



Internationalist Group

League for the Fourth International

CUBA: A Bureaucratically Deformed Workers State



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**For Workers Political Revolution to Defend Cuba
Against Imperialism and Counterrevolution**

Internationalist Group Class Readings

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Introduction

The Cuban Revolution has been an important event in world history, and also in the history of the left. The overthrow of the bloody dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, a former sergeant in the Cuban army who acted as the satrap of U.S. imperialism on the Caribbean island, set off joyous celebrations in Havana. As the dictator fled to Miami along with his minions who set to sea in their yachts, and the Rebel Army marched into the Cuban capital on 1 January 1959, hundreds of thousands went into the streets. It also unleashed a wave of enthusiasm among leftists throughout Latin America, who were saddled with similar anti-Communist rulers imposed by the United States (Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Somoza in Nicaragua, etc.) as part of the anti-Soviet Cold War.

The new regime that took office was by no means “communist,” as right-wingers charged, but rather a hodgepodge including both leftist leaders of the peasant guerrillas, notably Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara, as well as “moderate” capitalist politicians who had been sidelined by Batista and his cronies. While the United States was initially hesitant to intervene directly, as the government in Havana proceeded to undertake a modest land reform and other measures, it was met by virulent hostility from reactionaries in Cuba and from Washington. One by one, right-wing bourgeois figures split with Castro’s July 26th Movement and headed to Miami, and nationalizations by Cuba were met by sanctions by the U.S.

By the end of 1960 and early 1961, culminating in the April 1961 Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs) invasion of *gusanos* (worms, Cuban counterrevolutionaries) organized by the Central Intelligence Agency, a social revolution had taken place with the expropriation of the capitalist ruling class – but the resulting regime was marked by the absence of organs of proletarian democracy while political power was in the hands of a narrow petty-bourgeois layer around the guerrilla leadership that over time consolidated a full-fledged bureaucracy. Although its origins were different, and the process of consolidation took some time, this *bureaucratically deformed workers state* shared the same basic characteristics as the degenerated workers state in the Soviet Union under Stalin and his heirs, as well as the East European Soviet bloc countries, China, North Vietnam and North Korea.

Militants of the Latin American nationalist left became uncritical cheerleaders for the Cuban leadership. Some tried to replicate the Cuban experience by launching ill-prepared guerrilla struggles, which were quickly annihilated. Despite the disastrous results of this first wave of guerrilla struggles (1961-63) and a second wave from 1965 to 1969 (responding to Guevara’s call to make “two, three, many Vietnams” in Latin America), many Latin American leftists remain unconditional *fidelistas*, even as their own political activity is more on the line of nationalist populism. The rise of the bourgeois nationalist regime of Hugo Chávez and his “Bolivarian Revolution” in Venezuela since 1999 has given new impetus to such pro-Castro currents among bourgeois and petty-bourgeois “progressives.”

Among those who lay claim to the heritage of the great

Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, the Cuban Revolution also exercised a great attraction. Trotsky’s Fourth International had split during 1951-53, reflecting the pressures of the expansion of Stalinism after World War II. One side, led by FI secretary Michel Pablo, adopted a policy of tailing after and even liquidating into the mass Stalinist parties (as well as Social Democracy in northern Europe). Their opponents, including James P. Cannon of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and co-thinkers in Britain and France, continued to uphold the Trotskyist program for cohering an independent revolutionary vanguard. But the isolation imposed on the left by the Cold War took its toll, and by 1960 both the European Pabloites and the U.S. SWP leaders uncritically seized upon the Cuban Revolution as a godsend.

The forerunners of the Internationalist Group (IG) and the League for the Fourth International (LFI) go back to the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) which came together inside the SWP to fight the uncritical support for the Castro regime that effectively liquidated the Trotskyist program. The RT developed the analysis of Castro’s Cuba as a deformed workers state, and after a period of debate was summarily expelled by the SWP leadership in their drive to reunite with Pablo and his main collaborator, Ernest Mandel. The RT gave rise to the Spartacist League (SL), which for some three decades after 1965 upheld the program of revolutionary Trotskyism. The founders of the IG and LFI include comrades who were long-time cadres and leaders of the SL and its international current (now the International Communist League) prior to being expelled in 1996.

The documents of the RT’s fight over Cuba inside the SWP were published by SL in its *Marxist Bulletin* No. 8, *Cuba and Marxist Theory*, which is available on the Internet. Subsequently, from the late 1970s until the early ’90s, the Spartacist press published a number of articles on Cuba, many of them written by the comrades who later formed the IG/LFI. This bulletin brings together a number of these articles that give an overview of the evolution of the Castro regime over the space of three decades. In addition, we have included several articles on Cuba published by *The Internationalist* in recent years.

In this compilation we have laid out the Trotskyist program of unconditional defense of the Cuban deformed workers state against imperialist threats and attack as well as internal counterrevolution, together with the struggle to build a Trotskyist nucleus to fight for a workers political revolution to oust the Castro-Stalinist bureaucracy, whose pursuit of the pipedream of peaceful coexistence with capitalism and imperialism threatens the survival of the Cuban Revolution. This is the same program Trotskyists upheld toward the Soviet Union and East European deformed workers states, and still do today toward China, Vietnam and North Korea. Despite deep capitalist inroads, as Trotsky wrote in calling for defense of the USSR on the eve of World War II, revolutionaries must know how to defend past revolutionary gains if they intend to win new ones.

2 August 2010

Genesis of the Cuban Deformed Workers State

Guerrillas in Power



Leadership of the July 26 Movement's Rebel Army in June 1957, with Fidel Castro (center), Raúl Castro (kneeling) and Che Guevara (second from left).

The following article was published in Workers Vanguard No. 102, 26 March 1976.

As part of a broader effort to “institutionalize” its rule, the recent congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) approved a new “socialist” constitution for the country to replace the bourgeois “Fundamental Law” of 1940 (see “Castro Holds First Ever CP Congress,” *WV* No. 100, 12 March 1976). Prime Minister Fidel Castro also made use of the occasion to present the “revised standard version” of the history of the Cuban revolution.

The extensive overview was doubly significant in the context of the new constitution, since one of Castro's key original demands – from the attack on the Moncada on 26 July 1953 until taking power from the dictator Batista on 1 January 1959 – was precisely for a return to the 1940 constitution. This raises the crucial questions of the class character of the guerrilla movement, the nature of the revolution it carried out, and the causes and significance of the shift from a “democratic” bourgeois program to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

These issues are of tremendous significance for com-

munists as they concern the most fundamental questions of revolutionary strategy in the backward capitalist countries. Can the petty bourgeoisie – traditionally considered by Marxists as a vacillating group, incapable of giving independent class leadership – carry out a socialist revolution, as the revisionist “United Secretariat” claims? Or has Cuba remained throughout a capitalist state, as the Maoists and Gerry Healy's fake-Trotskyist “International Committee” contend? On the other hand, if, as uniquely put forward by the international Spartacist tendency, the Castro regime has since late 1960 been a deformed workers state, how was it formed, and what implications does this have for the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution?

A Closet Communist?

In his opening speech to the PCC congress, “*comandante*” Castro repeatedly praised the policies of the Stalinist leaders of the Soviet Union. Having long ago become locked into the Soviet orbit, Castro now seeks to project his

current policies back onto the militant youth who stormed the army barracks in Santiago in 1953 and the nucleus of the Rebel Army that initiated guerrilla struggle in the Sierra Maestra mountains three years later.

Castro includes among the “solid pillars” on which the leaders of the 26th of July Movement based themselves “the principles of Marxism-Leninism.” He goes on, “Even though this was not the way of thinking of all those who had embarked upon the road of revolutionary armed struggle in our country, it was that of its main leaders” (*Granma*, 28 December 1975). Castro also claimed that among the young combatants there was “a deep respect and admiration for the old Communists” of the pro-Moscow People’s Socialist Party (PSP), who “had held aloft with unyielding firmness the noble banners of Marxism-Leninism.”

The reality was considerably different. Castro’s speech was silent on the program of the anti-Batista movement, but in an oblique aside for the benefit of those who know something of the struggle during the 1950’s, he added: “... not only the most resolute action was necessary, but also astuteness and flexibility on the part of revolutionaries.... The proclamation of socialism during the period of insurreccional struggle would not have been understood by the people, and imperialism would have directly intervened in our country with its troops.”

A similar theme can be found in many right-wing attacks on Castro, which charge that he “betrayed the revolution” against Batista and hoodwinked the people. Certain left-wing apologists for the Havana regime also put forward the myth of Castro the “closet Marxist-Leninist” who “pulled a fast one” on the imperialists. “The leaders of the Revolution had to know the people and talk to them in terms they were ready to understand,” wrote Edward Boorstein in *The Economic Transformation of Cuba* (1968). Others, such as the ex-Maoist Progressive Labor Party (PL), who attempt to criticize Castro from the left, claim they were initially captivated by “Che [Guevara]’s slick way of moving Cuba to socialism behind everybody’s backs” (Jake Rosen, “Is Cuba Socialist?” *PL*, November 1969). Professing that they “no longer believe[d] in nifty gimmicks,” PL



Fidel Castro addressing mass rally after entering Havana, January 1959.

concluded that Cuba was still capitalist. The truth is more complex – more dialectical – than such simple-minded talk of Castro and Guevara as con artists.

A Radical Jacobin Democrat

All these “explanations” come down to a conspiracy theory of history and ignore the real social character of Castro’s movement. To begin with, Castro himself did not even pretend to be part of the workers movement during the struggle against the U.S.-backed dictatorship. Instead, he was a radical Jacobin petty-bourgeois democrat, following in the footsteps of “the Apostle” of Cuban independence, José Martí. His political background was as a liberal student leader and constitutionalist lawyer. He was for a time head of the student government at the University of Havana, and in 1948 voted for Eduardo Chibás, candidate of the Ortodoxo Party, who was running for president of the country on an anticorruption program. In 1952, Castro was a candidate for the Cuban Congress on the Ortodoxo slate, but a coup d’état by former military strongman Fulgencio Batista forestalled the elections.

After the March 10 coup, the young lawyer’s first action against the dictator was not to undertake agitation

among the workers and peasants, but instead to appeal to an emergency court in the capital to arrest Batista for violating the Code of Social Defense! Leo Huberman and Paul Sweezy's simplistic apology for Castro (*Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution* [Monthly Review, 1960]) commented: "When his petition for the imprisonment of Batista was rejected by the court, Fidel decided there was only one way in which the usurper could be overthrown – revolution." His goals were listed as "honest government" and a "truly sovereign Cuba."

The methods which the young lawyer then resorted to were well within the framework of traditional Latin American bourgeois politics. Various pseudo-Marxists – from Castro himself to the followers of fake-Trotskyist Ernest Mandel – pretend today that the Cuban guerrilla "strategy" was somehow to the left of traditional Stalinist reformism because it engaged in "armed struggle." They "forget" that in the unstable conditions of Latin America, just about every political tendency has at one time or another

"picked up the gun." Castro's first attempt at revolutionary action, for instance, was nothing but an old-style *pronunciamiento*.

The plan for the assault on the Moncada was to surprise the 1,000 soldiers quartered there, seize their arms, then take over the radio station and broadcast the last speech of Eduardo Chibás (who had committed suicide in 1951), followed by a call to arms inviting the Cuban people to rise up against the dictator. Similar actions have been carried out scores of times in Mexico, Bolivia, Peru or Argentina. However, in this case it failed, partly due to bad planning, and most of the 200 attackers were killed during the attack or brutally murdered by Batista's torturers in the mopping-up operation which followed.

Program of the 26th of July Movement

At his trial the following September, Castro (who had been caught hiding in the hills around the eastern provincial capital) was able to turn the tables on the government with a dramatic speech indicting the regime for its oppression of "the people." In this speech, later edited into a pamphlet entitled "History Will Absolve Me," Castro laid out five "revolutionary laws" that would have been immediately proclaimed after the capture of the Moncada barracks.

These projected decrees show quite clearly the social content of the revolution which the July 26 rebels were planning. The first was to return to the constitution of 1940; second was to grant land titles to tenants and squatters (with the state indemnifying former owners on the basis of rental values they would have received over the next ten years); the third provided for profit sharing, the fourth that cane



Fidel Castro warns U.S. not to intervene in Cuban internal affairs, 15 January 1959, as provisional president Manuel Urrutia (seated) listens. Within the year, Urrutia had defected to the U.S.

growers would get 55 percent of sugar production (instead of the lion's share going to the mills), and the last was to confiscate "ill-gotten gains of all who had committed frauds during previous regimes."

As the cold-warrior journalist-academic Theodore Draper wrote: "There is virtually nothing in the social and economic program of History Will Absolve Me that cannot be traced at least as far back as... the 1935 program of Dr. Grau San Martín's Auténtico party, let alone the later propaganda of Chibás" (*Castroism: Theory and Practice* [Praeger, 1965]).

Castro's anti-Batista struggle following the catastrophic landing of the yacht *Granma* in Oriente province in December 1956 is usually thought of exclusively in terms of a tiny guerrilla band gradually winning support from the *jibaros* (peasants). But the leader of the tiny 26th of July Movement was simultaneously negotiating with a number of prominent bourgeois politicians. Thus the "Manifesto of the Sierra Maestra," dated July 1957 and the most widely circulated of the rebel documents, was signed by Castro, Raúl Chibás (brother of Eduardo) and Felipe Pazos, ex-president of the National Bank of Cuba.

The Castro-Chibás-Pazos manifesto called for "democratic, impartial elections" organized by a "provisional, neutral government"; "dissociat[ion] [of] the army from politics"; freedom of the press "sound financial policy" and "industrialization"; and an agrarian reform based on granting ownership to squatters and tenants (with prior indemni-

fication of owners). The ten-point program was to be carried out by a Civilian Revolutionary Front, made up of representatives of all opposition groups.

The final programmatic statement from the Sierra Maestra, issued in October 1958 as the Batista regime was crumbling, was “Law No. 3” on agrarian reform. Based on the principle of land to the tiller, it did not mention cooperatives or state farms.

When Fidel and Raúl Castro swept out of the Sierra Maestra to link up with Ernesto “Che” Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos in the plains of Camagüey province and then march on to Havana, the Rebel Army was far from being a mass organization, counting only 1,100 soldiers, most of them peasants.

The provisional government, installed with Castro’s approval, was hardly dominated by 26th of July ministers. The president was Manuel Urrutia, a former judge; the prime minister was José Miró Cardona, former head of the Havana Bar Association; the foreign minister was Roberto Agramonte, the Ortodoxo presidential candidate in 1952; and Felipe Pazos was, again, head of the National Bank. In the new armed forces, the head of the Revolutionary Air Force was Pedro Díaz Lanz. By the end of the year, all of these men had defected to the U.S., joining the *ex-batistianos* in Miami. Miró was later to be the puppet head of a “Revolutionary Council” setup by the CIA to serve as the front for its Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961.

The policies adopted by the new regime during its early months were certainly a radical departure from the *laissez-faire* debauchery and wholesale corruption of the Batista “government,” which was something akin to having Al Capone in the White House. However, the actions of the revolutionary government did not exceed the limits of the capitalist regime.

Among the first steps were the slashing of electric rates by half in rural areas, up to 50 percent cuts in rents for the poor, and the implementation of the agrarian reform law of the Sierra Maestra together with seizure of the estates of Batista henchmen. In the United States, the bourgeois press, led off by *Time* magazine, whipped up a reactionary publicity campaign against the war crimes trials of the bloodstained butchers of the Batista regime (of whose bestialities the imperialist media had reported nothing). In all, only 550 of the most notorious criminals were executed, with the broad approval of virtually all classes of the Cuban population.

But while this first post-Batista government was headed by authentic liberal bourgeois politicians, real power was in the hands of the Rebel Army, which is why the openly counterrevolutionary leaders left without waging any kind



Cuban workers mobilized to defend the Revolution during the April 1961 Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) invasion. Above: militiamen capture *gusano* (worm).

of fight. The guerrilla struggles in the hills had been militarily marginal, but they succeeded in crystallizing the massive popular hatred for the Batista regime. By the time the leaders of the 26th of July Movement entered the capital, the official army and police apparatus – the core of the state power – had collapsed. The Castroites proceeded to sweep it away, and organize a new repressive apparatus recruited and organized along quite different lines.

The guerrilla army was a petty-bourgeois formation, politically heterogeneous, with its leadership recruited from among ex-students and professionals and the ranks from the peasants of the sierra. While Castro and the rest of the leadership had signed various programs, manifestos, etc., with oppositional liberals, their previous direct connections with the bourgeoisie had been broken. Most importantly, the Rebel Army was not faced with a combative and class-conscious proletariat, which would have polarized the petty-bourgeois militants, drawing some to the workers’ side and sending others straight into the arms of Urrutia, Miró & Co. Consequently: what existed in Havana following the overthrow of Batista was an inherently transitory and fundamentally unstable phenomenon – a petty-bourgeois *government* which was not committed to the defense of either bourgeois private property or the collectivist property forms of proletarian class rule (see “Cuba and Marxist Theory;” *Marxist Bulletin* No. 8).

The Consolidation of a Deformed Workers State

While such a regime was temporarily autonomous from the bourgeois order – that is, a capitalist state, namely armed bodies of men dedicated to defending a particular property form, did not exist in the Marxist sense – Castro could not escape from the class struggle. After 1 January 1959 a new bourgeois state power could have been erected in Cuba, as

occurred following the departure of the French colonial rulers in Algeria in 1962. In the Algerian case, this process was aided by the conclusion of the neo-colonial Evian Accords, explicitly protecting the property of French *colons*, and the fact that power was handed over to a regular army which played little role in the guerrilla fighting.

However, in Cuba U.S. imperialism was far from accommodating and soon began a sharp economic struggle against the new rulers in Havana which rapidly grew into military actions. This imperialist pressure, in turn, pushed the core of the Cuban leadership to the left, while leading other segments of the 26th of July Movement to join the bourgeois liberals and *batistianos* in exile.

The first sharp clash with the domestic bourgeoisie came over the proclamation of a moderate agrarian reform law in May. The new law expropriated all land over 999 acres, to be paid in bonds of the revolutionary government which could be redeemed in 20 years. The reaction was predictable: land-owners declared this was “worse than Communism” and the U.S. State Department sent a pious note deploring that American investors had not been consulted beforehand.

The next move by Castro which stirred the ire of the capitalists was the removal of Felipe Pazos from the National Bank where he was replaced by Guevara. In February 1960, Russian deputy prime minister Mikoyan visited Cuba and signed an agreement to purchase 1 million tons of Cuban sugar yearly. This relieved Cuba of its hitherto almost exclusive reliance on the U.S. for foreign trade, and when on 29 June 1960 U.S.-owned oil refineries refused to accept crude petroleum imported from the USSR, they were nationalized. On July 3, the American Congress approved a law cutting off Cuba’s sugar quota, and two days later Castro seized U.S.-held property (primarily sugar mills) on the island.

Meanwhile the polarization within the diverse Castroite movement had proceeded apace. Already in July 1959, President Urrutia had provoked a government crisis by denouncing the PSP and Communism; almost simultaneously, air force head Díaz Lanz called on defense minister Raúl Castro to purge Communists from the armed forces. Díaz soon fled to the U.S., and Urrutia resigned and was replaced by Osvaldo Dorticós. In October, the military commander of Camagüey province, Huber Matos, tried to launch a regional rebellion together with two dozen of his officers, but was quickly overpowered and arrested.

Not only in the new armed forces was the differentiation taking place. The Havana organization of the 26th of July Movement and its newspaper *Revolución* throughout early 1959 were a source of aggressive anti-Communism. The crisis between the right and left wing came to a head in the battle over the trade unions, where David Salvador had been installed as head of the Cuban Labor Federation (CTC) to replace Batista’s gangster crony Eusebio Mujal. Salvador immediately dissolved the working unity between the PSP and the 26th of July in the labor movement which had been established in late 1958, and assigned all seats on the CTC executive committee to non-Communists. In the November 1959 CTC congress there was a showdown, and after a personal intervention by Fidel Castro the back of the anti-PSP wing (which reportedly included a number of *ex-mujalistas*)

was broken. Salvador resigned a few months later, and control of the unions passed to longtime Stalinist Lázaro Peña (see J.P. Morray, *The Second Revolution in Cuba* [Monthly Review, 1962]).

