

**A MARXIST
DEBATES THE
SOCIALIST
LABOUR LEAGUE**

*on Cuba, China,
Che Guevara,
O.L.A.S., black power,
and the S.W.P.*

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INTRODUCTION

Last October, as socialists were preparing to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution, the news burst upon the world that Ernesto "Che" Guevara had been killed in a guerrilla action in Bolivia. For revolutionary socialists the blow was a hard one, especially as the fact began to emerge that "Che" had been murdered at the behest of the CIA.

In these cynical times Che's action seems incredibly heroic and romantic. To quit his position in Cuba and return to the life of a hunted animal and with only a handful of guerrillas to challenge the Barrientos regime- equipped and backed by US imperialism- seems utter folly to those whose philosophy is accomodation with oppression.

In fact it was both principled and practical. Once having decided that the advancement of the people of Latin America lies in breaking the chains of US imperialism, and that the survival of the Cuban Revolution depends on the extension of its socialized property forms to the rest of the continent, it would have been mere pedantry for Che to write a book or two, make a few speeches and then sit back and wait.

Che was not a pedant. He was a revolutionary. He went to Bolivia to contribute his experience to the development of the guerrilla struggle. That he was captured and killed in the early stages of the struggle, proves its extreme difficulty, but not that it has been defeated, or that it is the wrong way to fight imperialism in Latin America.

A side-light on Guevara's death is that it exposes a section of the British left, namely the leadership of the Socialist Labour League, as being wrong right down the line about Cuba. The documents contained in this pamphlet concern a discussion which I attempted to initiate with the SLL last summer.

In a letter which I wrote last August, I invited them to resolve one or two political contradictions which I thought their campaign for the "democratic" rights of Arne Swabeck* involved them in. To my surprise, The Newsletter pulled out all its typographical stops and published my letter, together with a reply by Mike Banda that took up over half a page. I was, it seems, dishonest, a liar, and a renegade to boot. Thus does the leadership set about discussing with another socialist. My record of six years membership in the SLL stands and many of my comrades still in the League know it. During that time I worked devotedly, sacrificing time, energy and money to build the SLL. Eventually I developed political differences, expressed them, and resigned. If this is renegacy, then Mike Banda has his own dictionary. I wrote a reply to Banda's article in the Sept.2/67 Newsletter and submitted it to the editor. It was never acknowledged. However, the campaign to

* (a leading member of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States, who had been disciplined for writing to Healy congratulating him on the SLL's line on the Chinese Cultural Revolution)

protect comrade Swabeck from the 'bureaucratic' excesses of the Socialist Workers Party suddenly ceased! Five months later we have not been told whether this comrade has been re-instated, reconciled, or swallowed up by the earth. Could there be a connection between this and my challenge to The Newsletter to allow Swabeck to set out his full political views? Surely not. And yet it is tempting to suppose that such an eventuality would be very embarrassing for the leadership of the SLL.

The correspondence here deals with Cuba, China, and the Black Power struggle, but it is on Cuba that the bankruptcy of the SLL's theorists is most clearly exposed.

In my first letter I demanded that the SLL withdraw their slanderous suggestion that Castro had been responsible for murdering Guevara. This Banda refused to do. He wanted concrete proof that Che was still alive before he would revise his opinion. (The logic of this seems suspect - even bourgeois law presumes innocence until guilt is proved beyond any shadow of doubt.) In line with socialist morality the news of Che's death in Bolivia might have been expected to draw forth an acknowledgement that the leaders of the SLL had been mistaken, but no! In The Newsletter of October 14, an article by Mike Banda merely states that "The Newsletter had been sceptical about Guevara's presence in Bolivia." No mention of the accusations against Castro. This is sheer dishonesty!

Some paragraphs from this rather turgid article are worth quoting:

"Guevara himself has fallen victim to the fallacious and pseudo-Marxist ideas propounded by him and exalted at the OLAS conference - that revolutionaries can dispense with revolutionary theory and parties.

"The tragedy of Guevara is the tragedy, not unique to Latin America of petty-bourgeois nationalism masquerading as Marxism. Hating imperialism which oppresses and humiliates it, but fearing the working class whose liberation threatens it with expropriation, the middle-class strives continuously to oppose imperialism while keeping the working class confused and disoriented about its own ideas, aims and power.

"This leads it from time to time to oppose the working class and compromise with imperialism.

"This, in short, is Castroism in theory and practice."

Does this mean that Guevara's death was the result of a compromise with imperialism? This in fact is a specimen of the kind of 'theory' which the Cubans and the OLAS conference have criticised, theory which is used to turn reality on its head. The only way these people can prop up their wrong position, is by a careful selection of the facts; and by the presentation of episodes unrelated to the development of the revolution in Latin America.

For example, in Banda's reply to my original letter he specifically denies that the OLAS conference criticized the policy of the USSR in giving aid to, and trading with, reactionary Latin American regimes, and he quotes The Economist to prove it. As I pointed out in my reply to Banda, even if this were the case, and the Cubans had backed down to the

pro-Moscow C.P.'s on this issue, the fact that they proposed it at all is significant, since it indicates their political evolution. But in fact, the OLAS Conference did carry this position! World Outlook, Sept. 22, 1967, carried a translation of a report in the Montivideo weekly, Marcha, which reveals that the resolution on this subject was sent to the Soviet Union, and the other workers states, but was not released to the capitalist press.

