the new state apparatus are not elected by or responsible to the workers and peasants, insofar as Cuba has not yet established proletarian democracy, the tendencies toward degeneration, of which Stalinism is only one form, are greatly heightened. And because of the peculiar economic and geographic situation of Cuba, degeneration there would not have the same significance it had in the Soviet Union -- in Cuba bureaucratic degeneration, if unopposed by institutions of proletarian democracy, would lead quickly back to capitalism.

The Draft Theses, as we saw, call Cuba a workers state "lacking as yet the forms of democratic proletarian rule." This is in fact to treat proletarian democracy as something secondary, almost trivial -- as a merely formal deficiency, one whose transcendence would make little real difference for the revolution.

But how can there be a lack of "form" if the content is there? It is the absence of the content of proletarian democracy, the responsibility of the government and state to the working class, that is crucial in the present stage of the Cuban revolution. It is the lack of this content, largely due to the lack of a Marxist leadership (and the 26th of July Movement can never advance beyond centrism unless it recognizes the need for soviets and a revolutionary party), that makes the danger of return to capitalism in the sense described above (i.e., without the military victory of the counterrevolution) a serious one. We therefore consider proletarian democracy as our basic norm for the progress of the Cuban revolution toward establishment of a workers state.

We have thus termed the Cuban state neither a capitalist state nor yet a workers state, but call it a transitional state. The meaning of this should be clear to all: the smashing of the repressive state apparatus, the arming of the masses, open the way to a workers state. But the absence of proletarian democracy shows that the progress toward that goal has remained incomplete. The state apparatus created by the revolution is in transition toward a workers state but completion of the transition is not yet assured.

Is the idea of a "transitional state" something hitherto unheard of in history and Marxist theory? Not as far as our movement is concerned, at any rate, even if we haven't specifically used the term. We have adopted the position that China became a workers state sometime between 1951 and 1953. But the Chinese state was definitively established in 1949, and had in essence existed for 18 years before then. What was the Chinese state before it became a workers state, if not a transitional state? For that matter all participants in the present discussion on Cuba use this category, at least implicitly. The Draft Theses place the origin of the Cuban workers state in August-October 1960. Other comrades prefer the date of October 1959. But the violent revolution that established the Cuban state was victorious in January, 1959. Unless one maintains the completely anti-Leninist position that what was established in Cuba, China, and Eastern Europe were capitalist states which were converted into workers states by gradual reforms, one must recognize that they were transitional states, at least for a certain time.

In defining the Cuban state as one in transition toward the establishment of a workers state we in no way express a hesitation to support the Cuban revolution and its present leadership. But we do make it clear that our support is not uncritical.

The "Draft Theses" seem to regard the category "workers state" as simply a label that we place on a revolution when it reaches a certain stage. Our movement ought to regard it in a very different way -- for us the term "workers state" should always constitute a

central part of our active program. In the degenerate and deformed workers states of the Stalinist bloc our advocacy of the establishment of a "workers state" signifies the elimination of the degeneracy and deformation through political revolution. In Cuba our advocacy of a "workers state" signifies our struggle for the further advance of the Cuban revolution to the establishment of proletarian democracy.

April 14-18, 1961.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The following two articles have been referred to the SWP discussion bulletin by the NEC of the YSA because of its feeling that the discussion on the Cuban question would best be handled within the party. "The Conscious Element in Social Process" by Tim Wohlforth was written for publication in the Young Socialist but was withdrawn by the writer after objections were raised by some comrades on the NEC. "Remarks on 'The Conscious Element in Social Process'" by Arthur Phelps was submitted to the NEC as an explanation of Comrade Phelps' objections to the article. -- Martha Curti.

April 26, 1961.

* * *

THE CONSCIOUS ELEMENT IN SOCIAL PROCESS

By Tim Wohlforth

Lenin's concept of the essential role of the conscious element -- the socialist element -- in the objective historical process has been under considerable direct or indirect attack these days. This attack has come not only from the capitalists themselves who have learned to fear above all organized socialist consciousness in the working class (they have long since learned how to contain a trade-union-conscious working class); not only from the faithful servants of the capitalists within the socialist movement, the social democrats and the Stalinists; it is now coming also from those who profess to be independent radicals: The New Left Review in England, similar New Left groups on the Continent, the Monthly Review and C. Wright Mills in this country.