The culminating step in the nationalizations came in the fall of 1960, with a series of rapid-fire seizures (tobacco factories, American banks, and then, on October 13, all banks and 382 business enterprises). By mid-October all agricultural processing plants; all chemical, metallurgical, paper, textile and drug factories; all railroads, ports, printing presses, construction companies and department stores were nationalized. Together this made the state the owner of 90 percent of the industrial capacity of Cuba.

The Permanent Revolution

With the takeover of capitalist property in Cuba, for the first time in the Western Hemisphere – and only “90 miles from Florida” – the world witnessed the expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a class. This naturally made the Cuban Revolution an object of hatred for the imperialists. It also made Castro and Cuba into objects of adoration by would-be revolutionaries of all sorts and a large spectrum of petty-bourgeois radical opinion. The New Left, with its hard anti-Leninism, grabbed instinctively for a revolution “by the people” but without a Leninist party or the participation of the working class.

For ostensible Trotskyists, however, the Cuban revolution posed important programmatic questions. The theory of permanent revolution held that in the backward capitalist regions the bourgeoisie was too weak and bound by its ties to the imperialists and feudalists to achieve an agrarian revolution, democracy and national emancipation – objects of the classical bourgeois revolutions. Trotsky’s analysis of the Russian revolution of 1905 led him to his insistence that the proletariat must establish its own class rule, with the support of the peasantry, in order to accomplish even the democratic tasks of the bourgeois revolution; and it would from the beginning be forced to undertake socialist measures as well, making the revolution permanent in character.

The Cuban revolution demonstrated that even with a leadership that began its insurgency with no perspective of transcending petty-bourgeois radicalism, real agrarian reform and national emancipation from the yoke of Yankee imperialism proved to be impossible without destroying the bourgeoisie as a class. It vindicated the Marxist understanding that the petty bourgeoisie – composed of highly volatile and contradictory elements lacking the social force to independently vie for power – is unable to establish any new, characteristic mode of property relations, but is forced to fall back upon the property forms of one of the two fundamentally counterposed classes in capitalist society, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat.

Thus the Castro leadership, under exceptional circumstances due to the collapse of the Batista regime in the absence of a powerful working class able to struggle for state power in its own right, was pushed by the pressure of U.S. imperialism’s frenzied hostility into creating a deformed workers state which in power increasingly duplicated the mode of rule of the degenerated USSR as the

Castroists consolidated a bureaucratic state apparatus. The evolution of the Cuban leadership from petty-bourgeois radicals to the administrators of a deformed workers state (and the incorporation of the Cuban Communists) confirmed Trotsky's characterization of the Russian Stalinists as a petty-bourgeois caste resting upon the property forms established by the October Revolution. Moreover, the Cuban revolution provides a negative confirmation that only the class-conscious proletariat, led by a Marxist vanguard party, can establish a democratically governed, revolutionary workers state, and thus lay the basis for the international extension of the revolution and open the road to socialism.

Unlike the Russian Revolution – which required a political counterrevolution under Stalin to become a bureaucratically deformed workers state – the Cuban revolution was deformed from its inception. The Cuban working class, having played essentially no part in the revolutionary process, never held political power, and the Cuban state was governed by the whims of the Castroist clique rather than being administered by democratically elected workers councils (soviets).

The revisionist current which had emerged from within the Trotskyist movement in the late 1950's saw in Cuba the perfect justification for its abandonment of the construction of Trotskyist vanguard parties. By ignoring the crucial index of workers democracy and thus sliding over the qualitative difference between a deformed workers state such as Stalinist Russia or Castroist Cuba and the healthy Russian workers state of Lenin and Trotsky, the European supporters of the "International Secretariat" (I.S.) embraced the Cuban revolution as proof that revolutionary transformations could take place without the leadership of a proletarian vanguard. Cuba became the model of the "revolutionary process" under "new conditions" – and the schema to which the revisionists have clung despite the failure of countless guerrilla struggles in Latin American to duplicate the "Cuban road."

For the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP), however, Cuba was a watershed in the degeneration of that party as a repository of revolutionary Trotskyism. During the 1950's it had fought Pablo's notion of "deep entrism" in the mass reformist parties. But with its revolutionary fiber weakened under the impact of McCarthyism, the SWP leaders were desperately searching for a popular cause which could enable them to break out of isolation.

SWP leader Joseph Hansen crowed enthusiastically: "What provisions are there in Marxism for a revolution, obviously *socialist in tendency* but powered by the peasantry and led by revolutionists who have never professed socialist aims.... It's not in the books!.... If Marxism has no provisions for such phenomena, perhaps it is time provisions were made. It would seem a fair enough exchange for a revolution as good as this one.

–"The Theory of the Cuban Revolution," 1962 [our emphasis]

Having declared the revolution "socialist in tendency" and equated it with Russia under Lenin, Hansen could not sim-

ply ignore the crucial question of workers democracy. "It is true that this workers state lacks, as yet, the forms of proletarian democracy," he wrote. But he immediately added, "This does not mean that democracy is lacking in Cuba."

The SWP tops took the convergence on the Cuba question as the opportunity to propose a reunification with the I.S. In a 1963 document, "For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement," the SWP wrote of "the appearance of a workers state in Cuba – the exact form of which is yet to be settled"; the "evolution toward revolutionary Marxism [of] the July 26 Movement" and concluded:

"Along the road of a revolution beginning with simple democratic demands and ending in the rupture of capitalist property relations, guerrilla warfare conducted by landless peasant and semi-proletarian forces, under a leadership that becomes committed to carrying the revolution through to a conclusion, can play a decisive role in undermining and precipitating the downfall of a colonial and semi-colonial power.... It must be consciously incorporated into the strategy of building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries."

In response to this open revisionism, Healy and his International Committee followers simply thrust their heads in the sand like an ostrich and declared that Cuba, even after the 1960 nationalizations, is "a bonapartist regime resting on capitalist state foundations," one not qualitatively different from Batista's regime. But within the SWP, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT – forerunner of the Spartacist League/U.S.) was able to analyze the post-1960 Cuban regime as a deformed workers state and point out the significance of that characterization for Marxist theory.

In a resolution that was submitted as a counter document to the "For Early Reunification..." document of the SWP leadership, the RT made clear that "Trotskyists are at once the most militant and unconditional defenders against imperialism of both the Cuban Revolution and the deformed workers' state which has issued therefrom." But it added: "Trotskyists cannot give confidence and political support, however critical, to a governing regime hostile to the most elementary principles and practices of workers' democracy..." ("Toward the Rebirth of the Fourth International," June 1963).

Directly rejecting the SWP's embracing of guerrillaism and Castroism in place of the Trotskyist perspective of proletarian revolution, the RT resolution summarized:

"Experience since the Second World War has demonstrated that peasant-based guerrilla warfare under petty-bourgeois leadership can in itself lead to nothing more than an anti-working-class bureaucratic regime. The creation of such regimes has come about under the conditions of decay of imperialism, the demoralization and disorientation caused by Stalinist betrayals, and the absence of revolutionary Marxist leadership of the working class. Colonial revolution can have an unequivocally progressive significance only under such leadership of the revolutionary proletariat. For Trotskyists to incorporate into their strategy revisionism on the proletarian leadership in the revolution is profound negation of Marxism-Leninism...." ■

From Punta del Este to the Panama Canal

Castro's Search for Hemispheric D tente

The following article was published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 141, 21 January 1977.

Of all the myths about Castro's Cuba, the most widespread is that of its supposedly revolutionary foreign policy. "Third World" cheerleaders in the New Left joined cold war liberals and McCarthyite conservatives in agreeing that Havana was exporting guerrilla warfare throughout Latin America. When confronted with evidence of suppression of socialist critics in Cuba, *fidelistas* dismiss this as nitpicking compared to Castro's "titanic" hemispheric battle against Yankee imperialist domination. Just remember "Che" Guevara's noble Bolivian mission! Think how Radio Havana, beaming nightly from the "First Free Territory of America," kept up the spirits of thousands of militants facing the most savage repression!

Among ostensible Trotskyists, this belief in a revolutionary internationalist commitment by the Cuban rulers was one of the bases for the formation of the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (USec), which proclaimed in its founding document:

"The Cuban Revolution dealt a blow to the class-collaborationist policy of Stalinism in Latin America and other colonial countries, new currents, developing under the influence of the victory in Cubam are groping in their way to revolutionary socialism..."

—"For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement," March 1963

The orientation of the United Secretariat in Latin America was "the infusion of Trotskyist concepts in this new Castroist current" ("Dynamics of World Revolution Today," adopted at the USec's founding congress, June 1963).

In recent years, however, the glitter has begun to wear off the heroic image of the Cuban revolution, and many former Castro enthusiasts have become disillusioned with their *"jefe m ximo."* Particularly disturbing has been his penchant for courting nationalist generals, from the Peruvian junta to Panamanian dictator Torrijos, and Castro's explicit support for Brezhnevite policies of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. In the early 1970's it became fashionable in certain "far-left" circles to hold a "private opinion" that something had gone awry in Cuba: bureaucratism was setting in and there had been a "right turn" in Castro's foreign policy.

There was no unanimity over the timing of the alleged



TASS

Fidel Castro with Soviet president Leonid Brezhnev (left) and premier Nikita Khrushchev (second from right) outside Moscow, 30 April 1963. Castro supported Kremlin policies of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism.

turn. Some placed it at the time of Guevara's departure from Cuba, or else his murder in Bolivia, making the "heroic guerrilla" out to be the left conscience of the revolution. Others set the date at Castro's support for the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, an action which deeply shocked many Latin American *fidelistas* who had seen Castroism as a left alternative to Moscow-line Stalinism. What the several explanations of the "right turn" have in common is a desire to avoid taking responsibility for Cuba's latest international gambits while not breaking fundamentally from Castroism.

Then late last year several thousand Cuban troops and army officers were dispatched to Angola to save the besieged MPLA from a South African-led imperialist power play. American president Ford hypocritically branded Castro an "international outlaw." In the U.S. the Marcyites tried to resuscitate a petty-bourgeois antiwar movement around political support for the MPLA and praise of Cuba's "courageous assistance" to liberation struggles the world over (*Workers World*, 30 January 1976). In Europe Livio Maitan, a leader of the fake-Trotskyist "United Secretariat," crowed that "Cuba's decisive commitment to a crucial anti-imperialist battle has few precedents in the history of past decades..." (*Inprecor*, 18 March 1976).

Maitan took the occasion to excoriate Castro's detractors and unnamed doubters:

"For some time there has been much talk of Cuba's desire to reach a compromise with the United States, and some people, falling into hasty impressionism, had drawn the conclusion that the Cuban leaders were pre-

pared to pay a very high price for such a compromise. It is now clear, however, that they were not prepared to pay the price of renouncing their courageous attitude of internationalist solidarity.... whatever the particular tactical reasons for the intervention may have been, it remains exemplary testimony to revolutionary internationalism.”

But this “revolutionary internationalism” was subordinate to the Kremlin’s foreign policy aims, which in no way ceased to be for global détente. In fact, at the same time as Cuban troops were fighting CIA-financed forces in Angola, Havana voters were approving a new constitution which wrote “peaceful coexistence” into the basic law of the country!

There have, of course, been some zigs and zags in Cuban foreign policy. In the early 1960’s, Castro concentrated on a hapless search for diplomatic support from bourgeois nationalist Latin American regimes while from time to time offering to strike a *modus vivendi* with Uncle Sam. In the “heroic” period of 1964-67, *fidelist* policy in Latin America concentrated on promoting guerrillaism and castigating certain Latin American Communist parties for their illusions in a “peaceful road.” Since then Havana has hewed more closely to the Moscow line. But despite periodic quantitative shifts, from the consolidation of a deformed workers state in late 1960 onwards, the Castro regime has followed a nationalist course based on the Stalinist illusion of building socialism on one island while courting at least the toleration of the imperialists.

Punta del Este

All those who yearn for the days when Guevara was riding high in Havana should be reminded that it was none other than “Che” who led the Cuban delegation to the 1961 Punta del Este (Uruguay) conference where the Castro regime made its first offer of hemispheric peaceful coexistence with U.S. imperialism. The conference itself had been set up to launch American president Kennedy’s brainstorm of an “Alliance for Progress,” whose aim was to isolate Cuba and thwart the chances of revolution in Latin America with a few million dollars in crumbs from the imperialist table.

It was well remembered that Guevara made a fiery two-hour speech at the August 1961 meetings, warning that American aid would not come without strings attached. What is not so frequently recalled is that he ended with a promise of détente:

“We cannot promise that we will not export our example, as the United States asks us to because an example is a matter of spirit and a spiritual element can cross frontiers. But we will give out guarantee that no arms will be transported from Cuba to be used for fighting in any Latin American country”



Left: AP. Right: Dick DeMarsico/New York World-Telegram & Sun

Former Brazilian presidents Jânio Quadros and João Goulart.

—quoted in John Gerassi, *The Great Fear in Latin America* (1965)

There is no doubt that the offer was sincere. After the conference, at an “unplanned social gathering” with top Kennedy aide Richard Goodwin in Montevideo, Guevara proposed a Cuba/U.S. parley on reimbursing American interests for expropriated properties, in exchange for calling off the trade embargo.

Trotskyists do not oppose Cuba’s efforts to break the U.S.-imposed economic blockade. On the contrary, we defend Cuba’s right to trade with all nations, from the Soviet Union and other deformed workers states to reactionary bourgeois dictatorships such as Franco’s Spain in order to prevent economic strangulation. Revolutionary Russia under Lenin concluded trade agreements with England and Germany without in any way restricting the activities of the Communist International. As Trotsky wrote,

“The fundamental line of the international policy of the Soviets rested on the fact that this or that commercial, diplomatic or military bargain of the Soviet government with the imperialists, inevitable in the nature of the case, should in no case limit or weaken the struggle of the proletariat of the corresponding capitalist country, for in the last analysis, the safety of the workers state itself could be guaranteed only by the growth of the world revolution.”

—*The Revolution Betrayed* (1936)

But Castro’s Cuba has built no Communist International, and it has on numerous occasions called on the proletariat to limit its struggle against those bourgeois regimes which maintain diplomatic relations with Havana.

During the early 1960’s, this policy was reflected in Cuban support for Brazilian president Jânio Quadros and his successor João Goulart. As the pro-Cuban U.S. academic James Petras wrote:

“Between 1959 and 1962 the Cuban leadership basically supported a broad spectrum of Latin political forces ranging from left-wing to moderate nationalist

forces, including personages like Quadros of Brazil.”

—in *Latin America: Reform of Revolution?* (1968)

In the spring of 1961 Cuban newspapers praised the Brazilian president for condemning the U.S.-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion and in August, when Guevara was on his way home from the Punta del Este conference, Quadros awarded the Cuban leader Brazil’s highest decoration, the Southern Cross. This produces an uproar in which pro-American politicians threatened to depose Quadros, who thereupon fled the country. Castro hailed Quadros as “one of the staunchest supporters of self-determination.”

Just who was this great “progressive”? In actuality Quadros was an eccentric conservative believer in clean government and tight money. Pro-Cuban journalist Gerassi summarized the policies of this “maverick”:

“He thus clamped down hard on unions, sent federal troops to the Northeast hunger dens to squash protest rallies, jailed disobedient students, fired government featherbedders, and devalued the cruzeiro almost to its free market level.”

—*Op. cit.*

In this case the Castro regime was unable to develop extensive relations because Quadros was forced to depart under fire so suddenly.

Quadros was succeeded by his vice president, Goulart, who trod a cautious path between left and right by conducting a relatively independent foreign policy while knuckling under to the landowners and industrialists at home. Himself a millionaire *latifundista*, Goulart headed the bourgeois populist Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) and needed to cultivate a “left” image in order to appear as the ally of the rapidly expanding workers and peasants movements. His reputation as a “firm friend” of Cuba aided this demagoguery.

Maintaining state-to-state relations does not require fostering illusions about “progressive” landowners, and the internationalist leadership of a revolutionary workers state would seek to aid the development of protest movements by the exploited into a powerful offensive against capitalist rule. There were certainly revolutionary opportunities at this time in Brazil, where a large and diverse peasant movement was exploding in the Northeast, led by the Communist Party, Catholic clergy and above all by the pro-Cuban Socialist politician Francisco Julião.

Castro was in close touch with this movement through Julião, whose trips to Cuba were so frequent that some of his opponents spoke of a “shuttle” between Havana and Brazil’s Northeast. But the politics which Julião infused in



Fidel Castro delivering the Second Declaration of Havana following the expulsion of Cuba from the Organization of American States (OAS), the “Yankee ministry of colonies,” 4 February 1962.

the peasants movement were hardly revolutionary. He refused to expand into the coastal plantation zones and link up with agricultural workers and the urban labor movement; and politically his influence rested on an alliance with the PTB state governor of Pernambuco, Miguel Arraes. Significantly, a former organizer of the Northeastern peasant leagues wrote of the frustration of plans for guerrilla activity (which Julião opposed):

“It appears that in addition to other factors, the existence of friendly diplomatic relations between the Cuban and Brazilian governments was closely related to the failure of the military scheme of the Peasant Leagues. The maintenance of diplomatic relations between the two countries prevented the Cubans from giving open support to the League’s guerrilla activities. Some Cuban elements even advised the Leagues to move closer to Presidents Quadros and Goulart.”

—Clodomir Moraes, “Peasant Leagues in Brazil,” in Rodolfo Stavenhagen, ed., *Agrarian Problems and Peasant Movements in Latin America* (1970)

As for Goulart’s left-wing reputation – assiduously fostered by the U.S., which (it is now revealed) was preparing a sizable naval/troop intervention in Brazil on the scale carried out in Santo Domingo a year earlier – his most “radical” measure was a land reform announced two weeks before being ousted as president. This timid decree, never implemented, called only for dividing up large estates “bordering highways, railroads and water reservoirs” (!), to be compensated with government bonds (Goulart speech to a mass workers rally in Rio de Janeiro, 13 January 1964; quoted in *Hispanic-American Report*, May 1964).

Frustrated Search for Détente

Brazil was the most notable of Castro’s attempts to form political alliances with left-talking bourgeois-nationalist politicians and governments. Cuba also maintained close relations with Guyanese prime minister Cheddi

Jagan, whose East Indian-based Progressive People's Party was thrown out of office following a CIA-engineered strike by black supporters of Jagan's rival, Forbes Burnham. Another bourgeois politician favored by Castro was former Ecuadorian minister Manuel Araujo, who was dropped by aging populist demagogue president Velasco Ibarra after a CIA-instigated campaign of student demonstrations against Araujo's pro-Cuban policies.

A good example of Cuban foreign policy during this period was Castro's reaction to being expelled from the Organization of American States in January 1962. Best remembered is Castro's "Second Declaration of Havana" in which he dismissed the OAS as a veritable "Yankee ministry of colonies," declared that in Latin America "the national bourgeoisie cannot lead the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggle" and denounced those who talk of uprooting the ruling class by legal means.

Less remarked upon is the fact that the Declaration called for unity with "the most progressive layers of the national bourgeoisie." What this meant in practice could be seen in Castro's "challenge" to the OAS: an "Assembly of the Peoples" held concurrently with the Punta del Este meeting and called by ten prominent Latin American "progressive" politicians, including former Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas, future Chilean president Salvador Allende, Julião and Araujo.