Neither Banda nor I had this information at the time; but it is obvious now whose analysis was nearer the truth. In fact, this resolution was the centre of a sharp struggle at the conference with the pro-Moscow C.P.'s trying to filibuster and blackmail the conference into dropping it. When one delegate threatened to walk out of the commission on the resolution, the Cubans replied: "Anyone can leave if he wishes to, but he should understand that the door he takes is to the right." Someone should warn Mike about relying entirely on the bourgeois press for his information.

Another prime example of Banda's method came in an article in The Newsletter of November 4, 1967, entitled, "Debray reveals facts on Guevara". Banda quotes Debray as saying in an interview published in the London Times, Oct. 26, that "There was nearly a rupture (with the Bolivian C.P.) three months before hostilities started, and of course this considerably and deeply upset relations between the guerrilla and other political forces in the country. That said, most of the guerrillas came from the basis of the Bolivian Communist Party."

From this Banda concludes, "The fact that Guevara had to rely on Stalinists and 'lumpen proletarians' for his support and could not build a real alternative to Stalinism in Bolivia - of all countries - casts serious doubt on the claims of the Castroites to the leadership of the Latin American revolution."

This is a squalid distortion. Banda omits the last sentence of Debray's reply, in which he said, "In this connection one must distinguish between militants and leadership."

From reading the whole text it is obvious that the militants who joined the guerrillas were not "Stalinists", but revolutionaries, who had broken with the reactionary role of their leaders. What Che did therefore was to offer a real alternative to the peaceful co-existence policies of the Bolivian Stalinists.

In case anyone thinks that these mistakes about Cuba are a personal foible on the part of Mike Banda, let me quote the rather misguided section on Cuba in the Manifesto of the International Committee of the Fourth International which was adopted by the lively gathering of that body in April 1966 which met for the purpose of "reconstructing the Fourth International."

"Inevitably the petty-bourgeois Castroite leadership," the Manifesto says, "had to come into conflict with the Cuban workers and peasants, become more and more the prisoner of the Kremlin bureaucracy, and be a bargaining counter between US imperialism and the Kremlin bureau-

cracy. It sought a compromise with imperialism itself."

"Under the petty-bourgeois Castroite leadership, the contradictions of the regime grow, they will lead to the decay of the regime to the benefit of imperialism." (Fourth International, Vol. 3, No. 3, August 1966)
The Socialist Labour League's position is shot through with contradictions because they have made no objective analysis of the development of the Cuban Revolution. In 1961/62, they took a position for factional reasons*, which was that Cuba was a capitalist country and could become nothing else until a revolution led by a Trotskyist party had taken place. Since then their press has virtually ignored Cuba, except to dig out isolated facts which could be twisted to support their position, in the way I have tried to show.

Will the leaders of the SLL please explain the following:

1. Where is the factual evidence for claiming that capitalism exists in Cuba? The big estates? The agencies of the international banks and finance houses? Where is that strata of society which lives by exploiting the labour power of wage slaves, i.e. the capitalist class?
2. Where is the factual evidence that the leaders of the Revolution have made unprincipled compromises with imperialism?
3. Where is the factual evidence that they are "prisoners of the Kremlin bureaucracy"? Will the leaders of the SLL explain how in any way the following extracts from the general declaration of last summer's OLAS conference show that the Cubans compromise with imperialism and/or Stalinism: "3. That the essential content of the Revolution in Latin America is to be found in its confrontation with imperialism and the bourgeoisie and land owning oligarchies. Consequently the character of the Revolution is a struggle for national independence, for emancipation from the oligarchies, and for taking the Socialist road to its complete economic and social development;

continued on back page...

*In these years the leadership of the SLL carried out a struggle against the majority of the International Committee of the Fourth International of which they were a section, which with the support of the SWP wished to end a ten year split in the world trotskyist movement by re-unifying with the International Secretariat of the Fourth International.

The important factor which showed that the International Secretariat and the International Committee had evolved basic political agreement was their identical analysis of the Cuban Revolution - namely that it had liquidated capitalism and established a workers' state in Cuba. This followed a process of development in which a similar analysis of the Hungarian Revolution was also a factor.

In their attempts to sabotage this unity, the SLL leaders concentrated their fire on this analysis of Cuba (they already had committed themselves on Hungary) declaring International Secretariat's position to be "imperial" and a "capitulation to petty-bourgeois nationalism."

A LETTER TO THE NEWSLETTER

A CHALLENGE TO THE SLL ON CHINA, BLACK POWER AND CUBA

Dear Comrade Editor,

I found the letters of Arne Swabek very interesting, no doubt you consider them useful ammunition against the SWP. I cannot comment on Comrade Swabek's expulsion although I do not doubt that the SWP is capable of defending its decision, but I would like to take up some of the political questions raised by the letters.