Lenin, perhaps more than any Marxist before him or since, carried out a systematic struggle against all attempts to minimize the essential role of the conscious element in history. He explained in "What Is To Be Done?" that workers on their own can only reach a trade-union consciousness -- that is, an understanding of the necessity for organization to fight for their own immediate economic interests. The role of Marxist intellectuals, according to Lenin, is to bring to the working class an understanding of the necessity to carry on a socialist political battle as well, an understanding that the struggle against a part must be turned into a struggle against the whole, for one can only win the part by transforming the whole.

The revolutionary party, in Lenin's thought, was a fusion of the conscious elements from among the workers and the Marxist intellectuals into a cohesive social force that can actively intervene in the historical process. Without the intervention of this conscious vanguard organized as a cohesive party, the working class is left leaderless and is bound to lose its battle with the capitalists who are highly organized on their part and control the means of suppression. The working class, which is the vast majority of the population in all advanced capitalist coun-

tries, could have toppled capitalism long ago if it had not been for this lack of an organized conscious leadership.

The great Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci states Lenin's view this way: "The decisive element in every situation is the force, permanently organized and pre-ordered over a long period, which can be advanced when one judges that the situation is favorable (and it is favorable only to the extent to which such a force exists and is full of fighting ardor); therefore, the essential task is that of paying systematic and patient attention to forming and developing this force, rendering it ever more homogeneous, compact, conscious of itself."

World Reality

There is good reason why this view of Lenin's is so much under attack of late. Over the past ten years the world-wide struggle for socialism has fared in a very contradictory manner. Tremendous successes have been registered in the colonial areas with many new nations achieving independence and some, like China, North Korea and North Vietnam breaking through the limits of capitalism. These great achievements have been accomplished with little conscious independent working-class leadership within the colonial areas and almost none at all within the advanced capitalist countries. The advanced capitalist countries have, since World War II, experienced a relatively high level of prosperity which, despite periodic recessions, has had a deadening effect on the working class of these countries.

This world situation, with the positive achievements in the colonial areas and the negative state of the advanced working class, has encouraged an outlook among many Marxist intellectuals in the advanced countries which minimizes the conscious element in the historical process. These intellectuals see the world as automatically evolving in the direction of socialism without the conscious intervention of the working class. They see their own role in society as spectators rather than as constructors of the conscious vanguard, as Lenin envisioned the role of the Marxist intellectual.

Typical of those who hold this view are the editors of the *Monthly Review*. Their recent series on "The Theory of U.S. Foreign Policy" (September, October and November, 1960) sees the events in Cuba as a pattern for the future of the whole world. "The course of Cuban-American relations in the last two years shows the whole process, in microcosm as it were. This is a case in which history is likely to repeat itself not once but many times in a future which it is probably safe to measure in years rather than decades." The editors see the automatic world process forcing the colonial peoples into revolt. The imperialist countries, just as automatically, are forced to resist the colonial peoples, thus forcing the colonial peoples further and further to the left. The objective combination of the colonial revolution and the resistance of imperialism automatically produces socialism throughout most of the world.

In contrast to this rosy outlook for the rest of the world the editors are so pessimistic about the workers in the advanced capitalist countries that even if capitalism is reduced to an island in a sea of socialist states they do not see a socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries.

Is M.R. Correct?

Are the editors of M.R. correct in putting forward a view of the world that sees revolutionary parties unnecessary in most of the world and necessary but impossible to construct in the remaining advanced sector of the world? We think not. We feel that the M.R. editors, in their desire to see a world which requires nothing of them but a monthly magazine, have painted an overly optimistic picture of the colonial world and an overly pessimistic picture of the advanced countries.