The reward Castro reaped for his attempt to curry favor with "the most progressive layers of the national bourgeoisie" was meager indeed. Again Brazil was the archetype: at the time of the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, the Goulart government voted in the OAS to support the American naval blockade as an act of "legitimate self-defense." Even Goulart's left-posturing brother-in-law, Governor Leonel Brizola of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, condemned the Russian delivery of missiles to the Castro regime as "tak[ing] advantage of the struggle of the Cuban people" and declared his opposition to "Cuba's transformation into a satellite of the Soviet Union" (quoted in *Hispanic-American Report*, January 1963).

On 31 March 1964, Cuba's "firm friend" Goulart was ousted in a military revolt obviously planned and executed in close cooperation with Washington. It took Castro until May Day to issue a public comment on the reactionary coup, yet only two days after it occurred he renewed offers of U.S.-Cuban détente. The occasion was an interview in which the Cuban prime minister uncritically praised Senator J.W. Fulbright's March 25 speech on "myths and realities of U.S. foreign policy." Castro commented:

"Senator Fulbright said that Cuba could be tolerated as something unpleasant ... but was not a danger to the United States. This is not only essentially true but it



Julião family

Francisco Julião (left), leader of Brazilian peasant leagues, with Fidel Castro watching the Moscow Circus in Havana in 1961. As peasant leagues mobilized in northeast Brazil, Che Guevara told them not to fight for power against government friendly to Cuba.

could be added that Cuba will be much less unpleasant in the same degree that Cuba is respected and left in peace."

—*New York Times*, 3 April 1964

Guevara also praised the speech of the "courageous" head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee [Fulbright] (who during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis had urged invasion of the island).

Just what did Fulbright say that so shocked his colleagues and warmed the hearts of Castro and Guevara? He called for a "candid re-evaluation of our Cuban policy," declaring that "the boycott policy is a failure" and urging that the trade embargo be abandoned. However, the senator added:

"Cuban Communism does pose a grave threat to other Latin American countries, but this threat can be dealt with by the prompt and vigorous use of the established procedures of the inter-American system against any act of aggression."

—*New York Times*, 26 March 1964

Quadros, Goulart, Jagan and Araujo had already had bitter experiences with these "established procedures," but apparently Castro and "Che" hadn't figured them out yet!

In an interview that summer, Castro went even further, reiterating Guevara's offer at Punta del Este to withhold material aid from Latin American revolutionaries in exchange for U.S. agreement to stop trying to overthrow the Cuban government:

"If they [the United States] are ready to live with us in subjection to norms, then we would feel the same obligations.... "If Cuba should finance a revolution against a government that respects her, it would be a violation of the norm."

—*New York Times*, 6 July 1964



Guatemalan guerrillas Marco Antonio Yon Sosa of the Revolutionary Movement 13 November (MR-13) (left, addressing recruits) and Luis Agosto Turcios Lima (right) and Cesar Marcos of the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR). At the 1966 Tricontinental Conference Castro denounced Yon Sosa and MR-13 as dupes of Trotskyite “mercenaries” and “agents of imperialism” for calling for socialist revolution, claiming this isolated the revolutionary movement from the masses. Cuba promoted split-off by Turcios Lima that formed the FAR on a “democratic,” “anti-imperialist” (but not socialist) program.

The interviewer said Castro was ready to ban both arms supply and economic aid to pro-Cuban insurgents, adding that “European Communist sources here insist that such aid has stopped entirely or almost entirely since the beginning of the year.”

And those who seek to contrast the “revolutionary” Guevara to the “compromising” Castro should consult the speech by “Che” at the United Nations General assembly in December 1964, where he stated that for Cuba the most important problem for the U.N. to deal with was “peaceful coexistence between states with different economic and social systems.” He bemoaned the fact that U.S. imperialism, while seemingly capable of coexisting with the Soviet Union, could not seem to keep its hands off the smaller states in Latin America. “Today, the kind of peaceful coexistence to which we aspire has, in many instances, failed to materialize” (*Che: Selected Workers of Ernesto Guevara* [1969]).

Stalinist Guerrillaism versus Workers Insurrection

But Castro’s repeated bids for a *modus vivendi* with Yankee imperialism were curtly rejected. U.S. leaders continued to regard the Caribbean as an American lake and agreed with the professional anti-Communist pundit Theodore Draper that, “if there is one place in the world where Communism can be ‘reversible,’ it is Cuba” (*Castroism: Theory and Practice* [1965]). Rebuffed by the State Department on every count and seeing its Latin American bourgeois “friends” being toppled one by one in CIA-inspired coups, the Cuban regime made a quarter turn to the

left but without altering its fundamental *nationalist* policies, characteristic of all Stalinist-ruled states.

During 1965 Castroite rural guerrilla struggles were initiated in Colombia (January) and Peru (June). In Guatemala, Luis Augusto Turcios Lima split from Yon Sosa’s MR-13 (Revolutionary Movement of November 13) guerrilla front to form the FAR (Rebel Armed Forces) which had a Guevarist program and close links to Cuba. Also in 1965 the Venezuelan FALN (Armed Forces of National Liberation) led by Douglas Bravo rebelled against an attempt by the Communist Party leadership to call off guerrilla actions. Previously, several dozen pro-Cuban groups had sprung up around Latin America, generally without any ties to Havana, while Guevara’s advocacy of the Cuban model (“Cuba: Exceptional Case or Vanguard in the Struggle Against Colonialism?” April 1961; and “Guerrilla Warfare: A Method,” September 1963) remained largely in the realm of intellectual admonishing. Now, however, in a series of countries there existed more or less official Castroite guerrilla “armies” whose success or failure would directly involve the international standing of the Cuban regime.

In retrospect, various “critical Castroites” have seen 1965 as the beginning of a heroic period in Cuba’s international policies. Castroism emerged as a left contender against the pro-Moscow CPs. Regis Debray, an authorized mouthpiece for the Cuban leader’s views, denounced the “frank hostility to armed struggle revealed by the leaderships of several Latin American communist parties (Peru, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Brazil)” (“Latin America: The Long March,” *New Left Review*, September-October 1965) and explicitly criticized the 20th congress of the CPSU which “led the CPs to take the

line of 'national democracy,' of 'United Front with the Bourgeoisie'" ("Problems of Revolutionary Strategy in Latin America," *New Left Review*, September-October 1967).

While the period 1965-68 did, to a degree, see a more militant international policy by the Cuban regime – the result of its diplomatic isolation in Latin America – there was no fundamental shift of its narrow nationalist orientation. For one thing, Cuba obediently toed the line whenever the Kremlin put its foot down. In January 1964 Castro issued a joint communiqué with Khrushchev in Moscow, hailing the nuclear test ban treaty and condemning 'factionalist and sectarian activity in the ranks of the Communist and workers parties' – a clear slap at China. Again in March 1965 Castro obliquely warned the Chinese against "Byzantine battles (following Cuba's participation in the Moscow meeting called by Khrushchev to read China out of the "socialist camp"); and in January 1966, on the eve of the Tricontinental Congress in Havana, Castro dramatically condemned China for halving its rice deliveries to Cuba.

Moreover, at the beginning at least, a number of pro-Moscow CPs went along with cautious references to (and even limited applications of) "armed struggle." A meeting of Latin American Communist parties in Havana in late 1964 agreed to "actively aid" fighters in Venezuela, Guatemala and elsewhere; many of the participants at the Tricontinental were from Moscow-line Stalinist parties. This should not be so surprising, since Stalin himself was hardly a pacifist. In fact, virtually every one of the pro-Cuban guerrilla groups at one point or another had (or sought) close relations with the "official" CP. The Venezuelan FALN was led by a central committee member of the pro-Moscow party and maintained formal ties with it until 1967; and the Colombian ELN (National Liberation Army) during the early months of its existence repeatedly sought to form a unified military command with the CP's guerrilla group (see Richard Gott, *Guerrilla Movements in Latin America* [1972]).

Equally important in judging the extent of Castro's "left" phase in the mid-1960s is the fact that the Cuban regime did not lift a finger to aid genuine mass struggles against U.S. imperialism and domestic reaction. A good example was the Panamanian student protest against American control of the Canal Zone which broke out in January 1964. As an anti-communist academic source (who could be expected to dis-



Santo Domingo insurrection against U.S. invasion, April 1965. Although urban workers rose up and armed themselves, Castro did nothing to aid them.

cover Castroite subversion behind every leftist demonstration) reported: "[Castro's] reaction to the riots was restricted to an announcement that his government was ready to set up, in conjunction with the other Latin American nations, a common fund to assist the Panamanians" (Andrés Suárez, *Cuba: Castroism and Communism, 1959-1966*).

An even more explosive struggle, where the Cuban regime could have given real content to Guevara's call to create "two, three, many Vietnams" in Latin America, was the Santo Domingo uprising of April-May 1965. Though it was under bourgeois leadership – the PRD (Revolutionary Democratic Party) of Juan Bosch – the "Constitutionalist" forces were made up of thousands of urban workers and a section of the army that had rebelled against the reactionary high command. The masses were seething with desire to do away with every vestige and every accomplice of the hated Trujillo dictatorship (i.e., virtually the entire state apparatus and most of the stunted bourgeoisie); the revolutionary possibilities were obvious.

The imperialist U.S. rulers, of course, in order to justify the Marine invasion alleged that the rising was a Castroite plot. The FBI produced its famous list of "57 leading communists" (many of whom were dead, out of the country or in jail). In fact, the opposite was the case: as we pointed out, "The Cuban leadership, and its main spokesman, Fidel Castro, failed to effectively aid the Dominican uprising" (*Spartacist*, September-October 1966). This is confirmed by Suárez:

"On April 28 the same 'imperialists' who were bombing Vietnam landed in Santo Domingo. Fortune was giving him [Castro] a chance to show the Soviets and the Chinese how to comply with 'proletarian internationalism.' But he did nothing."

Spartacist Spectre Haunts USec Debate on Castroism

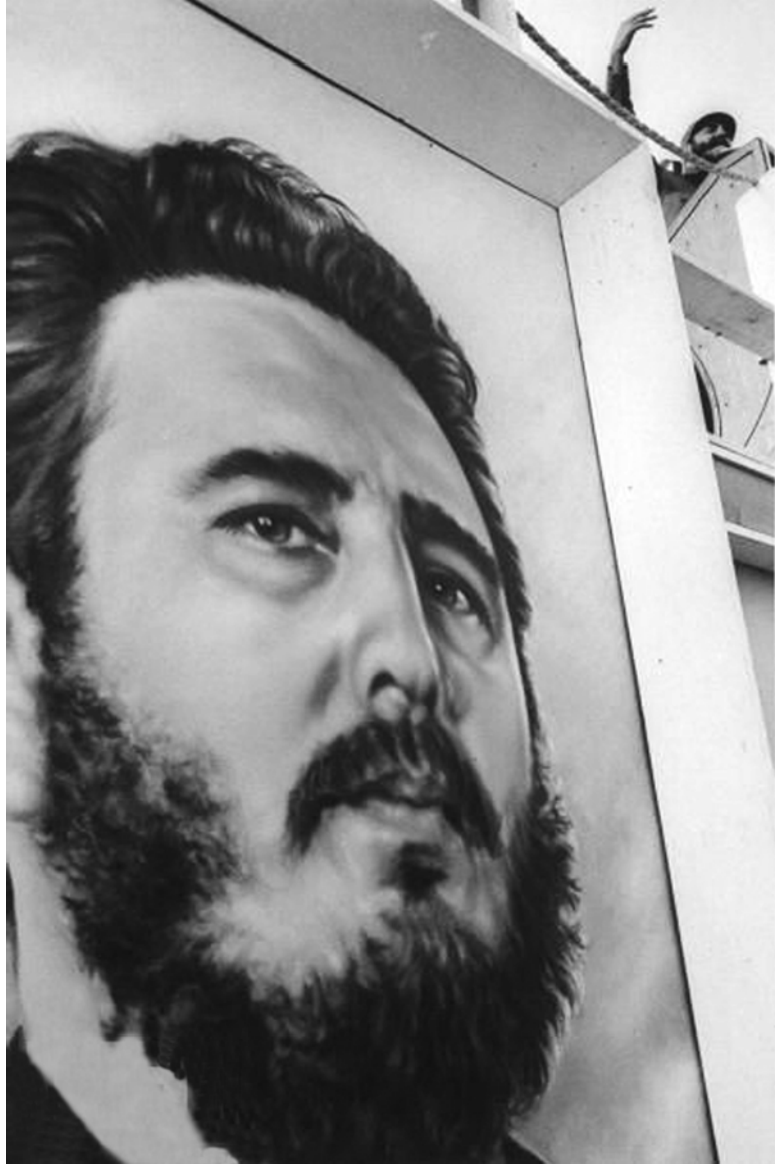
For Workers Political Revolution in Cuba, Part I

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A little less than two decades after the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd, Joseph Stalin issued a new constitution of the USSR proclaiming that classes had been abolished among the Soviet people and the revolution entered the stage of socialism. This bombastic claim was belied by the overwhelming poverty of the collective farms, the huge military expenditures made necessary by capitalist encirclement, the tremendous disparity between the living standards of the working people and the new elite of the "Soviet" bureaucracy. Yet with its tremendous resources, geographical isolation and a worldwide propaganda apparatus at its disposal, the Kremlin rulers were able to convince millions of the Stalinist myth of "socialism in one country."

But 20 years after the Cuban revolution no one would believe that "socialism on one island" could exist in the middle of the American lake called the Caribbean, with Guantánamo Naval Base at its back door and a nest of *gusano* bombers and assassins staring at it across a mere 90 miles of the Florida Strait. The very fact that Fidel and Raúl Castro had to make the U.S.-imposed economic, political and military blockade the theme of their anniversary speeches is proof enough. Still living under siege conditions, perhaps more than any other of the countries which have overthrown capitalist rule since World War II, the fate of Cuba is inseparably bound up with the question of international revolution.

Even though the Cuban leaders no longer talk of continental guerrilla war in Latin America, the "Cuban question" is still fought out on battlefields as far away as Angola and Ethiopia. But things have changed somewhat, as the guerrillas in olive drab are no longer talking of creating "two, three, many Vietnams" and are now supporting capitalist governments. Moreover, Havana's foreign policy has for some years worked closely in tandem with the détenté policies of the Soviet bureaucracy. And the regimes that Castro supports have brutally suppressed leftist students and wars of national liberation by oppressed peoples. Even though neanderthal elements in the Pentagon still talk of Cuban forces as "international bandits" for their role in Angola, many leftists have begun to ask serious questions about the Castro regime.



No "cult of the personality" in Havana?

If Cuban policy is an example of proletarian internationalism, then why does it aid Mengitsu's Derg in Ethiopia, which slaughters the Guevarist student leftists of the EPRP and rains bombs on the Eritrean independence fighters who only a few years ago received military aid from Havana? The Cuban role (with essential Soviet back-up) in beating back the South Africa/CIA imperialist invasion of Angola in 1975-76 was decisive, but why does Havana now aid in building up Neto's secret police, who repress popular discontent in the Luanda slums? Why does Castro hobnob with military dictators like Torrijos in Panama, who is beholden

to the New York banks and Jimmy Carter's "Human Rights" campaign?

And more. If in 1972 Castro praised Allende's "peaceful road" in Chile, which then led to a bloodbath of disastrous scope, did this represent a new policy for Cuba? What about the praise for the Peruvian junta as "anti-imperialist" – the same junta which murdered striking miners and peasants "invading" their ancestral lands? If this represented a turn, then when did it occur and why? But then there was Castro's support to the Goulart government in Brazil, to Araujo in Ecuador, Jagan in Guyana, etc. If there is no fundamental shift in Cuban policies, then what does this imply about the Castro regime?

These questions are hardly abstract – they have tormented a whole generation of Latin American youth, many of whom went into the hills in the early and mid-1960's, only to straggle back in defeat and confusion. Some of those who have since become the most critical of Castro's Cuba are precisely those who themselves experienced the bankruptcy of Guevara's guerrilla war strategy, watching their own comrades die in hopelessly unequal battle, and then stood by helplessly as the supplies from Havana dried up. This was the case of the Venezuelan FALN leader Douglas Bravo, who in 1970 denounced Castro's submission to Soviet détente policies. The significance of this reexamination of Cuba is tremendous, for in Latin America the Castroite generation is the equivalent of the New Left in the United States or the generation of '68 in France.

The course of Cuban foreign policy has been treated extensively in two previous articles, "Castro's Search for Hemispheric Détente" (WV No. 141, 21 January 1977 [see page 9 of this bulletin]) and "Castro Exports Stalinist Betrayal" (WV No. 219, 17 November 1978 [page 15 of this bulletin]). However, the questions raised by this investigation go straight to the fundamental issue of the class character of the Castro regime. This was a subject of great debate in the Trotskyist movement of the early 1960s, for the Cuban revolution posed problems which had not previously been faced head-on by Marxists. The question of questions was whether petty-bourgeois-led, peasant-based guerrilla movements could replace the Leninist party of the working class as a revolutionary vanguard.

In the flush of enthusiasm for Castroism that swept through the left, most of those groups laying claim to the Trotskyist heritage and program put in with the Cuban regime. True, the revolution wasn't led by a Leninist party, they admitted, but it is the first revolution since October which has "bypassed the obstacle of Stalinism." Perhaps there were no soviets, but didn't Castro mix with the people, hold mass rallies to mobilize the workers for revolutionary struggle? It was on the basis of political capitulation to Castroism that the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (USec) was formed in 1963. And on this basis also that their Latin American activities, notably the USec's guerrilla war orientation, were directed until the mid-1970's.

There were other responses to the theoretical/programmatic challenge posed by the Cuban revolution: some closed their eyes and denied that capitalism had been overthrown; others sought to hide behind an amorphous

conception of workers and peasants governments that were neither capitalist nor proletarian in their class character. But the only response which upheld the fundamental principles of the Trotskyist movement while giving a Marxist explanation of the development of the Castroite movement was that put forward by the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the United States. The RT and its successor, the international Spartacist tendency, have been *unique* among ostensible Trotskyists in consistently maintaining that Cuba had become a bureaucratically *deformed workers state* in the fall-winter of 1960, and that further progress toward socialism required a *political revolution* to establish soviet organs of workers democracy.

The various theories of the Cuban Revolution have now been submitted to the test of time. Many of those who during the "heroic" period of Castro/Guevarist guerrillaism held that Cuba was a healthy workers state with a revolutionary leadership became "sadder and wiser" ... and often bitter. In renouncing their previous guerrillaist positions, the centrist majority of the USec led by Ernest Mandel reached the conclusion that Cuba today is a "bureaucratized workers state," although they do not mention political revolution. The reformist minority of the USec led by the [U.S.] SWP continues to hold that the Cuban regime has not qualitatively degenerated. Still others, formerly associated with the SWP-led faction, have recently advocated a deformed workers state characterization of Cuba, but as a move to the *right*, in order to have a consistently Stalinophobic position.

The Spartacist program is the only one that has proved to be consistently correct in its analysis of the Cuban regime and revolutionary in its conclusions over the course of the past two decades. The core of this position is set forward in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 8, "Cuba and Marxist Theory." However, as various tendencies seek to grapple with the contradictions of their policies, it is worthwhile contrasting their analyses with the realities of the Cuban regime as it has subsequently developed. This is the purpose of the present article in two parts, the first dealing with the SWP and the second dealing with those groups which have adopted a critical posture toward Castroism.

The conclusion of both sections is that it is impossible to grasp the nature of the Cuban Revolution without confronting the Spartacist analysis. And this analysis/program in turn provides a key for unlocking many of the key theoretical problems posed by the appearance of a series of deformed workers states in Europe and Asia following World War II.

"Trotskyist" Fidelistas

Among those who claim to stand in the tradition of Trotskyism, the most enthusiastic supporters of the Castroite regime in Cuba are unquestionably the leaders of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party. Soon after the Rebel Army marched into Havana the SWP jumped with all fours on the bandwagon. As the Cuban Revolution moved to the left under the blows of American imperialism, the *Militant* began effusively praising "Fidel" as a revolutionary of epic stature. By 1961-62 the party was totally immersed in its defense (not only military but also political) of the Castro regime: the Fair Play for Cuba Committee was far and away

the major SWP activity; every issue of the paper had an article on Cuba (sometimes two or three); translations of speeches by Castro and “Che” Guevara were distributed by the thousands.