Comrade Swabek says:

'Since the rise of the Chinese People's Communes in 1958...

I have carried out a struggle in the SWP for a rational revolutionary attitude toward...the real essence of the Chinese Revolution. The present Party leaders have continually held to their fatally false position of calling for the overthrow of the Mao Tse-tung regime. Objectively this becomes support for counter-revolution'.

This contrasts so sharply with previously -stated SLL policy, that it is significant that no editorial comment accompanies the letters, making the SLL's position clear. For instance in 1961 the NEC of the SLL submitted a document entitled 'The USSR since the 20th Congress', which was adopted unanimously. One extract reads as follows:

'Whatever the case, the question is not one of reforming the CPs of these countries, but of building new revolutionary parties with the strategy of political revolution...

'Such a perspective in the USSR, China and the countries of Eastern Europe, together with our conditional defence of these states against the capitalist countries, constitutes the essence of our policy...'

This seems quite clear, since the SLL is for a political revolution in China, it too is 'calling for the overthrow of the Mao Tse-tung regime.' Strange allies Comrade Swabek. This position has never been publicly changed, although of late it has been given a new slant. While still maintaining the necessity for a political revolution, under the leadership of the International Committee of the Fourth International, this is presented in a very interesting way in an article by Mike Banda entitled (with Mike's flair for subtle innuendo) 'The SWP joins the White Guards', which appeared in The Newsletter of January 21, 1967:

'While the world press is forced to admit that two factions are fighting a life and death struggle for political power in China, and that millions of China's youth are backing Mao against the up and coming bureaucracy led by Liu Shao-chi and Peng Chen -- the new mandarins -- and while all China is seething with struggle, what does the Militant say? "The lack of information itself is an indication of the lack of democracy within the Party and the government" (!)'

So the Militant was castigated for not deducing from the information available at that time that the struggle was a cut and dried fight between the bureaucrats and the Maoists. Well, with inestimable advantage of hindsight, I think that the Militant's position stands up a lot better than The Newsletter's. All the information we have had since then shows that the struggle is a lot more complex than The Newsletter would have us believe.

Certainly there is a struggle against bureaucracy taking place, but the idea that it is being carried out by the devotees of the grotesque cult of 'Mao Tse-tung's thought' does not hold much water. The issue of The Newsletter which contains Comrade Swabek's letters is the first for three weeks; one would have hoped for an analysis of the latest events in China, to clarify what exactly the SLL's position is these days. It might also have been informative to have had some statements on the other fields where the SWP and the SLL have been in dispute, and where the line of the SWP has been richly confirmed -- especially in the last two or three weeks -- Cuba and the Black Power struggles in the US.

The OLAS conference in Havana has shown the determination of the Fidelista leadership to retain and develop an independent revolutionary line, not hesitating to criticize both pro-Moscow CPs in Latin America and Soviet trade policy with reactionary South American regimes. It has defended its actions in sending material aid to the revolutionary movement in that continent and has hailed the heroism of Che Guevara in going to lead the guerrillas. Thus two of The Newsletter's most strenuously maintained slanders are dealt a death blow.

'The disappearance of Guevara is not an accidental event. It signifies a major turn in Castro's policy, a turn towards a new relationship with US imperialism' and 'Castro's attack on Trotskyism is nothing more than a declaration...the Cuban government is prepared to play its part in suppressing any attempt to set up working class power in Central and Latin America' (sic). (The Newsletter, February 5, 1966.)

The riots in Detroit and other cities in the US show the explosive nature of the Black revolt and Stokely Carmichael's statements at the OLAS conference show that the Black Power leaders are beginning to see the revolutionary and international significance of their struggle -- confirming the forecasts of the SWP. It might seem that these things are worthy of an analysis and an explanation of where the SLL stands on these things; particularly pressing is the demand for a withdrawal of the suggestions that Castro had Guevara killed or exiled. A whole page of this issue of The Newsletter was given over to a re-hash of the Moscow Trials -- important, but not as urgent as the things I have outlined above.

In this context I personally can only come to the conclusion that The Newsletter is attempting to use the expulsion of Arne Swabek to divert attention from the clear political superiority of the SWP.

Fraternally, Bob Purdie.

SWABECK, GUEVARA AND THE RED GUARDS

The apologists of revisionism seldom, if ever, defend their policies and actions openly and honestly. They always seek to distort their opponents' views by a tendentious selection of quotations, facts and episodes torn right out of context. This is a method well-known in Stalinist circles, but is certainly not confined to them.

Mr. Purdie - a renegade from Trotskyism - has also got to employ identical methods to try and discredit the SLL, and rehabilitate the SWP as well. What is his method? Firstly, he ignores, or rather, carefully evades the 64 thousand dollar question of the expulsion of Arne Swabek, an action which is indefensible, scandalous and unprecedented in the history of the SWP. He leaves the defence of this action conveniently to the SWP. Yet he himself has nothing to say.