While it is true that the imperialist countries were unable to maintain capitalist rule in China, North Vietnam and North Korea, they have been able to stabilize capitalism pretty successfully in the rest of the colonial world. They have stabilized capitalism in India even though they had to split the country to do it. With the help of Nasser, Kasseem and Khrushchev they have been able to stabilize capitalism in the Middle East. The new African states, even those like Ghana and Guinea, whose rulers mouth Marxism, remain capitalist, again at the price of Balkanization. Latin America gives a similar picture with the sole exception of Cuba.

While capitalism was wiped out in China, North Korea and North Vietnam, these countries have had to pay a heavy price for the absence of a real Leninist revolutionary party and the absence of support from the workers in the advanced countries. These countries are highly bureaucratized on the model of the USSR and compromise the struggle for socialism in other countries for the sake of a deal with the very imperialists they threw out of their own countries.

While it is true that the advanced capitalist countries have been relatively stable over the past ten years, there are now extremely important signs of change. Last year's massive demonstrations in Japan almost reached the point of toppling capitalism in the most important capitalist country in the East. If the lack of a large, experienced workers' vanguard has given the Japanese capitalists a few more years -- this is all it has given them. Contemporary Europe is no longer the same after the magnificent general strike of the Belgian workers. While, again through precisely a lack of Leninist leadership, the strike was not successful, it once and for all put an end to the idea that the European workers are content and that they have forgotten how to struggle.

More than ever before it is important for Marxists to combat the theory of the automatic onflowing of history. We must put the conscious factor back in its right place as the essential ingredient for the success of socialism on a world scale. This is more than a theoretical task -- it is a practical task. Leninist

parties are essential for the healthy development of socialism in every country in the world. They are essential to the process of political revolution in the Soviet bloc countries in order to restore workers democracy there. They are essential to the victory of the colonial countries against imperialism and the healthy development of these countries, in alliance with the advanced working class, to socialism. They are above all essential to the toppling of capitalism in its citadels of strength in the U.S. and Western Europe. The colonial revolution can do much to weaken capitalism -- but that is all it can do. It is the task of workers in the advanced countries to finally put an end to capitalism on this globe.

The assembling of the tens, the hundreds, the thousands of revolutionary Marxist workers and intellectuals into national sections of a world-wide revolutionary movement is just as important to the success of socialism as the most profound unconscious processes which are presently shaking up so much of the world. We must, in Lenin's way, bring about the fusion of the conscious with the unconscious if we are to win. And we must win if humanity is to survive.

March 20, 1961.

REMARKS ON "THE CONSCIOUS ELEMENT IN SOCIAL PROCESS"

By Arthur Phelps

Introduction

The article withdrawn from publication by Comrade Tim Wohlforth, "The Conscious Element in Social Process," belongs, at present, in the realm of internal discussion. We understand that he has submitted an internal SWP article on the same question -- closely connected to his opposition to their position on Cuba -- against the approach of the last SWP Plenum. This surprised us after Tim's stating that: "When the article was written, I was not aware that any of the comrades had differences with these fundamental views of our movement." (NEC minutes, March 27, p. 2). Comrade Wohlforth further submits that "The article in question presents the traditional views of our movement on the question of Leninism and counterposes these views to those of the revisionist Sweezyites." In juxtaposition with the foregoing facts, it seems that there is some question about the "traditional views of our movement" on this matter; thus, the soundness of our first discussing them among ourselves before going to the public.

Both the Report on the Cuban question presented to the SWP Plenum by Comrade Joseph Hansen and an excellent article in the Fall, 1960 ISR by Comrade Murry Weiss ("Trotskyism Today," p. 106) are recommended to the YSA NC for comparison with Comrade Wohlforth's approach.

Revolutionary Leadership ... and building the party

The Russian Revolution is the best positive demonstration of the role of the party in the revolutionary process. Without Lenin's party, the Revolution certainly would have taken a different and longer, more hazardous, course. We furthermore generally assign a decisive role to the party -- negatively -- in the defeats of the working class suffered in connection with and between the Two Imperialist Slaughters. In these defeats a paramount cause was the betrayal of the "traditional" working class bureaucratic leadership of the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties.

That is why the main task of humanity is to overcome the crisis of the leadership of the working class.