The SWP leaders made no bones about what they were doing. When a minority in the party objected to the blatant political support being offered to Castroism, Joseph Hansen summarized the official position as being “to accept the Cuban revolution as it is, plunge in fully and completely, attempt to form relations with the revolutionaries and cement those relations if possible.” Against attacks from old-line Cuban Stalinists he replied that “The mainstream of world Trotskyism ... could with some justification even be called ‘Fidelista.’” Not only that, these “Trotskyist Fidelistas” believed their attentions were being returned. The founding document of the “United Secretariat of the Fourth International” (USec) stated dramatically:

“As I.F. Stone, the acute American radical journalist observed after a trip to Cuba, the revolutionists there are ‘unconscious’ Trotskyists. With the coming of full consciousness among these and related currents, Trotskyism will become a powerful current.”

–*Dynamics of World Revolution Today* (1963)

After years spent crossing the desert, latching onto Castroism would finally put them on the road to power.

However, there was a price to pay. For the SWP, the Cuban Revolution marked the turning point at which it abandoned the Trotskyist program and commenced a rapid slide into reformism. As usual in such cases, opportunist appetite preceded full-blown theoretical revision. But as Hansen and the central SWP leadership steered onto this rightist course they faced the difficult problem of coming up with a justification for Castroism using their accustomed Marxist terminology. In the process they had to turn the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution on its head and do considerable violence to the history of the Cuban revolution besides.

Many of the SWP’s distortions and anti-Marxist apologies for Castro have recently been collected in a volume of essays and documents by Hansen, entitled *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution* (1978). These focus on the key question of revolutionary leadership. Where was the Leninist vanguard party which Trotskyists hold is necessary to lead the social revolution? Fidel Castro’s July 26th Movement was not even part of the workers movement, and Castro himself had been a parliamentary candidate on the slate of the bourgeois Orthodox Party in 1952. His program from the time of the attack on the Moncada barracks up through the early months of the Revolutionary Government included nothing more radical than return to the 1940 constitution. Did this mean that petty-bourgeois populists could replace the communist vanguard?

Well, Castro did successfully lead a revolution, and that was enough to convince the SWP. *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution* is chock full of paeans to the “Cuban revolution-



Che Guevara as minister in October 1960. The symbol of romantic guerrilla struggle, in power he was a Stalinist persecutor of the Cuban Trotskyists.

ary leadership.” Even before the decisive nationalizations of October 1960, Joseph Hansen was effusively praising the “Castro team” and declaring that they would overthrow capitalism:

“To finally break the hypnosis of Stalinism, it became necessary to crawl on all fours through the jungles of the Sierra Maestra.

“Men and women capable of that, will prove capable, we think, of transcending the bourgeois limits set at the beginning of the Cuban revolution.”

– “Ideology of the Cuban Revolution” (1960)

And in his first document, “The Character of the New Cuban Government,” written in July 1960, Hansen termed the Castro regime a “workers’ and farmers’ government of the kind defined in our Transitional Program as ‘a government independent of the bourgeoisie’.”

Elsewhere in the volume, the SWP’s leading theorist admits to using the term in a very different sense from that of the Communist International: “...they also called the dictatorship of the proletariat a workers’ and farmers’ government,” he notes. Moreover, “The Communist delegates in 1922 could not visualize such a change without the presence of a genuine revolutionary socialist party such as the Russian workers had in the Bolsheviks. A key question requiring our attention, therefore, is the absence of this factor in Cuba” (“Theory of the Cuban Revolution”). Thus Hansen had already concluded, based on the Cuban experience, that it was no longer necessary to have a Leninist party to lead the socialist revolution.

On what did the SWP base its confidence that the “revolutionary process” would give birth to a workers state? On the Castro regime’s “tendency to respond to popular pressures for action against the bourgeoisie and their agents, and its capacity ... to undertake measures against bourgeois political power and against bourgeois property relations.” And what gave it this tendency and capacity? Why the “dynamic rather than static character of the Castro leadership,”

of course. Poor Bolsheviks! They thought it was necessary to build a communist party, steeled in combat for the Leninist program, and to form soviets, as revolutionary organs of workers democracy. Unnecessary, says Hansen. All they really would have had to do was bring in the populist Narodniki on the basis of a peasant uprising and the problem would be solved.

But this idyllic picture completely distorts the actual record of the early years of Castro's rule. While the Rebel Army had destroyed Batista's private police and praetorian guard army, this did not impart a "socialist dynamic" to the Cuban Revolution. And in fact, the first Revolutionary Government headed by the judge Urrutia and the lawyer Miró Cardona was simply pledged to clean government and social justice. It would be too simplistic to argue, as did some liberal circles in the 1960's, that Cuba "went Communist" solely due to U.S. hostility and the economic blockade. However, it is a fact that during his first six months in power, Castro carefully avoided any move which would necessarily have produced a split with Cuban liberals or with Washington.

The first measures of the Urrutia-Miró Cardona government were to outlaw gambling, suppress prostitution and seize the holdings of Batista and his henchmen: nothing out of the ordinary for a bourgeois reform government dedicated to cleaning up the "bordello of the Americas." In March Castro cut rents by 50 percent for the poor and middle class: although it sent shudders through the landlords, this had been part of the Ortodoxo program since the late 1940's. Even Castro's May 17 land reform corresponded to this political framework. In line with the 1940 constitution, the law called for a maximum landholding of 1,000 acres (while allowing the most efficient plantations and ranches more than triple that amount). These limits far exceeded those in almost any of the bourgeois land reforms of the 20th century.

At this point, nothing the government had done went beyond measures advocated by various middle-class populists in the short-lived cabinet of Grau San Martín following the fall of the Machado dictatorship in 1933. Grau, however, had been overthrown a few months later by Sergeant Fulgencio Batista with the connivance of U.S. ambassador Sumner Wells. Two decades later in Guatemala, President Jacobo Arbenz suffered the same fate at the hands of the CIA. Castro and Guevara (who had personally experienced the Guatemalan coup of 1954) were not about to let this happen without a fight.

There followed a process of blow and counterblow in which the Cuban leaders responded to each imperialist attack with increasingly radical measures. In the cabinet crisis of June 1959 Castro booted out opponents of the agrarian reform within the July 26th Movement. A month later President Urrutia was ousted for joining in the anti-Communist uproar sparked by defecting air force commander Díaz Lanz. This pattern was repeated throughout 1960. When Eisenhower asked Congress in January for authorization to cut the Cuban sugar quota, a few days later Castro signed an agreement with Soviet deputy prime minister Mikoyan for the USSR to purchase one million tons of sugar yearly from Cuba. When in June imperialist-owned oil refineries refused to handle Russian crude, they were "intervened" by Cuban authorities. Ei-

senhower thereupon eliminated the sugar quota, and Castro responded on August 6 by nationalizing U.S.-owned properties in Cuba: 36 sugar mills, three oil companies, the power company and the telephone company.

The process of retaliation by nationalization reached its crescendo in the fall of that year. Faced with the escalating imperialist offensive, the Cuban government struck a decisive blow against the economic base of domestic reaction; on October 13, it nationalized all banks and 382 businesses, amounting to 80 percent of the country's industry. When the U.S. slapped an embargo on trade with Cuba, Havana responded by expropriating all remaining American properties in the country. To complete the cycle, it was on 16 April 1961 that Castro baptized the Cuban revolution as "socialist," during his speech mobilizing the working people to fight against the U.S.-sponsored invasion at Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs).

Was this merely the unfolding of a dynamic inherent in the Cuban Revolution from the beginning? Joseph Hansen says yes, discerning a socialist tendency and capacity of the Castro regime and labeling it a workers and peasants government. And capitalism was overthrown in Cuba, so why argue with success? But this whole objectivist schema leaves out several radically different possible outcomes. The Castro brothers and Guevara might have been defeated by the right wing of the July 26th Movement (regional army commander Huber Matos, trade-union chief David Salvador), for example. Or there might have been a stand-off between the left and right wings, with Castro acting as supreme arbiter (as he did during the early months). This situation could have led to a successful counter-revolutionary coup or invasion.

On the other hand, there were conciliationist elements in the U.S. ruling class (e.g. Ambassador Bonsal) who under different circumstances might have held the upper hand. In order to keep Cuba in a neocolonial position (which it could do easily enough through control of the sugar quota), Washington could have accepted the agrarian reform and even subsidized some of the nationalizations. The latter option was precisely the course taken by de Gaulle in Algeria, through the 1962 Evian Accords. Interestingly, the SWP and the USec also called the Ben Bella government in Algeria (1962-65) a workers and peasants government. When challenged later to explain why it was so easily overthrown by Boumediene's palace coup, Hansen replied lamely, "Ben Bella was no Fidel Castro, Houari Boumediene no Che Guevara" ("The Algerian Revolution and the Character of the Ben Bella Regime," in SWP Education for Socialists bulletin, *The Workers and Farmers Government*).

In other words, "You win a few, you lose a few." In contrast to this passive guesswork, those in the SWP who rejected the capitulation to Castroism by the party leadership upheld the original Bolshevik program of a workers and peasants government based on soviets led by a vanguard Leninist party. The Revolutionary Tendency (RT), the opposition which was later expelled from the SWP and subsequently became the Spartacist League/U.S., ridiculed Hansen's "queer animal - a 'workers' and farmers' government" in which there are no workers or farmers and no representatives of independent workers' or farmers' parties! Surely neither the Fourth Congress of the CI [Communist Interna-

tional] nor the [Fourth International's] Transitional Program envisaged such a phenomenon" (The Cuban Revolution and Marxist Theory," *Marxist Bulletin* No. 8).

SWP Apologizes for Stalinist Repression in Cuba

While posing as the "best builders" of Castroism, the SWP does not fail to make a few "comradely criticisms." In a *Militant* interview (22 December [1978]), Hansen claims that from the beginning they had argued for the "development of structured workers democracy" in Cuba. Actually, during the early 1960's the SWP leadership hardly ever mentioned the subject of workers democracy in Cuba publicly, and then only as helpful hints to Castro. Instead of a Trotskyist critique of the untrammelled one-man rule, Hansen & Co. tried to pass it off as democratic, even going so far as to excuse Stalinist repression against Cuban Trotskyists.

In the "Draft Theses on the Cuban Revolution" (December 1960), where the SWP majority first declared that Cuba was a workers state, it used the following characterization of the Castro regime:

"10. When the capitalist holdings in the key sectors of the Cuban economy were taken over by the government, Cuba entered the transitional phase of a workers state, although one lacking as yet the forms of democratic proletarian rule."

Lest anyone take this as a criticism, the theses immediately add that although there are no workers, soldiers and peasants councils, "as it [the Cuban government] has moved in a socialist direction it has likewise proved itself to be democratic in tendency." And to underline the SWP's political confidence in the Havana rulers:

"13. If the Cuban revolution were permitted to develop freely its democratic tendency would undoubtedly lead to the early creation of proletarian democratic forms adapted to Cuba's own needs."

Well, it's been 18 years now, comrade Hansen, and the Cuban working people are still waiting.

Repeatedly in the early years of the Castro regime SWP leaders lauded it as revolutionary, "democratic and socialist in tendency," only occasionally mentioning the minor blemish that workers democracy had not yet been "formalized." Surely this was just a matter of loose ends – an oversight, perhaps – which could be tied up later. (They neglected to mention how you could have democracy that was *not* formalized.) Not only did Hansen and his associates view Cuba as "an uncorrupted workers regime," they publicly polemicized against those Trotskyists who termed it a bureaucratically deformed workers state.

The Summer 1961 issue of *International Socialist Review* printed an article on the Cuban revolution by the Chilean Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR), which argued:

"In Cuba on the downfall of Batista, a workers government based on soviets – as in Russia of 1917 – was not inaugurated; instead a different process took place in which the capitalist state was liquidated without the establishment of workers organs of power or workers councils to administer the country's economy....

"In view of these considerations, we believe that Cuba is a deformed workers state. A state that was born with deformations, fundamentally because of the absence of a revolutionary Marxist party."

The SWP tops scolded their Chilean comrades for such a gloomy outlook: "...we think that the use of 'deformed' to indicate the kind of workers state is not a happy choice." The *ISR* editors even pointedly *refuse* to call for soviets: "We are not inclined to specify the exact form which we think proletarian democracy should take in Cuba." While it is true that scattered references to the "lack (as yet)" of "forms of proletarian democracy" under Castro may be found in Hansen's recent book, it should be pointed out that most of his texts from the early 1960s were *internal* to the SWP. Externally the party made almost no criticisms of "Fidel": in 64 articles on Cuba published in the *Militant* during 1961, only one even mentions the question of workers democracy!

Even worse than remaining silent on this crucial question – above all for those who claim to be Trotskyists – the SWP leaders were forced by the logic of their positions to cover up and even make excuses for the most vicious Stalinist repression *directed against Cuban Trotskyists*. In late May 1961 the Havana government seized the newspaper *Voz Proletaria*, published by the Cuban POR (which was associated with the Latin American bureau of J. Posadas), as well as destroying the type for an edition of Trotsky's book *The Permanent Revolution* and taking over the small print shop for allegedly publishing "counterrevolutionary propaganda." The response of the SWP was a "Balance Sheet" in which it gives the regime a clean bill of health ("The main tendency of the Castro leadership is democratic") and tells its followers to take it all in stride:

"We think that defenders of the Cuban revolution could make no graver error than to lose their sense of proportion and give up on the revolution as lost because the Cuban Communist Party leaders, with their propensity to abuse positions of trust, have been making undue headway."

–*Militant* 7/14 August 1961

This was no isolated incident but a consistent pattern by Hansen over the years. When Guevara later said in an interview that smashing the printing plates was "an error," our "Trotskyist" theoretician saw this as "fresh confirmation of our opinion that the top leaders of the Cuban Revolution are democratic in outlook...." He considered it unworthy of comment that Guevara immediately added:

"However, we consider the Trotskyist party to be acting against the revolution. For example, they were taking the line that the revolutionary government is petty bourgeois, and were calling on the proletariat to exert pressure on the government, and even carry out another revolution in which the proletariat would come to power. This was prejudicing the discipline necessary at this time....

"You cannot be for the revolution and against the Cuban Communist Party [that is, the PSP]."

–*Militant*, 9 April 1962

Rather than protesting this outrageous accusation of counterrevolutionary activity and peremptory ban on criticism of the PSP, instead of demanding that the Trotskyist press be allowed to publish freely, Hansen distances himself from the

POR (“In general, we have the impression that the Cuban Trotskyists have been overly critical”) and opines:

“...the fact that such opinions can be freely expressed testifies to the health of the Cuban Revolution and to the promise that it holds for workers democracy.”

The incident and Guevara’s “self-criticism” were certainly eloquent testimony, though hardly to the expansion of workers democracy. *Voz Proletaria* could only come out in mimeographed form, since its printer had been “intervened,” and POR salesmen were regularly detained for distributing their newspaper. This finally resulted in the arrest of three leaders of the Cuban Trotskyists in November 1963 and their imprisonment for 17 months. The SWP did not say one word in their defense during this time, not even mentioning the case until several months after their release.

The Spartacist tendency was the first group outside the Posadistas themselves to defend the Cuban Trotskyists and bring their case to world attention. Hansen and his colleagues remained silent, trying to pin the blame on old-line Kremlin supporters rather than the top Cuban leaders, and above all sought to get out of the line of fire. In response to Castro’s violent diatribe against Trotskyism at the 1966 Tricontinental Congress, Hansen alleged it was most likely a case of “mistaken identity” and at worst a “belated echo” of Stalinist slanders, “the purpose of which remained completely obscure.” Of course, to those on the receiving end – particularly the Guatemalan MR-13 guerrillas, accused of being “agents of imperialism” because they called for socialist revolution – the purpose of this hatchet job was not at all obscure.

A final observation of the subject of anti-Trotskyist persecution in Cuba: polemicizing against the views of his French comrades, Hansen remarks that “The meaning of the attacks on the Cuban Trotskyists is exaggerated and placed at the wrong door....” Actually, while former PSP leader Blas Roca set his poisoned pen to writing several lengthy articles in the style of the Moscow Trials, the most active slanderer of Trotskyism in the Cuban leadership has been Ernesto “Che” Guevara. Nor was the purpose obscure: he attacked the POR comrades on several different occasions in 1961, just at the time the Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas (ORI) was being formed as the precursors of the Communist Party (PCC). Guevara was reportedly the moving force behind the fusion the July 26th Movement with the old pro-Moscow Stalinist PSP, and therefore wanted to clamp down on all criticism of the “Old Communists.”

Hansen Invents “Struggle Against Bureaucracy”

The formation of the ORI in mid-1961 marked the integration of a bureaucratic apparatus to politically organize the state machinery. It was the mouthpiece of the Stalinist ruling caste in formation rather than a workers party. But since no one ever ruled in the name of bureaucratic bonapartism, and since the SWP terms this party “revolutionary,” our revisionist pundits are called upon to do another public relations job, this time discovering a “struggle against bureaucracy” in the Escalante affair. In this instance the burden fell mainly on SWP journalist Harry Ring. In a 1972

pamphlet Ring wrote:

“In 1961 [1962], the conflicts between the Fidelistas and Stalinists exploded with the ouster of the CP hack Anibal Escalante from the post of general secretary of the predecessor political formation to the present Communist Party of Cuba. In motivating that ouster, Fidel’s scorching denunciation of bureaucracy and sectarianism was heard around the world.”

– “Cuba and Problems of Workers Democracy”

In a recent SWP internal document Hansen asserts that Castro’s “blistering attack on Escalante and the growth of bureaucratism in Cuba” was “recognized everywhere as an attack on Stalinism.”

What actually took place was an internecine bureaucratic clique fight, in which one side purged the other. Escalante, the former organization secretary of the PSP, naturally saw to it that “reliable” elements (i.e., his own men) were placed in key positions of the ORI. Castro gave him the boot because *his* people, the former members of the July 26th Movement, were systematically excluded from positions of authority.

As bonapartist head of the bureaucracy, Castro did have a real grievance against Escalante: the latter was setting up a rival center of power. On that the *líder máximo* was quite eloquent, in the process revealing a good deal about the nature of the “United Party of Socialist Revolution” being constructed:

“...we were making a leash, a straightjacket.... Here we speak of the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations, but what were the organizations?...”

“...how were the nuclei formed? I’ll tell you. In all the provinces the secretary-general of the PSP was made secretary-general of the ORI; in all the municipalities the secretary-general of the PSP was made the secretary-general of the ORI; in all the nuclei a member of the PSP was made secretary-general of the nucleus. Is this integration?”

– “On Sectarianism” (26 March 1962)

At no point in this speech (which was distributed in thousands of copies by the SWP) did Castro mention bureaucracy, bureaucratism or the like. Once, however, he cogently described an aspect of the phenomenon:

“In other words, there was not a single subject, not a single question, not a single detail which did not have to be discussed in the organization office of the ORI [Escalante’s den]. Whether at the higher level or at the lower – don’t think it would be a matter of weeks, when it might be months – a truly abnormal, absurd, intolerable, chaotic, anarchic procedure was being established, a habit of ordering people about, an avid urge to take decisions on all problems.”

–*Ibid.*

No doubt this was all true of the Comrade General Secretary. But there was another person to whom it applied even better, as everyone well knows: *Comandante* Fidel Castro Ruz. As far as resolving the problem, the only known measures taken were a reshuffling of the ORI secretariat to give a majority of July 26th leaders over the ex-PSPers, and the banishment of Escalante to Prague. End of Castro’s titanic “struggle against bureaucratism.”