Does he support the expulsion of Swabek? Or does he not? In reply we are told that he finds Swabek's letters 'interesting'. This is also very interesting. But does Purdie think that Swabek is a liar or a paranoid - or is the SWP guilty of arbitrary and bureaucratic action. This would certainly be more 'interesting' to all those who are interested in the differences between the SWP and SLL since these differences are not incidental or tactical ones, but are deep-going and fundamental.

Any serious student of these differences would try to acquaint himself with the whole history of the struggle and look at the divergent evolution of the two conflicting trends from the standpoint of the struggle for the revolutionary party and its programme. Purdie is unable to do this because he is blinded by a middle-class hatred of Bolshevism. Instead of seeking the concrete truth, he looks for paradox and incongruity. So he comes up with a quotation of the SLL in 1961. Poor Purdie!

He says that we made no editorial comment on Swabek's letters. Read The Newsletter of August 19, or better still read the statement of The Newsletter on the Red Guards (January 14) and the report of my speech made on January 19 at an SLL public meeting at Conway Hall in The Newsletter of January 28. The SLL does not equivocate. We supported - and still do - the movement of Mao Tse-tung and the Red Guards in China, critically. We said then - and still do - that the only way forward for the Chinese youth and workers was to break completely from Stalinism and adopt the programme of Trotskyism. Our support for the Red Guards is subordinate to the construction of a Trotskyist party in China. We are not neutral in the struggle of the factions in China, but neither are we acolytes of Mao Tse-tung.

In what sense do these principles conflict with the statement of 1961? On the contrary, I think that the subsequent evolution of Red China confirms rather than invalidates this prognosis. If it was correct, for example, for Trotsky to advocate support for Stalin against a possible coup from the rightist-Butenko trend in the 1930s, what is so odd about supporting Mao against the entire Party, trade union and

state apparatus in China today?

Do the Red Guards represent bureaucracy and kulak power or do they represent something different from and opposed to these things? Of course the Red Guard movement is not homogeneous and completely under the domination of Mao, nor can we predict with accuracy how the movement will evolve. All we can say is that there will be extremely bitter and bloody clashes between the contending factions leading to further and wider differentiations within the Red Guards which will facilitate the construction of the Fourth International in China. The fact that the Mao wing of the bureaucracy has had to arm the Red Guards after the Wuhan events reveals the crisis of the regime conclusively. For these reasons we think that Swaback is correct when he writes that the SWP is supporting counter-revolution in China.

Mr. Purdie finds this strange - but not anywhere as strange as the cordial relationship which exists between the SWP and the counter-revolutionary Stalinist Party of the USA. Whether Purdie likes it or not, all those who oppose the Red Guards are supporting imperialism. Only those who support the Red Guards have any right to criticize them or dissent from their views.

Purdie's comment that the struggle in China is complex is a platitude. All social struggles are complex - not only the Chinese social struggles - and this complexity should stimulate Marxists to try and discover the inner necessity, lawfulness and truth of these struggles instead of making them politically impotent in the face of historical events.

When the SWP (and Purdie) say they do not have all the facts, they mean really that they do not have the facts they would like to have. But facts, as they say, are stubborn things and cannot be easily ignored. The facts in China's case show that the vast majority of the youth, despite the 'grotesque cult of Mao' support Mao against Liu and the Party.

What is more, these facts once again demonstrate the incomparable superiority and correctness of Trotskyism in the present epoch.

What is most interesting and highly instructive about Purdie's criticism of the SLL is his defence of Castro and 'Black Power'. Here of course, there is no lack of 'facts' but the same monumental contempt for theory. Purdie is no exception to this reconversion to Fidelism. As the working class in the metropolitan countries begins to engage in combat with monopoly capital, the centrist-revisionist fringe consciously turn their backs on the working class and begin to look for new 'epi-centres' and non-working-class organizations in order to forge a new, anti-Marxist front. This is the real significance of the OLAS conference in Havana. (This conference significantly and unlike previous conferences was adorned by portraits, not of Marx and Lenin, but Simon Bolivar, bourgeois-landlord-statesman.)

Purdie's enthusiasm for Castro, I think, should at least be tempered by the odious memory of the 1966 Tri-Continental Conference where Castro, on behalf of imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy, made a nauseating attack on Trotskyism, an attack which, incidentally, he has never retracted.

It might also be recalled that this attack was followed immediately by a slanderous statement from Blas Roca, hired hack of Stalinism. Despite efforts by the SLL and even Purdie's friends in the revisionist United Secretariat, Castro did not allow the Trotskyists, or even the revisionist bootlickers of Castro, a forum in Cuba to defend themselves against his filthy and vile insinuations. The hatred of these leaders for Marxism is absolute and organic. And yet it is this same leadership that Purdie praises for its 'independent, revolutionary line'!. The more things change they remain the same. The 'independence' and 'revolutionary' quality of Castro's policies which Purdie advertises is as worthless as his statements about Guevara.

Did the OLAS conference condemn the reactionary policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy? It did NOT! Contrary to Purdie's opinion, this is what The Economist states: "But the issue that most nearly brought the conference to boiling - and walking out - point was the resolution condemning socialist countries that give aid to capitalist countries in the Western hemisphere. This was clearly directed in particular at the Russians who are stubbornly developing their economic relations with Columbia, Chile and other Latin American countries.