All of the theory which we possess -- on building the party, on any aspect of revolutionary practice -- we derive, as generalizations upon our experience. So that we don't lose the benefit of all past experience, we always apply our generalizations upon our present experience; and so that we don't lose sight that reality is undergoing constant change, which can modify the conditions in which our theory applies, we use that theory as a guide and never as a blueprint for action.

Reality, being manysided, cannot but be distorted. But it is never distorted more than by one who simply wishes to make a point.

Comrade Wohlforth's answer to the Sweezyites is that (1) You question the need for a party because your "view from the armchair" gives a distorted picture of world reality. (2) The facts are otherwise than as you present them. All of these revolutions without Leninist parties are deformed, sell out other revolutions; the colonial revolution "can do much to weaken capitalism -- but that is all it can do," and we cannot simply see the world revolution in a microcosm of Cuba (never defining what either thinks of Cuba's revolution and workers state .. or of how this influences their view of the world). On the contrary, Comrade Wohlforth

continues, Belgium proves and Japan proves that it is the advanced countries, that it is the proletariat, which is decisive. And the history of workers' defeats only shows the need for the party. (The latter is said quite a few different ways -- sometimes correctly, sometimes not).

And we can only assume that Huberman and Sweezy would answer with another question: But why is it possible for all of the post-war revolutions to have allegedly occurred without the leadership of a Leninist party or even the working class? The simple word why, had someone uttered it to Tim after he just completed his article, would have insisted upon him the necessity to catch his breath and start all over; for after all, that is the question being asked of Marxists today.

I would like to answer this question in relation to the Cuban Revolution (isolating the matter, for the sake of brevity, to the question of the party). But before that, we must talk about the world in which the party must build, certain aspects of which Comrade Wohlforth has not considered in his answer to Sweezy and Huberman.

The changed context for Building the Party

Trotsky's analysis of the "crisis of leadership" began with the reality of the monolithic character of Stalinism and the enduring weight of international social democracy relative to the objective general crisis of capitalism and the need for its overthrow. He declared flatly that either the Second World War would lead to worker's revolution or else Stalinism in the Soviet Union would consolidate the bureaucracy into an exploitative class (i.e. the completion of Thermidor). That War set the stage for the ensuing period -- creating conditions for the victory of the Chinese Revolution, the Yugoslav Revolution, the absorption of Eastern Europe into the sphere of Soviet property forms and removal from the capitalist world market. The process continued with the North Korean and Vietnamese overturns of capitalism. All of this in spite of Stalinism. Directly related to these events -- bringing us to the present -- followed the chain of events which point to the eventual demolition of Stalinism as a whole: East German uprising, the Vorkuta strikes, Poznan, Hungary, Poland (all of a revolutionary character), the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU and now the transformation of the Sino-Soviet debate and differentiation into the Sino-Soviet conflict in foreign policy. We need not dwell on the impact of these events in the Western CP's in order to point to the fissures in World Stalinism. We will simply state (for further elaboration, if necessary,) that it has become more difficult for Stalinism to sell out -- their motives have not changed, but their opportunities have. It has not become impossible (witness Laos) but more difficult (witness Cuba).

The other side of this reality is the effect of all of this and the increasing tempo of the world revolution (especially the colonial revolution) upon imperialism. Our "Fight Against War" resolution analyzed the position of U.S. imperialism compelling it to seek an agreement with Stalinism. A major reason adduced was the reliance of the State Department upon the colonial bourgeoisie to hold back revolution in their respective countries. Imperialism found it more difficult to use open and naked force because of the existence of the Soviet Union, the other non-capitalist countries and the rising colonial revolution. The choice was either this course or that of compromising the national bourgeoisie before their own masses, which would have destroyed imperialism's main base of colonial support. The unfolding of the African revolution is demonstrating the imperialists' problem anew. Again, we state, that it has become more difficult for imperialism to implement its counterrevolutionary strategy in the Soviet Union and throughout the

world -- not impossible, but more difficult!