What lay behind this outburst was simple enough. Bu-

reauracies are supposed to be monolithic. By breaking this cardinal rule, Escalante had committed a “crime against the state,” for Castro, like all bonapartist rulers deeply believes that “*L’état, c’est moi!*” The new party should be loyal to him, not Moscow, and therefore the old PSPers had to be kept in a subordinate position. Such intrabureaucratic purges are not uncommon in Stalinist regimes: witness Tito’s 1948 purge of the “Cominformists” at the time of his break with the Kremlin. And often they are accompanied by a lot of phony “democratic” and even “anti-bureaucratic” rhetoric, as in the Chinese “Cultural Revolution” in which Mao’s clique eliminated the previously dominant party bureaucrats around “China’s Khrushchev,” Liu Shao-chi.

Further evidence that what was behind the “Escalante affairs” was a clash between the national loyalties of sections of the Cuban bureaucracy (Moscow or Havana) came with the replay of the whole business in 1968. After having been readmitted and placed in charge of a dairy farm, the former ORI general secretary was accused of organizing a “micro-faction.” This time he was jailed for 15 years, with 27 accomplices also receiving long sentences. Significantly, a second secretary of the Soviet embassy in Havana was expelled from the country for being involved in the affair.

They Never Learn Department: Stalinists are, of course, quite capable of demagogically attacking bureaucratism while themselves being the most notorious examples. Stalin used to do it all the time. In a vile speech against Trotskyism at the height of the Moscow Trials, he remarked cynically: “I have in view the question of the formal and heartless bureaucratic attitude of some of our Party comrades ... toward the question of expelling members from the party...” (“Mastering Bolshevism” [March 1937]). But whenever Castro plays this tune, the SWP suddenly discovers a heartening renewal of the Cuban Revolution.

When in 1970 Havana went through a major reappraisal of its policies following the abysmal failure of the “Ten Million Tons” sugar harvest, Castro uttered a few words about the need to substitute “democratic methods for administrative methods.” This, rejoiced Ring, was “unambiguous language” about “creating a structured socialist democracy.” He doesn’t mention that the upshot of the 1970 reappraisal was the wholesale adoption of Russian-style economic management to replace the chaotic mess bequeathed by the primitive “planning” system set up by Guevara in the mid-’60’s.

Bonapartism and Bureaucracy in Cuba

Today, after two decades of the Castro regime, Hansen avers that “It would be untrue to say that the battle against bureaucratism has been won in Cuba.” He cites some examples: the introduction of ranks in the armed forces, the ban on organized dissent in the Communist Party, the jailing of the poet Padilla, the pillorying of homosexuals. “However,” he concludes, “the headway made by bureaucratism has not reached such a degree that one must conclude that a hardened bureaucratic caste has been formed, exercises dictatorial power, and cannot be dislodged save through a political revolution. No qualitative point of change has yet been adduced to substantially change this hypothesis” (introduction to *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*).

In the first place, it is not merely a question of bureaucratic practices: there have obviously been plenty of them from the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, and Castro is adept at brushing off such accusations with windy “self-critical” speeches. As for the “hardened bureaucratic caste,” with its current line the SWP wouldn’t recognize one in Cuba until it was practically mummified! Naturally, Hansen calls up images of the labyrinthine Kremlin bureaucratic machine, the luxurious dachas and official limousines, the leaders rigorously shielded from the Soviet masses. Then he compares this with Cuba, where government affairs are resolved with apparent informality (that is, if you are at the very top), where top officials for years wore their olive drab combat uniforms, where “Fidel” is always plunging into crowds and talking with old peasants about their smallest needs. His conclusion: there is no “hardened bureaucratic caste.”

Hansen deliberately confuses the origins of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, where it was the product of the degeneration of the workers democracy embodied in the soviets and the Bolshevik Party, and Cuba which had neither. Stalin rose to a commanding position by becoming the spokesman for the privileged layer and championing its drive to raise itself above the workers; he became, in Trotsky’s words, a “Soviet bonaparte, seeking to balance as an arbiter above the cliques, factions and classes. In Cuba there were no soviets, no Leninist party. From the beginning of the revolution, political power was in the hands of a tiny circle around the *líder máximo*. Hansen could not find a qualitative point of degeneration because Cuba was a bureaucratically deformed workers state from the moment the bourgeoisie was expropriated.

If in the early years the weight of the Havana bureaucracy seemed far lighter than that of the Kremlin, it was because in Cuba the bonaparte gave rise to the bureaucracy rather than the other way around. During the period 1961–65 Castro was trying to fashion a transmission belt to pass down the directives and whims of the ruling clique. The conflicts which arose, such as the Escalante affair, were over who should command this apparatus in formation. No doubt the level of personal material privilege was less than in the USSR, but this could be said with equal validity for Vietnam and other impoverished deformed workers states where the population has been kept in a constant state of mobilization due to imperialist threat and invasion. Castro and Guevara at first sought to fashion the new ruling elite in the image of the military asceticism of the Rebel Army, just as Mao tried to remold China in the “Yenan spirit.”

Napoleon used his army recruited in the provinces to put an end to the plebian democracy which had reigned in Paris in the heyday of the revolution; Castro marched into Havana at the head of a peasant guerrilla band (which during most of the fighting never exceeded 300 men) to impose a revolution in which the urban workers, tightly controlled by Batista henchman [Eusebio] Mujal [head of the Confederation of Cuban Workers, CTC] and the Stalinist PSP, were merely spectators. He did not have to put down the workers, who had not risen up until after Batista fled; but he made it clear that real power would be in the hands of the victors

who swept out of the Sierra Maestra. In his first speech to a monster rally in Havana, on 8 January 1959, Castro warned against the “proliferation of revolutionary groups” such as followed the overthrow of Machado; it was this, he said, that led to the success of Batista’s coup in 1934. A day later he made the point even more emphatically on television: “I have always thought that the revolution should be made by one movement alone” (quoted in Samuel Farber, *Revolution and Reaction in Cuba, 1933-1961* [1976]).

The Castroite regime in Havana has *always insisted* on its political omnipotence. This has been consecrated in the new Cuban constitution which decrees the Communist Party’s role as “the highest leading force of the society and of the state”(Granma, 7 March 1976). Even when the first “elected” local governments were introduced in the province of Matanzas in 1974, the resolution on “peoples’ power” setting them up stipulated that “The party will guide, activate and control the tasks of the state organs....” As to the “party,” it did not hold its first congress until December 1975, a full ten years after its formation (see “Castro Holds First Ever CP Congress,” WV No. 100, 12 March 1976).

A pervasive feature of Stalinist parties is the “cult of personality” around the supreme leader, and this is doubly and triply true of Cuba. The gigantic, 100-foot-high murals of Castro which dominate the million-strong rallies in the Plaza de la Revolución are well-known to everyone. Yet, amazingly, Hansen denies that there is any leader cult around “Fidel.” While he considers the concentration of power in Castro’s hands dangerous, even today he excuses it: “According to the theory of the Trotskyist movement, a personal dictatorship is not excluded in extremely exceptional circumstances...” (“Two Interpretations of the Cuban Revolution”). “Extremely exceptional circumstances” that have already lasted *two decades?!*

One wonders why the SWP even bothers to ritually mention the need for a Leninist party in Cuba: in giant Russia seven years after the October Revolution the essential elements of Stalinism had triumphed under the pressures of isolation; but to believe Hansen, Castro on his tiny island 90 miles from the U.S. has managed to stave off the inroads of bureaucratism for more than twice as long! As to workers democracy, perhaps our “Trotskyist” theorist would agree with J.P. Morray (*The Second Revolution in Cuba* [1962]), a lyrically candid Stalinist, who wrote: “Through Castro, who is the Cuban Soviet, the workers discover their own interest and participate in the direction of society by ratifying his initiatives.”

Laughable? Of course. But when Posadas¹ characterized the mass rallies in which the Cuban workers are permit-

¹ J. Posadas was the leader of the Latin American Bureau of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International in the 1950s, and split off to form his own current in 1961-62. Posadas developed a series of peculiar positions such as his call for a Soviet nuclear first strike; or his “critical support” to UFOs. But in several countries, notably Brazil and Cuba, the *posadistas* were revolutionary cadre not particularly marked by their leader’s increasingly bizarre flights of fantasy. The Cuban Trotskyists were part of the Posadas tendency.

ted to ratify Castro’s measures as “plebiscites,” Hansen accused him of “not seeing too clearly through the ultraleft smoke in his glasses” (“Trotskyism and the Cuban Revolution”). Yet to anyone who has read *The Revolution Betrayed*, the Cuban leaders’ “democratic” procedures – from the monster meetings where the crowd roars its assent, to the 1976 constitution approved by a 97.7 percent “yes” vote – cannot fail to recall Trotsky’s vivid description of the plebiscitary methods of Stalin:

“As history testifies, Bonapartism gets along admirably with a universal, and even a secret, ballot. The democratic ritual of Bonapartism is the *plebiscite*. From time to time, the question is presented to the citizens: *for or against* the leader? And the voter feels the barrel of a revolver between his shoulders. Since the time of Napoleon III, who now seems like a provincial dilettante, this technique has received an extraordinary development. The new Soviet constitution which establishes *Bonapartism on a plebiscite basis* is the veritable crown of the system.”

SWP Degenerates into Pabloism

The significance of Hansen’s denial of the *necessity* of a Trotskyist vanguard to lead the socialist revolution, of his apologies for the Castroite bureaucracy, of his failure to fight for workers democracy in Cuba extends far beyond the Western Hemisphere. For the Cuban Revolution was a decisive event in turning the SWP from the path of intransigent proletarian struggle against Stalinism.

In 1951-53, the SWP, after initial hesitations, had led the opposition to the liquidationist policies of Michel Pablo, then head of the International Secretariat (I.S.) of the FI.

In January 1951 Pablo wrote a document which pulled his confusions together into a program of conciliation to Stalinism. It was *objectivist* in its *methodology*, in effect denying that the crisis of revolutionary leadership was the decisive factor:

“The objective process is in the final analysis the sole determining factor, overriding all obstacles of a subjective order.”

And it was *liquidationist* in its *programmatic conclusions*, holding that the Stalinist parties could be revolutionized (thereby making independent Trotskyist parties unnecessary):

“The Communist Parties retain the possibility in certain circumstances of roughly outlining a revolutionary orientation.”

This was followed up by a practical proposal to carry out long-term entrisism in the mass reformist workers parties, particularly the pro-Moscow CPs.

Once the gravity of the Pabloist threat had become clear to the SWP leadership, it reacted sharply. A “Letter to Trotskyist Throughout the World” (November 1953) declared, “The lines of cleavage between Pablo’s revisionism and Orthodox Trotskyism are so deep that no compromise is possible either politically or organizationally.” However, as the impact of McCarthyism bore in on the

party, which had lost most of its trade-union base in the 1953 split and was greatly reduced in number compared to the immediate post-war years, the SWP leaders also began to succumb to the pressures of isolation. By 1960 the one-time anti-revisionists also decided to “junk the old Trotskyism.” Hansen wrote cavalierly:

“What provisions are there in Marxism for a revolution, obviously socialist in tendency but powered by the peasantry and led by revolutionists who have never professed socialist aims; indeed, who seem to have been limited to the bourgeois-democratic horizon? It’s not in the books!

“If Marxism has no provisions for such phenomena, perhaps it is time provisions were made. It would seem a fair enough exchange for a revolution as good as this one.”

– “Theory of the Cuban Revolution”

Hansen & Co. were remarkably frank about their motivations in jumping on the “Fidel” bandwagon:

“Our theoretical and political contributions ... drew the favorable attention of a whole new layer attracted by the Cuban revolution, including such significant figures as C. Wright Mills. This work and the accompanying participation in demonstrations, etc., ... decisively advanced the SWP from its previous isolation to its present prominence in the American radical movement.”

– SWP Political Committee, “Problems of the Fourth International and the Next Steps,” *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, July 1962

At the same time, the Hansen-Dobbs leadership noticed that their enthusiastic support for Castro closely paralleled the positions of the International Secretariat:

“It noted especially that the IS had assessed the main stages of the Cuban revolution in the same way as the SWP, the Canadians and the Latin American Trotskyists.... Most important of all, the IS in its majority and the IC in its majority had passed the acid test of the Cuban revolution.... It was impossible to escape the conclusion that objectively the correct course was to press for reunification.”

– “Cuba – The Acid Test”

But the SWP tops’ sharp turn to the right did not go unopposed. The Revolutionary Tendency presented a counter-resolution to the majority’s “Problems of the Fourth International....” The RT document stated:

“...the Pabloites have proposed one substitute after another for the revolutionary role of the working class and its Marxist vanguard....

“In 1949 it was a form of Stalinism that would prevail for centuries; in 1951 it was imminent war that would force the Stalinists to project a revolutionary orientation; today it is the colonial revolution that is unfolding automatically. *At no time has it been the working class organized under Marxist leadership that is central in the world revolutionary strategy of Pabloism.*”

“...the entire national leadership of the party was swept up in the Cuban events and lost sight of the basic strategic approach that our movement must take

towards such a revolution.... It was hoped that through its virtually uncritical support to this government, the leadership could be won over wholesale to Trotskyism....

“The Trotskyists should urge the workers to consciously struggle for democratic control over the governing apparatus rather than expecting the government to hand over such control to them on its own.”

– “In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective” (June 1962), *Marxist Bulletin* No. 1

The Hansen-Dobbs leadership was now arguing for its policy of political support to “the Castro team” with the unmistakable objectivist methodology of Pabloism:

“The Cuban experience demonstrates once again that the ultimate determinant in the outbreak, course and outcome of a revolutionary struggle is the relationship of class forces on a national and world scale, and not the subjective political factors alone....

“The favorable course of the Cuban Revolution was determined by far more powerful and fundamental forces than the original character and aims of the Castro leadership....

“This is not to detract in the least from the tremendous role played by Fidel Castro and his associates in carrying the revolution through to its logical conclusion....

“Somewhat unexpectedly, the comrades who insist so strongly at this date on the vital necessity of correct leadership have here a most convincing example to illustrate their thesis.”

– “Problems of the Fourth International....”

Eureka! The crisis of proletarian leadership has been solved in Cuba... by Fidel Castro. Now it is petty-bourgeois nationalists who can in certain circumstances “roughly outline a revolutionary orientation.” And the obvious conclusion: everyone should rush out and sign up as Fidelistas, which is precisely what Hansen & Co. did.

Just as Pablo’s objectivism served to justify his liquidationist political program, the SWP leaders not only “forgot” but actively *denied* the need for an independent Trotskyist vanguard. Of course, they occasionally talked of a “revolutionary socialist party” ... but note carefully what they mean by this. In criticizing the Chilean POR’s characterization of Cuba as a deformed workers state, the SWP advocated the formation of a “mass revolutionary-socialist party in Cuba” which would replace the old PSP and “The Castro leadership would naturally be elected to head the party. They have demonstrated their fitness and capacity to such a degree that we think every Cuban revolutionist would give them a vote of confidence.” As for the Trotskyists, they should join the party as “completely loyal party builders” (*ISR*, Summer 1961).

This was not just liquidationism in the abstract. A year later the SWP majority wrote: “... we believe the Trotskyists of Cuba should seek to enter and take their place in the soon-to-be formed unified revolutionary party where they can work loyally, patiently and confidently...” (“Problems of the Fourth International...”). Recall that this is the same Stalinist party that was being set up by staffing its apparatus with ex-PSPers! This “modest proposal” certainly

qualifies as “entrism *sui generis*” [of a unique kind] in the Pablo mold.² And we have Hansen’s own testimony to demonstrate the political bankruptcy of the SWP’s Castroite perspective. A small Trotskyist group reportedly existed in Havana which supported Castro’s movement even before the 1956 *Granma* landing, and which after the revolution was absorbed by the July 26th Movement:

“Under the ban on factions and tendencies it was not easy for them to spread their views, and some became discouraged. It is difficult to ascertain the present status of these loyal defenders of the Cuban revolution.”

—Joseph Hansen, “Two Interpretations of the Cuban Revolution,” *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, July 1977

Closely related to the SWP’s liquidationism into the Castroite current and its whole position on Cuba is a narrow, almost genealogical conception of Stalinism. The source of Stalinism is the Kremlin bureaucracy, they argue, and only those who have been connected with that apparatus are Stalinists; this may be by extension, such as the Chinese and Vietnamese, but the fundamental explanation is hereditary. In contrast, the Spartacist tendency, following the analysis of Trotsky, views Stalinism as the system of ideology and political domination corresponding to a parasitic bureaucracy sitting atop the property forms of a workers state.

In Hansen’s 1961 “Report for the Political Committee” he remarks that the Cuban Revolution “immediately points to discussions we had on Eastern Europe, on Yugoslavia, on China.” The same parallel is drawn in others of his documents. But the SWP held that Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China were *deformed* workers states, whereas it refused to apply that label to Cuba. Answering this charge, Hansen remarks:

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

“Besides, Cuba has something new to offer.... Stalinists do not head the Cuban revolution. They were by-passed.”

—“What the Discussion on Cuba Is About” (May 1961)

It is, of course, true that Castro was not a Stalinist at the outset of the Cuban Revolution. He was a petty-bourgeois nationalist populist. For Hansen and the SWP, Castro remained non-Stalinist even after the ORI/PURS/PCC “party” was formed as a fusion with the former Kremlin-loyal Stalinist PSP. Castro, you see, had not inherited the disease of Stalinism from his political parents. So, therefore, as long as Castro dominates the PCC or its predecessor formations, it is non-Stalinist, dixit the SWP. And if there are no “forms” of workers democracy, while that is unfortunate, it does not mean that Stalinism is triumphant,

² In the early 1950s, Pablo argued that the Trotskyists should enter the official pro-Moscow Communist parties with the aim of staying there for a considerable time, in contrast to Trotsky’s call in the mid-1930s for a short-term entry into leftward-moving socialist parties in order to win militants to an independent Trotskyist vanguard.

because Castro the democrat is still dominant. This is replacing Marxist analysis with predestination.

Thus armed with an objectivist method, a liquidationist program and a scholastic analysis of Stalinism, Hansen and the SWP were ready to play ball with the Pabloists. While suspending the RT (subsequently expelled for “disloyalty”) the reunification was carried out in mid-1963. Cuba played a prominent role in the documents for the new USec. The main political resolution stated:

“The victory in Cuba marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of the world revolution; for, aside from the Soviet Union, this is the first workers’ state established outside the bounds of the Stalinist apparatus.”

—“Dynamics of World Revolution Today”

It also wrote the Pabloists’ false “lessons” from the Cuban experience into the USec program. Interestingly, Hansen now seeks to directly falsify this fact. In his introduction to *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution* he pretends that “the American Trotskyists” criticized Havana’s call for guerrilla war on a continental scale and generalizes: “... more effective means than a guerrilla band is required to lead the struggle for socialism. What is needed is a working-class party of the Leninist type.” But here is what Hansen supported at a time when guerrilla warfare (or talk of it) was popular:

“Confronted with the powerful and well-experienced bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries, the working class can achieve victory only under a genuine revolutionary Marxist leadership....

“The weakness of the enemy in the backward countries has opened the possibility of coming to power even with a blunted instrument.”

—“Dynamics of World Revolution Today”

A second resolution, this one written by the SWP itself as the basis for the reunification with the I.S., was even more explicit on the question of guerrilla warfare. In a now-famous section it stated:

“13. Along the road of a revolution beginning with simple democratic demands and ending in the rupture of capitalist property relations, guerrilla warfare conducted by landless peasant and semiproletarian forces, under a leadership that becomes committed to carrying the revolution through to a conclusion, can play a decisive role in undermining and precipitating the downfall of a colonial or semicolonial power. This is one of the main lessons to be drawn from experience since the second world war. It must be consciously incorporated into the strategy of building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries.”

—“For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement” (March 1963)

What the founding documents of the USec were based on is the objectivist theory that the force of the colonial revolution was such that a proletarian vanguard was no longer necessary in order to lead the socialist revolution. This is the fundamental revisionist conclusion that Hansen & Co. drew from Cuba, as wide-ranging as Pablo’s “new world reality” in the 1950’s and as destructive in its conclusions.