"The Cuban-sponsored resolution condemning this led to an extremely bitter debate in one of the conference commissions. After it had been approved by 15 votes to 3 (Uruguay, Costa and El Salvador) with nine abstentions there was very nearly a walk-out by the pro-Moscow parties.

"Presumably just because it was so controversial this resolution was not confirmed at a plenary session and was therefore not published."
(my emphasis, M.B.) (The Economist, August 8, 1967, p. 645)

In the same way Purdie's comments on Che Guevara must be taken with a large pinch of salt. The Newsletter will continue to view with scepticism all statements about the existence of Che Guevara until some solid tangible evidence can be produced that the man exists and secondly, that he left Cuba of his own free will. So far, only Regis Debray is supposed to have met him.

But even on Debray's evidence it seems dubious. Sometimes we are informed that Debray met him, sometimes Debray would have met him if he hadn't been arrested. It seems to us that the Stalinists and Castroites are conspiring to keep the real fate of Guevara hidden from the Cuban public. Purdie's approach to Black Power suffers from the same boss-eyed, middle-class approach. Carmichael's statements are a curious mixture of militancy and reformism. He articulates the demands of ghetto Negroes eloquently but only in order to give them a Utopian and petty-bourgeois meaning.

As was pointed out in last week's Newsletter the Black Power programme is a reformist one which excludes all unity of Negro and white workers in the struggle against capitalism. Marxists must distinguish between the Black Power idea or feeling of Negro workers and the Negro petty-bourgeoisie. The former want political power in their own neighbourhood or district to fight the police, the landlord and the capitalist. Their emphasis is on Power. It is progressive and revo-

lutionary. The latter, however, express the universal uncertainty and fear of the petty-bourgeoisie - the fear of being proletarianized. It is reformist and reactionary. There is a world of difference between these two concepts of 'Black Power'. And Detroit, contrary to what Purdie says, is a thorough refutation of the SWP forecast. In Detroit particularly the uprising was an 'integrated' one - in fact a class movement aimed against merchant capital and the police, even though on a very elementary and primitive level.

What Detroit and Newark demonstrate is not the feasibility of 'Black Power', but the imminence of much larger social struggles which will decide the future of US imperialism. Since the Negroes in the USA do not constitute a nation but are an exceptionally exploited section of the working class, their struggles will precede the struggles of white workers.

But these struggles in turn will disrupt the stability of US capitalism and stimulate newer and greater layers of white workers to take the path of struggle. Only the unity of Negro and white workers can secure socialism. Conversely, disunity will in all probability lead to fascism.

So, Mr. Purdie, we withdraw nothing, Nor do we apologize for anything. Unlike the revisionist and the renegade fringe, we do not chop and change our policy to please the prevailing prejudice of the middle class or even indulge their fears. We know that capitalism is doomed and that the only class which can end this system is the working class in alliance with the colonial peasants. It is true to say that the SWP leaders have never grasped this very important idea.

This alliance will be forged only through the building of the revolutionary party and the International. Neither Havana nor Peking can substitute for this task.

C H E G U E V A R A S P E A K S

A collection of speeches, articles, interviews, and letters of the late, famed revolutionary. Selections span the years of Guevara's rise to world renown - from 1959 and the Cuban Revolution's triumph to 1967 and his death in the mountains of Bolivia. The speeches and other statements in this volume were made by Guevara in Cuba, Uruguay, the United States, Algeria and in the case of his manifesto on Vietnam, from "somewhere in the world" - now presumed to have been Bolivia.

Subject matters include Guevara's views on the history of the Cuban Revolution, guerrilla warfare, agrarian reform, economic planning, socialism, the role of artists, imperialism, relations between underdeveloped and industrialised nations, and the war in Vietnam. Other features are an interview granted to the widow of Frantz Fanon, and Guevara's moving letters of farewell to his parents and to Fidel Castro.

Che Guevara Speaks contains 20 chapters and is 159 pages long. Available from Pioneer Book Service, 8, Toynbee St., London E.1 Cost 16/6, 1/-Post.

A SECOND LETTER TO THE NEWSLETTER

TROTSKYISM IS THE HIGHEST EXPRESSION OF MARXISM

Dear Comrade Editor,

One of the most positive attributes of the great Marxists, was the ability to recognize and correct mistakes. Lenin, on his death bed, opening up the campaign against Stalin; Trotsky, admitting he was wrong about the Bolshevik Party, and joining them in 1917, showed the quality of political honesty, which made them the leaders of the World's greatest revolution.

Mike Banda, replying to my letter published in The Newsletter of September 2nd, shows a distressing lack of this quality.

The most glaring mistake is in his remarks about Che Guevara. Instead of admitting that the new evidence, at the very least, puts into strong suspicion the assessment of The Newsletter, that Castro had Guevara killed or exiled, he frantically tries to cast doubts on Regis Debray's testimony for, of all reasons, that he was vague about whether or when he had met Guevara. What the hell do you expect Mike? Debray to announce Che's address and phone number to the CIA?