The Revolutionary Party and Cuba

These were the conditions which permitted a revolutionary development in a country such as Cuba. That is, under pre-War conditions of the monolithism of Stalinism and the position of world imperialism such a phenomenon as the Revolutionary Government of Cuba would seem even more improbable than it looked to us before 1959. (Witness, the betrayal of the Spanish Civil War and the CIO's need for building a political party, as only isolated examples in the whole cloth of Stalinist sell-out to the bosses in the thirties). To put it very simply, the Stalinists and Social Democrats were discredited; Batista's imperialist craft was leakier than was Castro's Granma; the peasants and workers supported the Castro regime, demanding that it fulfill their needs -- some in accordance and others not in accordance with Castro's initial whole program; the 26th of July Movement, the militia, the trade unions the other organs of workers and peasants power today recognize the bonds of the petty-bourgeoisie and bourgeois nationalists with private property (and therefore with imperialism) as being stronger than their bonds with the "bourgeois" tasks of the Cuban Revolution. The armed workers, and peasants, and the regime which leads them, nationalized the basic industry in the interests of the oppressed .. and defend these interests. Cuba is today a workers state.

My attitude toward building a party there must obviously be colored by these facts. It does not suffice (however correct an abstraction) to say:

The assembling of the tens, the hundreds, the thousands of revolutionary Marxist workers and intellectuals into national sections of a world-wide revolutionary movement is just as important to the success of socialism as the most profound unconscious processes which are presently shaking up so much of the world.

And without a demonstrated understanding of the "World Reality" it will be difficult for us, "in Lenin's Way" to "bring about the fusion of the conscious with the unconscious ⁽¹⁾," as we join Comrade Wohlforth in attempting.

Comrade Wohlforth states: "More than ever before it is important for Marxists to combat the theory of the automatic onflowing of history. We must put the conscious factor back in its right place as the essential ingredient for the success of socialism on a world scale. This is more than a theoretical task -- it is a

(1) In my opinion, it is not proper, when speaking of building the party, to make a dichotomy of conscious vs. unconscious. Better it is to speak of the party as the (conscious) vanguard in relation to the working class (at varying levels of consciousness -- but never unconscious) and peasantry. The unconscious of which we generally speak -- not engaging in psychoanalysis but social-political-economic analysis -- is the structural underpinnings of society in process of development, beginning with nature on up to the man-made portions of economy through many of the superstructural institutions he has created, to which man -- at varying levels of consciousness in understanding and acting upon his environment -- must relate himself -- and, we hope, revolutionize.

practical task." He concludes on why such parties are essential.

We agree that the building of the party is more than a theoretical task -- that it is a practical task. As a matter of fact, for our movement -- having laid our fundamentals of the theory of party building many years ago, which theory still retains its validity -- it is the practical task. And for this reason, we would expect the practical question to at least be asked: How is the party to be built?

Again, in essaying this tough nut (which is today being discussed in our movement) -- for which, however, we find it unnecessary to twist our theory -- I would like to look at Cuba. Starting with the facts outlined above, we then say: party-building starts from program. The program of the Cuban revolution and its leadership moves closer to Trotskyism day by day; the day it showed that it understood the permanent revolution was a new stage in that development. This is our point of departure. Once saying the Revolutionary Leadership is centrist moving leftward, we have our bearings in the history of Trotskyist party-building. Our tactic -- the tactic of the "French Turn," of the fusion with the Musteite-led centrists, of the fusion with the Left-Wing Caucus of the YSA -- is regroupment. In this instance, the programmatic basis and tasks are different. This tendency is at the head of a workers state. But the tactic is essentially the same. The main elements tending to bind us are connected with the defense of the Cuban Revolution through the spread of the Revolution throughout the Western Hemisphere. I would submit that our movement must think these questions out broadly and in detail; but it must think them out. As mentioned above, some excellent thought has already been given -- I once again recommend the material by Comrades Hansen and Weiss -- in the tradition of the richness of Marxist thought guiding our very tactics.

Somewhere or other the plea of the need for theory and the plea of the need for action must meet in a unity of these elements. Comrade Wohlforth leaves a chasm between the two, which has a withering effect upon his treatment of theory (smacking of dogmatism) and action (smacking of sectarianism). That is because the elements must be united in life in order to be healthy, when treated separately on paper.

April 17, 1961