Spartacist Spectre Haunts USec Debate on Castroism

For Workers Political Revolution in Cuba, Part II

The following article is abridged from Workers Vanguard No. 224, 2 February 1979

In celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution recently Socialist Workers Party leaders reminisced about the early 1960s, painting a rosy picture of a mutual admiration society between “Fidel” and the SWP. Castro had mentioned Farrell Dobbs’ presidential candidacy at a giant rally in Havana, albeit only indirectly, while the SWP “printed more speeches by Castro and Che Guevara than any other English-language publication” (*Militant*, 22 December 1978). Actually, the relationship was rather more one-sided than this would suggest. And in recent years, as the luster of July 26 wore off, one of the SWP’s main jobs as the unrequited (and unwanted) “best defender” of Castro has been to attack left critics of the Havana regime. And whether acknowledged or not, number one on their enemies list has always been the Spartacist League.

Like all apologists for bureaucratic anti-working-class regimes, the SWP finds distortion and downright lies more convenient than honest debate. Thus in a recent speech on “Cuba: Twenty Years of Revolution,” SWP national secretary Jack Barnes disingenuously equates the SL with right-wing social democrats:

“There were quite a few people who considered themselves socialists but didn’t recognize the Cuban revolution as a socialist revolution They were known as the Young People’s Socialist League (YPSL). They have modern-day clones like the Spartacist League....”
—*International Socialist Review*, February 1979

Of course, Barnes is well aware that “State Department socialists” of the YPSL stripe supported the Bay of Pigs invasion and were hypocritically “neutral” during the October 1962 missile crisis, while the SL and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the SWP, never hesitated in defending the Cuban Revolution against imperialism.

In another instance an editorial introduction to a collection of writing by Joseph Hansen, *Dynamics of the Cuban*



TASS

Fidel Castro with Soviet party chief Nikita Khrushchev at 1963 May Day celebration in Moscow. American SWP claims there is no bureaucratic caste in Cuba similar to the Stalinist apparatus in the USSR. Yet from the outset political power has been held tightly by the narrow layer of Castro supporters in the government apparatus, and the Communist Party was created to consolidate that hold.

Revolution, pretends that the RT characterized Castro’s Cuba as capitalist:

“A tendency in the IC [International Committee] led by Gerry Healy of the Socialist Labour League in Britain insisted that the lack of a mass Trotskyist party in Cuba meant that the state was capitalist. A minority if the SWP led by Shane Mage, Tim Wohlforth and James Robertson held a similar view, as did the French section of the IC.”

Again, it is no secret to the editors of Pathfinder Press that the Revolutionary Tendency *rejected* Healy’s position and held that the 1960 nationalizations marked the overthrow of Cuban capitalism.

Why does the SWP resort to such slander and falsification? This is not hard to fathom. It is a simple matter to demonstrate that the bourgeoisie no longer rules in Havana; it is far more difficult to reply to Spartacist arguments that the Castro regime is characterized by the Stalinist traits of bonapartist-bureaucratic rule at home and a nationalist foreign policy. Curiously, nowhere in Hansen’s book does he even mention the definitive position of the RT (upheld ever since by the international Spartacist tendency), namely that Cuba has become a *deformed workers state*.

As early as December 1961, in a resolution submitted to the convention of the SWP youth group, the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), the Revolutionary Tendency wrote:

“Taken as a whole, the process going on today in Cuba is that of the formation of a deformed workers state – that is, the creation of a society like that which exists in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China.”

–Shane Mage, “The Cuban Revolution,” reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 8 (Cuba and Marxist Theory)

A year and a half later, at the July 1963 SWP convention, the differences on Cuba were succinctly stated in counterposed international resolutions by the Dobs-Hansen leadership and the RT. The majority wrote:

“9. The appearance of a workers state in Cuba – the exact form of which is yet to be settled – is of special interest since the revolution there was carried out under a leadership completely independent from the school of Stalinism. In its evolution toward revolutionary Marxism, the July 26 Movement set a pattern that now stands as an example for a number of other countries.”

–“For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement,” reprinted in SWP Education for Socialists bulletin *Marxism vs. Ultraleftism*

While the SWP tops were enthusiastically whooping it up for Castro, always keeping one eye cocked toward their recruitment rate, the minority analyzing the Cuban Revolution from the standpoint of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, arrived at a very different conclusion:

“13. The Cuban Revolution has exposed the vast roads of revisionism upon our movement. On the pretext of defense of the Cuban revolution, in itself an obligation for our movement, full unconditional and uncritical support has been given to the Castro government and leadership, despite its petit-bourgeois nature and bureaucratic behavior. Yet the record of the regime’s opposition to the democratic rights of the Cuban workers and peasants is clear: bureaucratic ouster of the democratically-elected leaders of the labor movement and their replacement by Stalinist hacks; suppression of the Trotskyist press; proclamation of the single-party system; and much else. This record stands side by side with enormous initial social and economic accomplishments of the Cuban Revolution and of the deformed workers’ state which has issued therefrom. But Trotskyists cannot give confidence and political support, however critical, to a governing regime hostile to the most elementary principles and practices of workers’ democracy, even if our tactical approach is not as toward a hardened bureaucratic caste.”

–“Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International,” reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9 (Basic Documents of the Spartacist League)

This still stands today, a decade and a half later, as a fundamental characterization of the Castro regime and the attitude of Trotskyists toward it.

The Cuban question, moreover, was no secondary issue for the SWP leadership or the Revolutionary Tendency. According to *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*, “A common position on the Cuban revolution was part of the growing area

of political agreement that led to the reunification of the Fourth International in 1963, after a split lasting ten years.” But while Dobbs and Hansen joined Ernest Mandel to found the United Secretariat (USeC) on the basis of applauding Castroism, the RT was expelled from the SWP on frame-up charges of “disloyalty.” Thus it was over the issue of Cuba that the SWP’s break with Trotskyism took place, and the Spartacist tendency represents the continuity of those who fought against this betrayal from a Marxist perspective.

For years the SL was locked in national isolation in the U.S. while it was taboo in the USeC to refer to Cuba as a deformed workers state. In 1973 a small Revolutionary Internationalist Tendency in the U.S. (with supporters in Australia and Canada) did so, and it too was summarily expelled (see *Spartacist* No. 23, Spring 1977). Nevertheless history marched on, and as Castro abandoned all support to guerrilla adventures abroad, clearly subordinating his foreign policy to the détente aims of the Kremlin while continuing bureaucratic repression domestically, many would-be Trotskyists found themselves pushed willy-nilly toward the conclusion that Stalinism held sway in Havana. This has led recently to a notable upsurge of interest in Spartacist literature on Cuba. And as the USeC’s 11th World Congress approaches, with the Cuban question actively under discussion, it will be impossible for intellectually honest militants to avoid confronting the uniquely consistent revolutionary program of the iSt.

The Formation of the Cuban Deformed Workers State

For a fuller exposition of this analysis we refer our readers to the SL’s *Marxist Bulletin* No. 8 on “Cuba and Marxist Theory.” Here we will only sketch some of the key elements, expose the SWP’s cowardly slanders and point out the general methodological significance of the Spartacist position on Cuba for the broader programmatic question of the deformed workers states that arose following World War II (Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, etc.).

The most comprehensive exposition produced by the RT, “Cuba and the Deformed Workers States” by Tim Wohlforth, stressed the *qualitative* difference between workers states of the soviet or commune type and the deformed/degenerate workers states. In the former case the proletariat rules through its own democratic representative institutions (workers councils – soviets – or their equivalent) and revolutionary party. In the latter case, even though it requires the collectivist property relations of the dictatorship of the proletariat, a bonapartist regime controls the state apparatus, excluding the working class from exercising power.

In the USSR it took a Thermidorian³ political counter-

³ On 9 Thermidor (in the French revolutionary calendar), or 27 July 1794, conservative elements in the French Revolution carried out a coup d’état, arresting and executing Robespierre and other leaders of the radical Jacobin faction which had led the Revolution at its height. While the coup of Thermidor represented a counter-revolution in the political sphere, it did not overturn the social gains from the triumph of the bourgeois revolution.

revolution for the bureaucracy to achieve its domination, while in the deformed workers states the usurpation of power existed from birth, due to the absence of the working class as and active force in those revolutions. This absence was the result not of chance but of bloody repression: in China the proletariat was atomized by Chiang Kai-shek's police, in Cuba it was terrorized by Batista's torturers and disciplined by the gangster union leader Mujal. The RT stressed that a petty-bourgeois leadership based on a peasant guerrilla force could not have played such an independent role if the workers had been mobilized. Instead there would be a clash, as in Vietnam where in 1945 the Stalinist-led guerrillas joined the imperialists in massacring the Trotskyist leadership of the Saigon workers uprising.

In contrast, for Hansen and the USec workers democracy is merely *normative*, an ideal which is approximated in differing quantitative degrees by all existing workers states: Lenin's Russia was very good, Stalin's Russia was very bad, Castro's Cuba is pretty good, Ho's Vietnam is not so good, etc. So in the first place if there are no "institutions of proletarian democracy" in Cuba, don't worry, Castro has popular support and perhaps soviets will turn up later. And if the Trotskyists of the POR are arrested and their newspaper suppressed, do not overrate its significance; after all, it could be worse (e.g., Stalin's Gulag), and with a little pressure and advice, perhaps Castro himself could be won over. The SWP ignores the decisive question of *power*, pretending that if there are no organs of proletarian democracy there is a vacuum; but if the workers don't rule directly, then someone else must. In Cuba that someone is Castro and his bonapartist clique.

One of the specific characteristics of the Cuban revolution was the initial lack of a clearly defined bureaucratic caste. On the rare occasions when the SWP spokesmen have polemicized against a deformed workers state characterization of the Castro regime, this is one of their main pieces of "evidence" as to its supposed "democratic tendency." Such arguments carry no weight, however, for rather than being embodied in a Stalinist "party," state power was clearly in the hands of Castro and those sections of the governmental apparatus headed by his closest associates (the agrarian reform agency INRA, directly administered by Fidel in the early years; the reorganized Revolutionary Armed Forces commanded by Raúl; Guevara's Ministry of Industry). Nevertheless, the fact that a ruling bureaucracy was only in the process of formation made Cuba far more open to the intervention of Trotskyists than any other deformed workers state.

This fact was clearly recognized by the RT. The Wohlforth document called for "a considerably different strategy and tactics than that which we would apply to a more stable (relatively) deformed workers state such as China." And the document "Notes on the Cuban Discussion Within the Revolutionary Tendency" (April 1963) by James Robertson argues that:

"... the program of political revolution for Cuba ought to be given a transitional formulation (e.g. 'Make the Government Ministers Responsible to and Removable by Workers' and Peasants' Democratic Organizations')... While this advantage for proletarian intervention is, or more likely was, transient, it should not just

be written off but tested out in practical agitation as the Cuban BLA'ist Trotskyists [the supporters of J. Posadas's Latin American Bureau] were doing in their press up to the time it was closed down."

—*Marxist Bulletin* No. 8

Particularly from late 1959 through mid- 1962, there were important opportunities for such intervention. K.S. Karol notes the appearance of a number of mass organizations during the revolution:

"There was the Militia, the symbol of a whole nation under arms, the various Committees for the Defense of the Revolution [CDR]; the ANAP (National Association of Small Farmers); the revolutionary trade unions; and many others."

—*Guerrillas in Power: The Course of the Cuban Revolution* (1970)

The CDRs were set up in September 1959 to provide a system of collective vigilance against counterrevolution. The militia was a volunteer army of 150,000 workers organized after the October 1959 crisis in the Rebel Army provoked by the attempted uprising by Huber Matos. In the unions, the *mujalista* top leadership had been purged and replaced by July 26 Movement supporters.

For a short time it would have been possible to call for a government responsible to these mass organizations while struggling for full workers democracy within them (right to tendency, democratic elections, delegates recallable at any time). However, by spring 1960 the old-line PSP Stalinists had already put a hammerlock on the labor federation, the CDRs were soon subordinated to the G2 (army intelligence) and the militia were turned into a civil defense organization (with rifles locked up) after some popular disturbances in the summer of 1962.

Who Defended the Cuban Revolution?

Of course, the SWP leadership did not argue that the minority was passing up opportunities to mobilize the masses in struggle for workers democracy and an internationalist policy in Cuba. On the contrary, their "arguments" amounted to the charge of "slamming all doors" on Castro and the vile slander that the Trotskyist opponents of Castroism "didn't defend the Cuban Revolution."

So just how did the RT supposedly fail to defend Cuba against Yankee imperialism? First, it seems that it was guilty of the crime of calling on the SWP's *Militant* to "campaign for proletarian democracy in Cuba" during early 1961, at a time when the Bay of Pigs invasion was being prepared and launched. Here is Hansen's indictment:

"Had the *Militant* opened a 'campaign' for proletarian democracy at that precise time it would not only have made it difficult to differentiate our position from that of the counterrevolution, it would have facilitated the slanderous charge that we were acting as a 'left cover' for the counterrevolution; and, as a matter of fact, in view of the need for centralism in facing the attack, the Cuban workers would have had good cause to consider such a campaign at that precise time as a 'criminal act of sabotage against the revolution'."

—"What the Discussion on Cuba is About" (May 1961),

reprinted in *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*

Is that so? In other words, since the POR was campaigning for proletarian democracy in Cuba in the spring of 1961 it was *correct* to shut down their paper?! We recall that Stalin made the same charges against the Trotskyists at the time of the Moscow Purge Trials. Would the SWP care to argue that the Fourth International committed a “criminal act of sabotage against the Russian Revolution” because it continued to call for political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy even at the time of Hitler’s attack?

That brings us to the second item in the SWP’s slanderous charge that the revolutionary minority in the party did not defend Cuba against imperialist attack: the missile crisis of October 1962. In “Cuba – The Acid Test” (November 1962) Hansen mocks the insistence by the International Committee (IC – led by Healy’s Socialist Labour League [SLL] after the departure of the SWP) that rockets were not the way to defend the revolution. But although his article is sprinkled with quotes from the SLL’s *Newsletter*, Hansen does not even *mention* the IC statement on the crisis, “Defend the Cuban Revolution.” That declaration clearly stated:

“The working class of the world must act to prevent the Cuban revolution from being crushed. Such action must be independent of the policies of Khrushchev and the Soviet bureaucracy. Their line off peaceful co-existence designed only to preserve their own privileged rule by diplomatic deals, is opposed to the spread of the Cuban Revolution and to independent workers’ action, which are the only guarantees of Cuba’s defense. Installation of Soviet missile bases in Cuba is not for the defense of the Cuban Revolution, but part of the diplomatic game of Khrushchev.”

–*Newsletter*, 3 November 1962

Furthermore, the Revolutionary Tendency, which was in general political solidarity with Healy although disagreeing with the SLL position that Cuba was still a capitalist state, sent its own declaration on the October crisis to the SWP leadership. In addition to requesting that the *Militant* publish the 3 November IC communiqué, and that the political committee adopt its political line as a “starting point of a campaign for international working-class solidarity with the Cuban revolution based on the establishment of workers’ democracy in Cuba,” the RT declaration stated:

“The Cuban revolution is now at its hour of greatest peril. The result of the round trip of the Soviet mis-



Bolivian officers pose with body of Che Guevara in Bolivia. Guevara was hunted and assassinated by the CIA using Cuban *gusano* (counterrevolutionary) agents. A generation of young Latin Americans went into the hills inspired by the Cuban example and Guevara’s theories of guerrilla warfare. Yet peasant guerrillas were no match for Yankee imperialism’s mobilization. Rather than providing revolutionary leadership, Mandelites pseudo-Trotskyists tailed after Castro/Guevarists. Key to defeating the imperialists and defending Cuba is mobilizing the working class for international socialist revolution.

siles has been to make a deal between Khrushchev and Kennedy at the expense of the Cuban people no longer merely a perspective but an immediate threat ...

“In this situation the duty of the Trotskyists toward the Cuban revolution only *begins* with demonstrations of sympathy and support for Cuba.

“The decisive point in the political line in defense of the Cuban revolution against *all* its enemies is explicit denunciation of the counterrevolutionary role of the Stalinist bureaucracy *in the concrete instance of Cuba*. The Cuban revolution cannot be defended by arms *under the control of Kremlin bureaucrats whose only interest is to turn the revolution to the service of the Russian foreign policy, including selling it out entirely if the price is right....* The false policy of the Castro leadership, its political bloc with the Stalinists, has gravely undermined this defense.”

–“Declaration on the Cuban Crisis” (30 November 1962), in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 3, Part I (The Split in the Revolutionary Tendency)

And the SWP leadership – how did they defend the Cuban Revolution? In the *Militant* coverage at the time of the October crisis they criticize neither Castro (of course) nor Khrushchev (except for keeping the presence of the missiles secret!). Moreover, in a now-famous letter, from long-time SWP leader James P. Cannon to Farrell Dobbs, dated 31 October 1962, Cannon listed the conditions Khrushchev agreed to and then asked:

“What else could he have done under the given circumstances?....

“Those who judge otherwise should tell us what alternative course the Kremlin should have followed on the military and diplomatic fronts at that excruciating point of decision.

—reprinted in *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 35 No. 16, July 1977

But we thought that Trotskyists were supposed to put forward a revolutionary program, not advise the Stalinist bureaucracy on how to protect its interests!

The actual course of the SWP at this point was not toward becoming “left” advisers of the Stalinists, but rather in the direction of pacifist capitulation to the U.S. bourgeoisie. This is made quite clear in Cannon’s letter, which talks repeatedly of “Washington’s evident determination to go the limit.” But the dramatic evidence of which way these ex-Trotskyists were heading came a year later when John F. Kennedy was shot down in Dallas. The accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, had been a member of the SWP-led Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and the hysterical bourgeois press was portraying him as a Castro agent. So what did the SWP do? The answer is well-known; it fired off a telegram of condolences to the widow of the No. 1 imperialist, the man responsible for the Bay of Pigs invasion and the threat of nuclear war unleashed during the October missile crisis. Some defense of the Cuban Revolution!

IMT Guerrillaists Turn Against Castro

Interestingly, the current discussion on Cuba within the United Secretariat was raised not by the reformist SWP-led wing, the former Leninist Trotskyist Faction (LTF), but by the centrist International Majority Tendency (IMT) led by Ernest Mandel, who not so long ago was a vociferous cheerleader of Guevarism. From 1969 through 1977 these two groupings in the USec were at each other’s throats over a series of issues, beginning with a supposed “turn” toward guerrillaism by the Mandelites in the late 1960s. The majority had taken the OLAS Conference in Havana (July 1967) as the tocsin for a new wave of Cuban-backed guerrilla struggles throughout Latin America. Instead, as one IMTer wrote ruefully a decade later, “OLAS was the requiem of the Castroite current” (Pablo Rojas, “El centrismo de ‘tipo castrista’ en América Latina,” *Combate* [Sweden], February 1977.

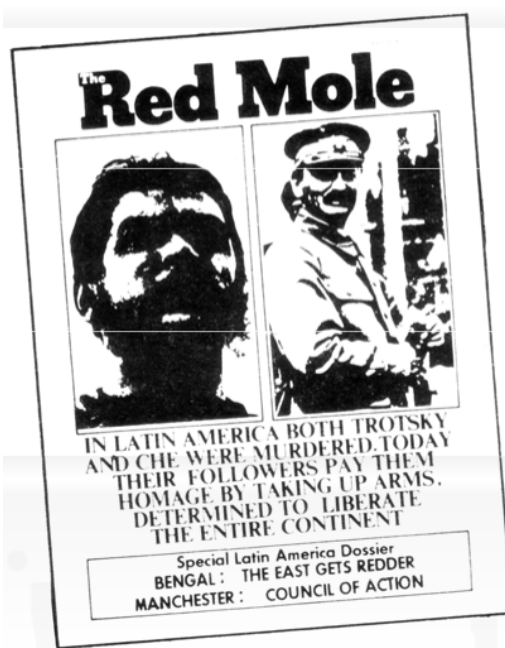
Consequently, the IMT guerrillaists never received the hoped-for material aid from Cuba, and every one of their guerrilla ventures turned into a disaster. In Bolivia a joint effort with remnants of Guevara’s ELN to establish a *foco* not far from the capital of La Paz was nipped in the bud by the army, leading to many deaths; the survivors abandoned the Usec to throw in their lot with the ELN. In Argentina the official section of the United Secretariat, Roberto Santucho’s PRT, became so enthusiastically committed to the “guerrilla road” that it, too, left the Usec in favor of mainstream Castroism. (However, on the military plane, despite some spectacular actions in the early 1970s, the PRT was impotent in the face of Videla’s 1976 coup; and politically

Castro was more interested in good relations with the Peronist government than in supporting a Trotskyoid guerrilla outfit.)