For a long time the SLL has tried to distort the Cuban Revolution, denying that it has liquidated capitalism in Cuba, and seizing on every possible opportunity to predict a sell-out by Castro to imperialism.

It is tragic, that instead of correcting these mistakes, and evaluating the development of the revolution, Mike Banda has to go in for political acrobatics. To maintain this untenable position, he quotes The Economist at me, to prove that the OLAS conference did not criticise Moscow. Unfortunately, for him, the quote proves only what I actually said, "the determination of the Fidelista leadership to develop and maintain an independent revolutionary line".

Whether or not it was advisable for the Cubans to back down in face of the opposition of the pro-Moscow C.P.'s does not alter the fact that Castro did severely criticise the Soviet trade policy, and the tactics of the Venezuelan C.P.

This is a very important development. Taken in conjunction with the publishing of Guevara's statement, the increase of guerrilla struggle in a number of Latin American countries, and the rejection by the OLAS conference of peaceful co-existence, it is profoundly revolutionary.

US imperialism has shown, by its intervention in the Dominican Republic, that it is determined to prevent any more "Cubas" in Latin America. A struggle by the masses on that continent will cause enormous contradictions for the leader of world reaction, already stretched to the utmost in Vietnam, and would sharpen class struggle on an international scale. That the Cubans choose this perspective is the most meaningful refutation of the sneers of Mike Banda, and shows that they are not going to be blackmailed by the Soviet bureaucracy into selling out the workers and peasants of what they call "our America".

The Newsletter's original accusations about Che Guevara were based on hearsay and rumour. There was not any evidence in any way as substantial as the evidence which now refutes these slanders. But this does not impress Mike Banda, he regards the struggle against imperialism in Latin America as a sort of supermarket from which he can select facts and episodes in order to avoid the embarrassment of admitting that the SLL and The Newsletter have been wrong all along about Cuba.

Banda chooses to try and bludgeon me over the head with the speech made by Castro at last year's Tri-Continental conference, in which he criticised the actions of certain supporters of the Posadas tendency in the Guatemalan guerrilla movement, and the accusation made by various publications, carrying the Trotskyist label, that he had killed Guevara.

My head is not the least bloody, and certainly not bowed. I analyse the development of the Cuban Revolution, not from the subjective stand point of whether or not its leadership is prepared to swear allegiance to Trotskyism, with a hand on a stack of Transitional Programmes, but on the basis of the contributions to the struggle against imperialism made by the Cuban Revolution and its leadership.

So far as Castro's speech is concerned, I think that he may well have been justified in criticising the Guatemalan Posadists; and he certainly had reason to be irritated by the accusations that he had murdered one of his closest comrades. The anti-Trotskyist content in his speech was deplorable, but I believe that he may have been the victim of Stalinist propaganda and lacked knowledge of the real nature of Trotskyism. However, the evidence that he is increasingly critical, and asserting independence of Moscow, makes it, in my opinion, by no means uncertain that he will not publicly correct these mistakes. However, I reassert, the important thing is the contribution he is making to the struggle against imperialism.

If Castro miserably fails Mike's examination for genuine revolutionary leaders, he deftly switches papers, and allows Mao Tse-tung to pass with colours, which, if not quite flying, seem to be fluttering more vigourously than Castro's.

This is one of the most obvious inconsistencies in Banda's reply, that he allows Mao Tse-tung credit for leading a struggle against bureaucracy in China, but can find nothing good to say about Castro, citing mainly Castro's "anti-trotskyist" speech, but ignoring the bitter, slanderous, accusations, and repressions against Trotskyism, which are a feature of the whole history of the Maoist leadership.

I shall return to the subject of China shortly, but first the matter of Swabek's political position.

In my letter I quoted a passage from Comrade Swabek's letter in The Newsletter of August 12th in which he stated that since 1958 he had been in opposition to the position of the SWP calling for the political revolution against Mao Tse-tung. I also quoted from a 1961 document of the SLL, not because I had to search far to find a relevant quote, but in order to show that the SLL had for a long time held a position, in principle, the same as the one which Cde. Swabek had opposed in the SWP.

So it is rather startling to find that instead of admitting the political disagreement between the SLL and Swabeck, Mike Banda takes Swabeck's accusation, that the line of the SWP had been support for counter-revolution, and, ignoring the fact that it is a general criticism of the policy of the SWP since 1958, applies solely to the present disagreement between the SLL and the SWP on the attitude to be taken toward the Cultural Revolution! It seems to me that Mike Banda and The Newsletter are deliberately trying to cover up the extent of the political disagreement between the SLL and Cde. Swabeck, in order to score a cheap point off the SWP.

I may be wrong, of course, I have only the letters printed in The Newsletter from which to assess Cde. Swabeck's political line, however the matter can easily be cleared up, if The Newsletter will give Cde. Swabeck space in which to set out his views in full.

As for the "sixty-four thousand dollar question" as to whether or not I support Swabeck's expulsion, I must plead guilty to that most heinous of crimes, not having enough facts.

I have no hot line to New York, and the SWP does not supply me with the minutes of its National Committee, I have only the statements of The Newsletter, as to the reasons for, or even the fact of, Cde. Swabeck's expulsion.

Perhaps the SWP will publish its side of the story, or perhaps it does not wish to enter into a public debate on the matter. I do not know, however I do not consider it dishonest to suspend judgement on this matter, while supporting the general political line of the SWP. But notice how the question is put, "does Purdie think that Swabeck is a liar or a paranoid - or is the SWP guilty of arbitrary and bureaucratic action?" Both of the alternatives which Banda offers me are equally false. and emotionally charged, in order to make me appear to uphold a ridiculous opinion of Cde. Swabeck's psychiatric condition, if I attempt to defend the SWP's action in expelling him. No Mike, I am not daft enough to step into your little trap.

One other little trick of yours, Mike. In answer to my remark about the absence of editorial comment, on the political content of the Swabeck letters, you direct me first to the editorial in The Newsletter of August 19th, actually this does not take up Swabeck's political position, but as you well know, my letter, which is published undated, was dated August 18th. I may be "blinded by middle class" (actually I am a semi-skilled engineering worker), "hatred of Bolshevism" but I think that even Mike's eagle eyes would be strained by trying to read an editorial before it was published!

The other statements and reports which you direct me to, deal with the SLL's position on China, but not with the position of Arne Swabeck.

To return to the subject of China. It is significant that Banda scolds me for not trying to, "discover the inner necessity, lawfulness and truth" of the struggles in China.

His remarks will convince only those who consider that "theory" consists

of complicated grammar.

For, while claiming that I and the SWP ignore those facts which do not fit our theories, an examination of Banda's efforts will show that he:

- (1) Ignores the fact that the "Cultural Revolution" has its roots in the sharp repression of the foment of criticism caused by the "Blossom and Contend" movement of 1957.
- (2) Ignores the fact that it was sparked off by the purge of such men as Wu Han and Teng To who had criticised the Maoist leadership in an allegorical fashion, in articles and plays, like: - "Hai Jui Dismissed from Office", "Notes from Three Family Village", "Evening Chats at Yenshan", and had encouraged criticism of the bureaucracy from the masses.

Teng To was closely connected with a purged student and youth leader, Lin Hsi Ling, who was accused of being a rightist, but who wrote, "the present upper strata of China does not correspond with the property system of common ownership", and, "the party and state apparatus has become a set of bureaucratic organs ruling the people without democracy".

- (3) Ignores the fact that, while the Red Guards are encouraged to "criticise and overthrow" the leaders of party and state, the fostering of the cult of Mao Tse-tung, among the youth, who are naturally easier to mobilise around idealistic and unrealistic formulae, makes them almost entirely a force under the domination of the Mao wing of the bureaucracy. So that the fact of the mobilization of millions of youth does not make the struggle an anti-bureaucratic one, only one against those sections of the bureaucracy who challenge Mao.

No Mike, I am not politically impotent, merely because I cannot agree with the simplistic conclusions of The Newsletter.

Re-emphasising his views on my social origin, and optical defects, Banda censures my "boss-eyed, middle class approach" to the Black Power movement. He asks us to distinguish between the Black Power idea of the Negro workers and that of the Negro petty-bourgeoisie, and says that the former is progressive and the latter reformist and reactionary. He also claims that the Black Power programme excludes all unity of Negro and white workers in the struggle against capitalism.

It is difficult to understand how anyone laying claim to a Marxist method of analysis can come to either of these conclusions.

The most significant feature of the breach between the old "integrationist" phase of the Afro-American struggle, and the new Black Power phase, is that the former was the attempt of the black middle class to share in the fruits of American society - the right to move into plush neighbourhoods - to join luxury golf clubs - eat in good restaurants etc. It not only did not benefit the Black masses, it failed to mobilise or touch them in any way. In fact it increased the gap between the integrated middle-class and the ghetto poor.

This is the reason for the most virulent opponents of Black Power being, precisely, the Negro petty-bourgeoisie.

As with the case of Cuba, Banda does not examine the Black Power struggle in order to understand the development of the movement, but only in order to isolate those facts which, torn out of context, underpin his mistaken position. What is the reality of his claim that the Black Power movement excludes any unity between white and black workers?

The Black Power concept is a very fluid one, and has expressed some mistaken ideas, but in its concrete development it is the greatest hope of an eventual unity of black and white workers.

It is a response, which for the first time has stirred the depths of the ghetto, to the fundamentally racist nature of advanced capitalism, which lives by sucking the blood of the colonial peoples.

It is the recognition that the demoralised slum Negroes can stand up straight, and shake off the idea, which is at the very centre of the US exploitative system, that black is inferior to white.

The most important reason for the disunity of white and black workers is the fact that, by keeping the ghetto masses demoralised, and giving the white workers a relatively privileged standard of living, the US ruling class can prevent any social contact, and foster, not only racist concepts amongst the white workers, but distrust of these workers' privileged position amongst the black.

Banda remarks that the US Negroes do not constitute a nation. By all conventional standards of nationhood this may not be so, but the concept of nationhood is breaking through the demoralisation, and mobilising the black masses against the bourgeois state. Thus sharpening the class conflicts within the US, and teaching important sections of the Afro-Americans the true nature of US society.