So with nothing but unmitigated defeats on the balance sheet of its “armed struggle” line, and in the more sedate mid-1970s atmosphere of the popular front (as contrasted to the heady Guevarist ambiance following May ’68), in late 1977 the IMT wrote a “self-criticism” arguing that the Usec had missed the boat by taking up guerrillaism too late. But having been burned badly, they went on to question their own previous line on Cuba as well:

“The first source of these errors lies in the fact that at the time (and this is still partially true today) we lacked a *complete* and *correct* view of the *real* lessons of the Cuban revolution....

“...we did not clearly oppose the incorrect lessons drawn from the Cuban revolution by the great major-



Back when Ernest Mandel & Co. reveled in vicarious guerrillaism. Then some of their supporters tried to put it into practice, with disastrous consequences.

ity of the Latin American vanguard....

“Che’s departure from Cuba in 1966 reflected a qualitative change in this relationship of forces within the Cuban leadership. We did not understand this. *That was the second source of our errors of analysis during the Ninth World Congress.*”

—“Self-Criticism on Latin America,” in [SWP] *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol 13, No. 8, December 1976

And in an off-hand, by-the-bye remark, the IMT document casually refers to “the role of the bureaucratized workers states (especially China and Cuba at the beginning) – thereby pointing to a major revision in the program of the USec ever since 1963. Moreover, in a recently issued draft resolution on Latin America for the upcoming 11th World Congress of the USec, the new “majority” of the United Secretariat – obviously under pressure from the ex-IMT –

refuses to take a position on Cuba.

In arguing that the Cuban Revolution has degenerated, the Mandelites' biggest problem has been to fix the turning point. They are constrained both to find a major event and to explain why they missed its significance at the time. So their solution has been to come up instead with a whole series of "bending points" (*points d'inflexion*)!

According to a "dossier" on "Cuba 20 Years Later" published by the French LCR, the first of these "bending points" was the "big turn of the 'economic debate'" of 1963-65. It will be recalled that Ernest Mandel participated in that debate supporting "Che" Guevara's utopian Stalinist economic model based on "moral incentives" against the pro-Moscow Stalinists insistence on material incentives (see "Radical Egalitarian' Stalinism: A Post Mortem," *Spartacist* No. 25, Summer 1978). It seems, according to the Mandelites, that there was also a second debate, "limited to small circles of the leadership," concerning socialist democracy and "internal deepening of the revolutionary process" (*Rouge*, 29 December 1978). Of course, the author concedes that the importance of this turn was hidden by certain factors, such as the fact that Castro implemented Guevara's program up until the disastrous 1970 sugar harvest.

The LCR places a second "bending point" in 1968, in the foreign policy of the Castro regime. Until that "right turn," the Mandelites see the Cubans as pursuing a revolutionary internationalist policy in Latin America; however, following the defeat of Guevara's adventure in Bolivia, Castro increasingly followed the straight Moscow line. The first evidence is, of course, his support for the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, later followed by political endorsement of the "anti-imperialist" generals in Peru, of Torrijos in Panama, of Allende's peaceful road" to bloody counterrevolution in Chile, of Mengistu's "red terror" against Guevarists in Ethiopia.

The Mandelites leave unmentioned the support of both Castro and Guevara to the populist regime of João Goulart in Brazil prior to the 1974 coup and their discouragement of guerrilla struggle by peasants in the explosive Northeast during the Goulart period. The LCR "dossier" makes much of the 1975 meeting of Latin American Communist Parties, which did not mention any of Castro's erstwhile guerrillaist followers and endorsed Soviet-line détente. But they don't mention that the Cuban government all along sought an alliance with the pro-Moscow CPs, with disastrous results in the case of Che's Bolivian fiasco. The third "bending point" is the reappraisal of economic management following the failed Ten Million Ton sugar harvest. Suffice it to say that for the SWP's Harry Ring, this "turn" marked a new struggle against bureaucratism (see Part I of this article, page 21)!

One thing should be noted about the former International Majority Tendency's talk of a "bureaucratized" workers state in Cuba. This is part of a new trend on Mandel's part to replace standard Trotskyist categories with precise meaning by vaguer concepts having no necessary programmatic consequences. Thus after much haggling between IMT and LTF over electoral policy toward

recent popular fronts in Europe, in which the Mandelites at first denied that the French Union of the Left was indeed a popular front (as they did with the Allende UP in Chile), now they talk vaguely of "class-collaborationist coalitions." Similarly with the "bureaucratized" workers states: this term does *not* imply, in current Pabloist usage, a call for political revolution. This subterfuge was first used by the IMT for China at the USec's Tenth World Congress.

The SWP, however, has resisted the attempt to revise the line on Cuba set down in the founding documents of the United Secretariat. They know, first of all, that this could shake the whole delicate house of cards by putting the foundation into question. Commenting on the IMT's "self-criticism," the SWP's Barnes reacted sharply on only one point:

"To my knowledge, at the time of the 1963 reunification of the Fourth International, there was total agreement on this analysis of Cuba.... So to revise our analysis of that sequence...is to revise a common position, codified in the reunification documents and never challenged in written form from inside the international.

"...what I consider to be one of the biggest errors contained in the IMT Self Criticism document: that is, recasting the history of the Cuban revolution.

—The Meaning of the IMT Steering Committee's Self-Criticism on Latin America," *IIDB* Vol. 14, No. 5, May 1977.

The other reason is that Barnes correctly senses the Spartacist spectre haunting any reopening of the Cuban question....

Fidelistas in Grey Flannel Suits

The SWP does not presently feel under pressure to abandon its Cuban left cover, either from the American bourgeoisie or for its factional maneuverings in and around the United Secretariat. While Carter is still holding off on diplomatic recognition, the Cubans have long since abandoned any support to struggles against dictatorships in Latin America, and a wing of American liberals (Vance, Andy Young, the National Council of Churches) even consider Castro as a "stabilizing" factor in Africa. In the USec a "live and let live" truce has been arranged in which all controversial topics are simply avoided in their documents and each wing is soft on the Stalinists of its former colonial possession (the SWP on Cuba, the French LCR on Vietnam), as a reflection of a certain level of sympathy for them in liberal or moderate left circles respectively.

So the SWP will occasionally get carried away in its paeans to the tamed heroes of yesteryear, occasionally reaching grotesque proportions which openly deny their by-now purely verbal Trotskyist heritage. Thus in his speech on the twentieth anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, Jack Barnes proclaimed:

"At the 1961 convention of the SWP, Morris Stein, one of the experienced veteran leaders of the party, explained to a minority grouping inside the SWP that was opposed to recognizing the realities of Cuba that the Castro leadership was superior to the Bolshevik leadership, once you leave aside Lenin, Trotsky,

Sverdlov, and people like that.”

–*ISR*, February 1979

One wonders why, if this is so, Trotsky even bothered to build the Third International, not to mention the Fourth which began on a far narrower base of recognized and tested leaders. For that matter, why does the SWP call itself Trotskyist anymore if the Castroites are so superior?! Or there is the absurd counterpoint, such as another remark in the same speech:

“The Castro leadership began their struggle not by taking up arms, but by doing something we emulated twenty years later – they filed a suit against the government. When Batista made his coup in 1952, Fidel went to court.”

So with that kind of “pick up the constitution” rhetoric we catch a revealing flashback to the SWP in the mid-1960s, *Fidelistas* in grey flannel suits!

The critics of Castroism within the USec ranks do not have much to recommend them: former armchair guerrillas who tired of the “struggle” (the would-be Régis Debrays who never made it out of Paris) or the academic house critics of the SWP, kept in reserve for a future social-democratic realignment with the OCI. In contrast the international Spartacist tendency has one simple but very powerful weapon: an authentically Trotskyist program which has proved itself with the test of time. The iSt alone continues to stand on the lessons it drew from the Cuban Revolution more than a dozen years ago:

SWP: Witness for the Prosecution

In Defense of the Cuban Trotskyists

The following article was published in Workers Vanguard No. 225, 16 February 1979.

Recently, Socialist Workers Party (SWP) leader Jack Barnes took the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the overthrow of Cuban dictator Batista to deliver paeans of praise to the Castro leadership, described as “superior to the Bolsheviks” except for a few individuals like Lenin and Trotsky. But for the Cuban *Trotskyists*, the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR), Barnes had nothing but condemnation:

“Unfortunately, in Cuba Trotskyism was misrepresented by a group that followed a cult leader named Juan Posadas. Their specialty was passing out leaflets demanding a march on the Guantánamo naval base, while the Cubans were trying to consolidate the revolution. They denounced the leaders of the revolution for not being socialists....

“...the Fourth International lost an opportunity to influence the Cuban leadership as much as it could have because of the character of the Cuban organization that called itself Trotskyist. This resulted, in part, from an unnecessarily long and brutal split in the Fourth International. This split...blocked the international leadership from using its full strength to influence the Cuban Trotskyists.”

In other words, too bad they couldn’t shut up the POR! But Castro beat them to it, closing down the Trotskyist press and

“Movements of this sort [peasant-based guerrilla warfare] can under certain conditions, i.e., the extreme disorganization of the capitalist class in the colonial country and the absence of the working class contending in its own right for social power, smash capitalist property relations; however, they cannot bring the working class to *political* power. Rather, they create bureaucratic anti-working class regimes which suppress any further development of these revolutions toward socialism. Experience since the Second World War has completely validated the Trotskyist theory of Permanent Revolution which declares that in the modern world the bourgeois-democratic revolution can be completed only by a proletarian dictatorship supported by the peasantry.”

–Declaration of Principles of the Spartacist League” (1966), *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9

Thus the Spartacist analysis of Cuba overcomes the central problem that has confronted Trotskyism with the rise of the deformed workers states since World War II. Recognizing that under highly exceptional circumstances petty-bourgeois forces – even those not originating in Stalinism – can be *forced* to overthrow capitalism, nevertheless we point out that the bonapartist regimes they throw up remain roadblocks to extending and deepening the revolution. Only through workers political revolution, led by a Trotskyist vanguard party, can this roadblock be removed.

eventually jailing its leaders. Barnes said not a word about this Stalinist repression in his speech.

Even as the POR militants were being slandered, censored, harassed and imprisoned in the early 1960’s, the SWP turned its back on them as proof of its ‘sincerity’ in abandoning Trotskyism to embrace the Castro regime. It was left to the Spartacist tendency, itself just expelled from the SWP after characterizing Cuba as a bureaucratically deformed workers state, to champion the defense of these courageous fighters against Stalinist domination of the Cuban Revolution (see “Freedom for Cuban Trotskyists!” *Spartacist* No. 3, January-February 1965.)

Our vigorous publicity about the plight of the victimized Cuban Trotskyists caused the SWP no little embarrassment. SWP theoretician Joseph Hansen, “replying” to the anti-Trotskyist diatribes of veteran Cuban Stalinist Blas Roca, complained that “There were few campuses where the violation of the democratic rights of the Posadas group was not thrown at defenders of the Cuban Revolution” (*International Socialist Review*, Summer 1966). But Hansen was not the only one to take the Spartacist League to task for defending the POR. In a smear pamphlet entitled *What Is Spartacist?* (1971), Tim Wohlforth, then a hatchet man for Gerry Healy’s “International Committee,” accused the SL of making an unprincipled bloc with Posadas. The proof? In

the above-mentioned *Spartacist* article the Cuban Posadistas were “referred to over and over again as ‘Trotskyist’”; the article did not attack them politically; and in a subsequent issue we printed a letter from the British Posadas group “warmly” thanking us for our principled defense of their imprisoned Cuban comrades.

So who were these much-maligned militants, whom Blas Roca labeled “agents of imperialism,” Che Guevara denounced as “working against the revolution,” Hansen called “ultraleftists” and Wohlforth/Healy termed “extreme revisionists”? We can begin with Barnes’ charge that their “specialty” was calling a march on the Guantánamo base. This accusation originates with Guevara, who in a September 1961 interview with U.S. academic Maurice Zeitlin claimed that the POR “agitated there for the Cuban people to march on the base – something that cannot be permitted.” Interesting, this slander was refuted by none other than Barnes’ mentor, Joseph Hansen! While criticizing the POR as “overly critical” of Castro, he wrote:

“We have not seen any material printed by the Cuban Trotskyists calling for a ‘march’ on Guantánamo. At a youth conference in Havana in the summer of 1960, where this charge was first made to my knowledge, a leaflet was cited. The leaflet in question, however, contained nothing on this point but a repetition of the demand that the U.S. should withdraw from Guantánamo.”

—*Militant*, 9 April 1962

The POR, which was formed shortly after the fall of the Batista dictatorship, claims that “...we were the first ones, from 1959 on, to struggle for the establishment of the proletarian state in Cuba, nationalizing all the enterprises of foreign imperialism and of the national bourgeoisie and allying ourselves with the socialist camp, at a time when the Stalinists PSP [Partido Socialista Popular] was calling this proposal a ‘provocation by imperialist agents’” (*Voz Proletaria*, August 1963). This was confirmed by Blas Roca, replying to a *Spartacist* supporter on a student tour of Cuba in the summer of 1964: “In 1959 they were calling for soviets in Cuba. This would have provided imperialism with the excuse to attack our revolution as ‘Communist.’” As we remarked in *Spartacist* No. 3, “Strange excuse from a presumably Communist state leader!”

In the Zeitlin interview, Guevara accused the POR of calling on the Cuban workers to “exert pressure on the government, and even to carry out another revolution in which the proletariat would come to power.” While, in the articles of their newspaper available to us, the Cuban Trotskyists did not definitely label the Castro regime a deformed worker state, they did point to its bonapartist character and called for measures which amounted to a political revolution to establish soviet democracy. Moreover, they did so in a manner which sought to take into account the initial absence of a hardened bureaucratic caste, which was only then being formed. Thus following the late 1960 nationalizations which expropriated the Cuban bourgeoisie the POR proposed:

“...we ought to fight day by day for immediate measures of revolutionary democracy, such as:

“Organization of administrative council in the cooperatives, formed by the peasants themselves.

“Formation and putting into action the Technical Advisory Councils in factories and industries, set up the revolutionary government, as an immediate step toward administration by workers councils...”

–“Restructuring the workers’ militia through the unions and workplaces.”

The POR also called for a national congress of democratically elected delegates of the central union federation, and freedom to organize for all tendencies defending the revolutionary conquests.

However, despite the assurances of Castro apologists like Hansen that the Cuban government “has guaranteed freedom of expression to all groupings that support the revolution” (“The Character of the New Cuban Government” [July 1960], reprinted in Hansen’s *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution*), tolerance of Trotskyist criticism did not last long. The government soon began to adopt the visceral anti-Trotskyism of the pro-Moscow PSP, whose services they sorely needed to consolidate the new state apparatus. As a result the POR press was closed down and publication of Trotsky’s writings brutally halted by physically smashing the printing plates.

This did not silence these valiant militants, despite their tiny number and the threat of even more drastic repression. Thus a year later, they boldly intervened at the August 1962 congress of sugar cooperatives with a manifesto endorsing the government’s plans to transform the cooperatives into state farms but also demanding:

“...to assure the democratic, proletarian and revolutionary functioning of our workers state it is necessary to organize councils of workers and peasants, elected by the masses in their centers of work, to be directing bodies which name all of the functionaries of the workers state, and through which the masses make their voice heard, discuss, approve, reject and decide all the problems of the state.”

—Quoted in Robert Alexander, *Trotskyism in Latin America* (1973)

In response to such heresy, the government arrested two POR members for distributing the leaflet. Two days later a POR meeting in Guantánamo called to commemorate Trotsky’s assassination was banned. Subsequently police raided POR headquarters and arrested the group’s general secretary, Idalberto Ferrera, and another comrade, who were released several days later.

Still the Cuban Trotskyists stood their ground. When a delegation of North American students arrived in the summer of 1963, the POR walked up to the hotel where they were staying and distributed a leaflet saluting their “revolutionary initiative in traveling to socialist Cuba and defending our revolution against all the imperialist standers,” while also calling upon the students to “...tell the whole truth about our situation: that socialist democracy must go forward, allowing all revolutionary tendencies, including the Trotskyists to function with full democratic rights...” (*Voz Proletaria* No. 32). When the student delegation met with Guevara, he justified suppression of the Trotskyists’ freedom of expression: “They are more revolutionary than anyone, but they do nothing and criticize everything. We do not

allow public criticism by those who are not connected to the Revolution..." (AFP dispatch, quoted in *Frente Obrero* [Montevideo], 23 August 1963).

In November 1963 the Castro regime finally moved in to crush the pesky POR. Five leading comrades were arrested, held incommunicado for months and then sentenced in secret trials to two-to-nine years imprisonment for the 'crimes' of distributing an illegal paper, advocating the overthrow of the Cuban government and being critical Fidel Castro. Were they indeed "unconnected to the Revolution," as Guevara charged? The first to be arrested was Andrés Alfonso, a revolutionary unionist since before 1959 who fought in the underground against Batista, a member of the militia and the Committees to Defend the Revolution (CDR). Also arrested was his companion, Florida Fraga, also a member of the militia and an activist in the Cuban Federation of Women, whose father died a revolutionary martyr in the anti-Batista struggle. When Ricardo Ferrera went to inquire about Florida, he was himself arrested. Ricardo had fought with the Rebel Army since age 16 and was a militia officer, a CDR member and "Vanguard Worker." The revolutionary credentials of the Cuban Trotskyists speak for themselves.

In response to this vicious repression, the SWP maintained a criminal silence. Even the POR's international mentors advocated softening their revolutionary intransigence: Posadas wrote them that "you must intervene more flexibly and didactically in the internal and external problems of the Cuban socialist revolution" (from *Voz Obrera* [Mexico], January 1964). But in the face of intense pressure from all sides to capitulate, the Cuban comrades stood firm even in jail, conducting classes in Marxism for the other prisoners. Their resolute spirit can be seen in a letter by Andrés Alfonso:

"The struggle against imperialism is completely clear and well-defined, but the struggle against the bureaucracy is harder and more arduous, because this bureaucracy is bathed in the garden of the revolution and covers itself with the protective mantle of Marxism-Leninism: it is the hidden enemy of the revolution with a near-Marxist phraseology, socialist in words and chauvinist in deeds, as Lenin always put it so well."

—from *Voz Obrera* [Lima], August 1964

The campaign to free the jailed Cuban Trotskyists received support from a number of trade unions, including Bolivian miners and Argentine sugar workers, as well as various left and student groups. In the U.S., the Spartacist group took the lead, while the SWP, *during the entire time of their incarceration*, maintained absolute silence in their press. During a 1964 student tour of Cuba, a Spartacist supporter again challenged Guevara over the suppression of the POR. "Che" could only reply with the hackneyed slanders. In contrast to the SL's principled stand, when challenged in a public meeting, SWP leader Barry Shepard remarked cynically, "There are Trotskyists and there are Trotskyists. But if I were in Cuba, I wouldn't be ar-

rested." Only three months after the POR militants were released in April 1965 did the SWP press even mention the arrests, and even then it attributed their freeing to "the struggle...by the Fidelista leadership against bureaucratism" (*World Outlook*, 25 June 1965)!