It is precisely this process that led to the integrated nature of the Detroit revolt, the Black Power militants are extending a hand to their fellow victims of exploitation in the slums, the Puerto Ricans, the other minority groups, and the poor whites.

Banda's article implies that the leaders of the Black Power revolt express a Petty-bourgeois fear of becoming proletarianized - what is the truth behind this accusation?

The present leadership came from two processes:-

- (1) The work, done in the ghettos, by such organizations as the Students Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) to organize the ghetto poor against the landlords, police, thieving shopkeepers etc.,
- (2) The ideas of such men as Malcolm X, who taught the black Americans the truth about their heritage, and pointed the way to an international struggle of all exploited races, and Franz Fanon who, in spite of his pessimism about the workers of the advanced countries, expressed

and analysed the struggle of the colonial peoples.

To most people the fact that Rap Brown, the chairman of SNCC, could say "Violence is necessary, it is American as cherry pie" would indicate that a process of change had occurred within that organization. Not to our Michael though. He is concerned only to discredit anyone who dares to lead class struggle without a permit from Clapham High Street.

He says that Stokely Carmichael articulates the demands of the ghetto Negroes "only in order to give them a Utopian and petty-bourgeois meaning". Mike wrote his article before the full text of Stokely's address to OLAS was published (World Outlook, September 8) perhaps if he reads this speech he will correct his estimation. Carmichael very definitely expresses the revolutionary and international importance of the Black Power movement, lays down a programme for unity against the racist exploitation of the ghettos and calls for the unity of this struggle with the anti-imperialist struggle of the "Third World".

It is true that he expresses a Fanonist pessimism about the advanced workers, but in the context of the struggle in the US this will rapidly be overcome, as the struggle mobilizes the white workers in answer to the attacks on them by capitalism, necessitated by the black revolt.

It is certainly a gross distortion to imply that the Black Power leaders will refuse unity with white workers. Already in the mass demonstrations against the Vietnam war they mobilize alongside white labour and anti-war organizations.

Two other minor points:-

Mike says that if I were a serious student of the difference between the SLL and the SWP, I would try to acquaint myself with the divergent evolution of the two trends.

He knows that I am very well acquainted with this evolution, having been in the SLL for six years, and participating in the discussions in the SLL at the time of the breach between the two organizations. In fact it is by going over that discussion again, that I have concluded, in the light of further experience, that the SWP was right at that time and is right now.

He also says:-

"Capitalism is doomed and the only class which can end this system is the working class in alliance with the peasants. It is true to say that the SWP leaders have never grasped this very important idea."

Come, come Mike, surely you would like to at least qualify this, after all, not only did these leaders work closely for many years with Lion Trotsky, but for a long time they were the SLL's closest allies.

In conclusion.

Mike Banda's whole method is one of abstracting the question of leadership from the concrete process of the class struggle. Leadership is seen as something pure, which must descend like a dove upon the masses, before any effective class struggle can occur. This is why he suffers from political myopia, and theoretical schizophrenia, when faced with the problem of developments which do not fit in with his rigid concepts.

Trotskyism is the most developed expression of Marxism, and thus of human consciousness. Many of the mistakes and setbacks of the struggles of the masses could be avoided, and in the end these struggles can only come to the fruition of a socialist world, if the masses have a leadership which has absorbed the experiences and lessons of the Russian Revolution, and its degeneration, which Leon Trotsky fought to clarify. But Trotskyists cannot impose their leadership on the masses, inevitably the class struggle throws up forms of action and consciousness which, although inadequately, drive forward the movement of the masses.

Trotskyists can, and must, support such movements and leaders, while seeking to clarify for them the ideas which we know can lead them to victory. It is because the SIL sets itself up against such movements that it is so sterile in its approach to Cuba, China, and the Black Power struggle.

Fraternally, Bob Purdie
Sept. 12, 1967

introduction continued...

"4. That the principles of Marxism-Leninism guide the revolutionary movement of Latin America..." and, "19. That the heroic struggles of the people of Vietnam aids all revolutionary peoples fighting against imperialism to an inestimable degree, and constitutes an inspiring example for the peoples of Latin America."

(International Socialist Review, Nov-Dec 1967)

This is not to say that "Castroism" is identical to or supersedes Trotskyism, an interpretation which the leadership of the SIL puts on any attempt to assess favourably the role of the Cuban leadership. Marxism is a materialist philosophy and must base itself on the living reality of the class struggle. British Marxists must understand what is actually happening in Latin America, since this is likely to be decisive in determining the world relationship of forces in the struggle against imperialism in our epoch. This is why the SIL's line on Cuba is so reprehensible.

I hope that my associates of recent years, whom I still regard as comrades, will approach this pamphlet with an open mind. I hope that they will take up some of the points inside their own organisation and will discuss with revolutionaries outside their movement in a fraternal way. They should feel free to send me any comments, however unfavourable which they wish to make.

Bob Purdie, Jan. 18, 1968

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