As for Juan Posadas, he was indeed a revisionist whose tailing after "militant Stalinism reached increasingly bizarre and even comical proportions as the years wore on. Thus starting with the supposed imminence of a third world war as propounded by Michel Pablo, secretary of the Fourth International the early 1950's, Posadas concluded that it was necessary to call for a Soviet nuclear first strike. Trying to relate this thesis to an architectural congress in Havana in early 1974, some Latin American Posadista delegates argued that it was useless to talk about building new structures that would all be destroyed inside of four to five years as a result of atomic devastation!

As we noted earlier, the Cuban Trotskyists had political weaknesses. Thus they did not have a fully elaborated analysis of the Castro regime as a deformed workers state, although their program called, in substance, for political revolution to replace the Stalinist bureaucracy with the proletarian democracy of soviets. The POR also reflected certain aspects of Posadas' revisionism, notably in its support to the Mao-Stalinist regime in China and the references to a 'socialist camp' – a form of apology for the ruling bureaucracies of the Sino-Soviet bloc.

In terms of specifically Cuban events, the POR's principal weakness was a softness on guerrillaism and initially toward Guevara. However, unlike the SWP, Posadas, Mandel and the other ex-Trotskyists who gave explicit political support to the Castro regime, the POR comrades had one cardinal virtue: courage of their convictions. Although they eventually signed a statement renouncing the Fourth International in order to obtain their release, the POR militants had fought a valiant battle against Stalinist domination of the Cuban Revolution, isolated from the comrades internationally and facing mounting bureaucratic repression.

The disgusting behavior of the SWP, acting as witness for the prosecution against the Cuban Trotskyists, recalls the treachery of that earlier renegade from Trotskyism, Michel Pablo, who in the early 1950s refused to defend the Chinese Trotskyists jailed and even murdered by Mao. They were, said the Pabloists, "refugees from a revolution," because they continued to fight for a Trotskyist leadership. More recently, the French Mandelites have made excuses for Ho Chi Minh's massacre of the Vietnamese Trotskyists. The repression of the POR marked a watershed for the Cuban Fidelistas, it accompanied the Stalinization of the regime as it fused with the pro-Moscow PSP; for the SWP it provided definitive proof of their complete degeneration into Pabloism, their willingness to sacrifice the most elementary principles of revolutionary morality in whitewashing the crimes of popular Stalinist heroes.

Stalinist Show Trial in Cuba

The Execution of General Ochoa

The following article was published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 500, 29 April 1990, including a clarification published in the following issue, *WV* No. 501, 4 May 1990..

“The Revolution struggles, too, not to destroy any who have been its children.... Struggles so that any man can be corrected, so that any revolutionary who makes mistakes can rectify them.... The Revolution is patient, and tolerant, and it tries to help comrades and not destroy them.”

—Fidel Castro, 13 March 1966

“Did Ochoa have the opportunity to save himself?...If the man had sincerely repented, there might have been arguments against his execution and even against his being sent to prison.... There were moments when the Revolution could be, and was, generous without hurting itself. Today, the Revolution cannot be generous without really hurting itself.”

—Fidel Castro, 9 July 1990

Last June 14, Division General Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez was arrested in Havana, Cuba on charges of corruption and misuse of funds. Two days later, the charges were raised to include dealing with international drug traffickers and possible drug smuggling. On June 24, General Ochoa was brought before a military tribunal of honor composed of 47 top generals and admirals of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR).



General Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez

Stripped of his rank and honors, on June 30 Ochoa was placed on trial together with a group of officials of the Ministry of Interior (MININT) headed by Colonel Antonio de la Guardia.

After a trial that lasted three days, Arnaldo Ochoa, Tony de la Guardia and their two top aides were sentenced to death; ten others were sentenced to jail terms of up to 30 years. The day after the military court’s verdict, the sentences were appealed to the Cuban Supreme Court, which immediately rejected the appeal. The next day the council of State met and confirmed the sentences. The sentences, the appeal, its rejection and confirmation of the death penalties were all reported on July 10 in the Cuban daily *Granma*, and on July 13, barely one month after the first accusations appeared, the executions were carried out by firing squad.

This drumhead trial and rapid execution were unprecedented in Fidel Castro’s Cuba. This was the first time that leading government officials were subjected to capital punishment. For that matter, since 1959 not even a counterrevolutionary *gusano* has been executed in Cuba. But in this case, General Ochoa was the former head of the Cuban military mission in Angola and one of the very few FAR officers to receive the award of Hero of the Revolution. Ochoa had also headed the Cuban military mission in Ethiopia and Nicaragua, commanded the Western and Central armies in Cuba as well as the Havana district, and was slated to become commander of the key Western region. He was sent to Venezuela to aid the guerillas in the early 1960s. He fought with Fidel and Raúl Castro and Che Guevara in the Sierra Maestra against the Batista dictatorship.

Arnaldo Ochoa was truly a child of the Cuban Revolution. Tony de la Guardia came from an upper-class Havana family and had worked in the MININT



TASS

Fidel and Raúl Castro with Soviet party chief Mikhail Gorbachev in Havana, April 1989.

since 1960. After 18 years in the elite Special Troops, he was appointed head of Department Z (later changed to MC) which was in charge of circumventing the U.S. embargo by obtaining goods on black markets around the world. His brother Patricio, also convicted in the affair, was a brigadier general in the Interior Ministry, headed the MININT mission in Angola while Ochoa headed the FAR there, and was head of Cuba's Special Troops in Chile, with Allende right up to the coup. With such prominent Fidelistas on trial, the whole country sat slugged to their seats as testimony was broadcast over TV. Walls in Havana were painted with "8A" (in Spanish, "ocho-a"), in support of the popular general.

The Ochoa case, "Case 1/89," was a classic Stalinist purge of the top levels of the ruling bureaucracy, complete with show trial, abject confessions and an appeal by the defendant that the maximum penalty be applied against him. It was followed by Case 2/89, in which the chief defendant was Interior Minister Division General José Abrantes. Altogether eight MININT generals as well as a number of colonels and majors were jailed, fired or resigned, including the heads of the intelligence department, customs, immigration, border police and deputy heads of the political department. Also jailed in a linked "morals" case was the vice president of the council of ministers, Transportation Minister Dioceses Torralbas, formerly a Comandante of the Revolution and head of FAR air defense.

So the top echelons of the police apparatus were cleaned out. This was followed in the fall with a check of Communist Party cards, with 400,000 members interviewed, 6,000 disciplined and 2,000 expelled. The Ochoa case became the centerpiece of the Castro brothers' "rectification" campaign. In his 1999 July 26th speech, Castro declared that because of Cuba's geographical location – "ninety miles away from the most powerful empire on earth," or even "two millimeters away...right here at the Guantánamo naval base" – the party "can make no mistakes that will weaken it ideologically." And shortly after the Ochoa execution, Cuba banned the Soviet publications *Moscow News* and *Sputnik* as antisocialist.

With Washington increasingly aggressive in its provocations, and Cuba increasingly isolated as a result of the international crisis of Stalinism, the Castro regime is hunkering down. Yet as itself a bureaucratically deformed workers state, Cuba is experiencing many of the same pro-capitalist social pressures as East Europe and the Soviet Union. Beyond the individuals involved, Cases 1 and 2/1989 showed a petty bourgeois bureaucratic layer prone to corruption and ready to cut personal deals with the capitalist enemy. As a Stalinist, Castro's only answer is to intensify moral/ideological exhortation and police repression while seeking to appease imperialism. Under siege, the regime is showing a bunker mentality, congenitally alien to workers democracy and proletarian internationalism, the regime espouses a nationalist ideology which is a caricature of "barracks socialism."

Ochoa, the Castros and the Angolan War

These are some of the effects of the Ochoa trial, which signaled the most serious internal crisis in the three decades of Castro's Cuba. But what brought it on? What were the charges, the evidence? We have to say from the outset that *we don't*

know what happened. We weren't there, and we only have one side of the story to go on: the prosecution's case and the "confessions." And the main defendants were summarily shot.

When General Ochoa was arrested, he was accused of corruption, essentially dealings on the Angolan black market. During the "trial," the prosecutor claimed Ochoa and his aide Captain Jorge Martínez (also executed) were selling sugar in order to get dollars to deposit in a Panamanian bank account. Ochoa said they changed dollars into local currency to buy materials to build an airport in southern Angola. This was a real triumph; they built an airfield to handle jet fighters in just seven weeks. This was key to providing air cover for Cuban and Angolan troops that defeated the South Africa apartheid invaders at Cuito Canavale. If Ochoa turned to the black market to get what he needed, when he needed it, that's hardly a crime.

The charges over black marketeering are dubious in the extreme. Ochoa is accused of selling sugar and buying elephant tusks; he replies that tusks were freely sold like television sets on the market. Of course: money was worthless, trade was reduced to barter, the Cubans had surplus sugar, the Angolans had tusks. And the total amount that the prosecutor claims was deposited in the Panama account (which Ochoa denies was personal) was a piddling \$46,000. In answer to the charges that he purloined \$160,000 from the Nicaraguans intended for grenade launchers, Ochoa replied he couldn't get them so instead he sent 2,000 grenades, costing as much or more. *And the Nicaraguans weren't complaining.* As for charges of greed and corruption, Ochoa says to the military court, "those who know me and know how I live are aware that I've never been selfish or that I have anything." And no one contradicts him.

The black market charges are all window-dressing, as Fidel Castro's July 9 speech before the Council of State shows. He starts off his diatribe by attacking Ochoa at length (more than 4,500 words!) over *disagreements they had over military policy* in Angola. But Ochoa *wasn't charged with anything* concerning these disputes. What were they about? Castro has blamed the Soviets for seriously overextending the Angolan army in the south, making them vulnerable to a devastating South African counterattack. From his remarks, he evidently saw Ochoa as siding with the Soviets. Who was right? We only have Castro's account. Cuban forces did eventually win a major victory in southern Angola, defeating South African forces at Cuito and then driving them back to the Namibian border. And it is clear from Castro's dispatches that he ran the military campaign out of Havana.

But that in itself tells a lot about the Castro regime. The commander in chief dictated battlefield instructions in minute detail from 5,000 kilometers away. This is how Stalin and Hitler directed their armies. And sometimes they were right. In North Africa, Rommel kept begging Berlin to send more fuel so he could chase the British to Cairo, but Hitler saw that for all the brilliant general's exploits, this was essentially a harassing and delaying action. Stalin managed to stiffen quite a few local commanders' backs through sheer terror, as the Red Army held out against tremendous odds. But that was only after he brought the Soviet Union to the brink of defeat; his collapse following the Wehrmacht's June 1941 Blitzkrieg attack, his criminal trust in his pact

with Hitler, and his bloody purge of the Soviet general staff *cost millions of Soviet lives*.

Ochoa's real crime was evidently that he talked back to *El Jefe* and to his immediate boss, Raúl Castro. Before the military tribunal of honor, Raúl absurdly accuses Ochoa of being a wiseacre, claiming it was "difficult to discern his real thinking under his constant joking"! According to American journalist Julia Preston, in a televised speech General Castro said that 'people raise complaints against the commander-in-chief... more than ever' and that Ochoa complained of "lousy decisions" made in the Angolan war ("The Trial that Shook Cuba," *New York Review of Books*, 7 December 1989). For his part Ochoa "confesses" to the Court of Honor:

"One begins by uttering grunts when given an order and ends up thinking that everything that comes from the high command is wrong. And along that path one begins to think independently and come to believe that it is one who's right..."

So the general was "guilty" of "independent thinking."

Fidel Castro declares to the Council of State that in carrying out internationalist missions, "it is inconceivable to allow any military chief, however bright or capable, to have the power to make strategic decisions...and, on many occasions, the power to make important tactical decisions." These powers are the purview of "the leadership of the Party" (Fidel) and "the High Command of the Revolutionary Armed Forces" (Raúl). With such a megalomaniacal view from the Castro brothers, it's easy to see how Ochoa feel afoul of his superiors."

Ochoa, the Castros and the "Drug War"

So what about various other charges against Ochoa? Some were just unsubstantiated character assassination playing on Stalinist prudery, such as the talk of sex sandals: "street gossip included tales of wife-swapping, sex with a mistress" 13-year-old daughter, and arranging for Cuban lovelies to travel to Angola as *internacionalistas* to service the soldiers," reports *Cuba Update* (Fall 1989). And despite much speculation in the U.S. press—emanating from former Cuban general Rafael del Pino, who defected in 1987—no evidence has emerged to support theories that Ochoa was the leader of a pro-Moscow wing of the military which supported perestroika reforms, and that there was a power struggle with Defense Minister Raúl Castro.

But the accusation that General Ochoa was involved with drug traffickers and covered up the existence of a drug-smuggling ring operating out of the Ministry of the Interior is a different kettle of fish, some of them pretty rotten. That there was such a ring, headed by Tony de la Guardia, is af-



General Ochoa, standing to right of Fidel Castro, during 1971 visit to Salvador Allende's Chile.

firmed not only by Castro but also by the U.S. government, which had infiltrated it. And while the prosecutor and the Castros assiduously conflate the MININT ring with Ochoa, all agree that he made contact with the Colombia cocaine mafia through the de la Guardia brothers. About sending his aide Martínez to meet with Medellín cartel kingpin Pablo Escobar, Ochoa said, "of all the outrages I committed, to me this is the most serious. I haven't the slightest doubt of it."

The de la Guardia ring was apparently identical with the embargo-busting Department MC. Because of the clandestine nature of their work, they could count on the cooperation of their customs and border guard MININT colleagues, no questions asked. Because they dealt with shady figures, capable of smuggling goods out of the U.S., they necessarily came in contact with drug and arms traffickers. Over the years, they doubtless accomplished much for Cuba. But they got too chummy with some of their more dubious contacts and that evidently developed into drug smuggling in conjunction with Miami-based *gusanos*. Over three years, the MC ring ran a series of drug transshipments through Cuban waters and the military airport at Varadero, totaling several million dollars.

Even by the prosecution's account, Ochoa never carried out any drug deal. He says he planned not to run drugs through Cuba, but to reinvest money in Cuban tourism which a friend would launder in Panama for drug operations via Mexico. Such an arms-length arrangement would be safer, he figured, than de la Guardia's "two-bit operation." However, in the course of his negotiations, Ochoa sent Martínez to Medellín, Colombia where he met with Pablo Escobar. (The latter didn't need money laundering; he was more interested in anti-aircraft missiles.) And two of Escobar's people were brought to Cuba for negotiations together with de la Guardia. Castro and the prosecutor both ask what would have been the consequences if Martínez had been arrested in Colombia. Ochoa commented on "the political implications of all this for Cuba":

"While the commander in chief was saying that we

were not involved in drug trafficking, we were involved in drug trafficking, that we were negating what the commander had said, I think nothing can be more serious. We jeopardized the position of the homeland.”

In arguing for “an exemplary punishment and the most severe sanction,” Fidel declared: “they were drastically weakening our defenses, they were depriving us of our moral weapons. They were presenting to the enemy, on a silver platter, the possibility of collecting evidence to discredit Cuba. What would revolutionary Cuba be without international credibility?”

Gangsters like Pablo Escobar are plenty unsavory; the private armies of the Medellín cartel have killed several *thousand* leftists in Colombia, repeatedly massacring peasants and assassinating Communist Party politicians. And it is stupid in the extreme to get entangled in an enterprise where the CIA has long been deeply involved. Drug trafficking has a long and sordid history – recall the Opium Wars of the last century, where British imperialism squeezed gold from the addiction of millions of Chinese. The harm wrought by the Medellín cartel’s trade is magnified into a far greater social evil by criminalizing drug use, and by the militarization associated with the “war on drugs.”

Before the 1959 revolution, Havana’s image was sin city, playground of the mafia, whorehouse of the West. The Fidelistas took a moralistic stance drawn from guerilla military discipline, traditional Stalinist Puritanism and the heavy weight of Catholicism in Cuban society. Castro’s regime made much of its repressive measures against supposed evidence of “capitalist degeneracy” as homosexuality. (In early years, homosexuals were jailed in Castro’s Cuba, now AIDS victims are quarantined.) This is the hypocritical and oppressive “morality” of capitalist society, which communists oppose.

However, the phony “drug war” is at the moment the central refrain in Washington’s drive to repress the ghetto population and labor at home and to intervene militarily as a gendarme in Latin America. A member of the Cuban Council of State observed, “The United States could have been able to prepare armed aggression against Cuba under the pretext of repressing drug trafficking” (*La Jornada* [Mexico], 12 July 1989). This is certainly true, but it hardly justifies summary execution.

“His Pure and Noble Children”

The real charge is treason, but of what? The prosecutor spelled it out in his summation. “It is clear that over and above any technicality of a legal nature,” he says, “Ochoa’s greatest offense is having betrayed his people.” “The first person Ochoa betrayed was precisely Fidel,” he continues. “Ochoa knew better than anyone that he was betraying a symbol, a history of honesty never clouded by a lie. By making an attempt against Fidel’s credibility, Ochoa—and with him the rest of the accused—stuck a knife in the back of the country and the people. Fidel is our voice, he is our representative, to whom we turn in difficult times....”

In short, General Ochoa is accused of betraying...Fidel. Just as Castro identifies himself with the leadership of the

party, and his brother with the leadership of the army, here El Líder Máximo is equated with Cuba, with the Revolution. Even the vile prosecutor in the infamous Moscow Purge Trials, the former Menshevik Vyshinsky (who as a minister for Kerensky in 1917 issued an order for the arrest of Lenin), had to be more circumspect in identifying Stalin with the Soviet Union. But the methodology is the same: because the *Vozhd* (Leader) is *the Revolution*, therefore failure to obey, much less opposition, is treason. To drive this home, Castro had 47 brigade and division generals and admirals put on the “tribunal of honor” as a loyalty oath implicating them personally in the execution.

And in every other respect, “Case 1/1989” eerily recalls the Stalinist show trials of the 1930s. Ochoa rebukes his defense attorney for even raising the question of motivation, declaring, “I didn’t want to go into explanations that might look like justifications.” Most sinister were the references to Ochoa’s children, his “pure and noble children” as Raúl referred to them in a menacing demand that Ochoa cooperate in his public testimony. This was clearly the operational point: his “confession” in exchange for a guarantee in open court of his family’s safety. And this is given by Fidel saying that the “noble and generous” Revolution “will never discriminate against the children of the culprits.”

To the military Court of Honor, Ochoa declares: “I know I betrayed the homeland—and I tell you in all honesty, treason is paid with one’s life.” And if he is shot, he adds, “My last thought will be for Fidel, for the great Revolution he has made for his people.”

They Would Have Loved the Moscow Trials

Leftist admirers of Castro fell all over themselves in justifying the Ochoa trial. Debra Evanson, president of the National Lawyers Guild, declared it was ‘neither a sham nor a ‘show’ trial,’ since confessions were evidently given voluntarily and at times “the defendants even appeared eager to clarify the facts and events for the court....” She would have loved Bukharin on the stand, or Zinoviev. “Although time was obviously extremely short,” she notes – right, *two days between being charged with treason and going on trial!* – still, “defense layers had opportunities to review the evidence gathered by the investigators and to interview their clients.” Of course, she adds, “culpability was not an issue in this case,” since they all confessed *Cuba Update*, Fall 1989).

The reformist Socialist Workers Party, among Fidel’s most shameless apologists, praised the executions. Shooting Ochoa was a “resolute response” for which “working people everywhere owe a debt of gratitude to the Cuban government and army.” They also applauded “Cuba’s decisiveness in confronting the scourge of trafficking in drugs” (*Militant*, 11 August 1989). Back in 1987, the SWP opposed extraditing Nazi war criminal Karl Linnas to the Soviet Union because he might face execution for his crimes as commandant of an Estonian death camp. Another “scapegoat” the SW wanted to protect from execution was former SS butcher of Lyon, Klaus Barbie, who helped the U.S. hunt down and murder Che Guevara. These armchair Fidelistas save their civil libertarian concerns for fascists.

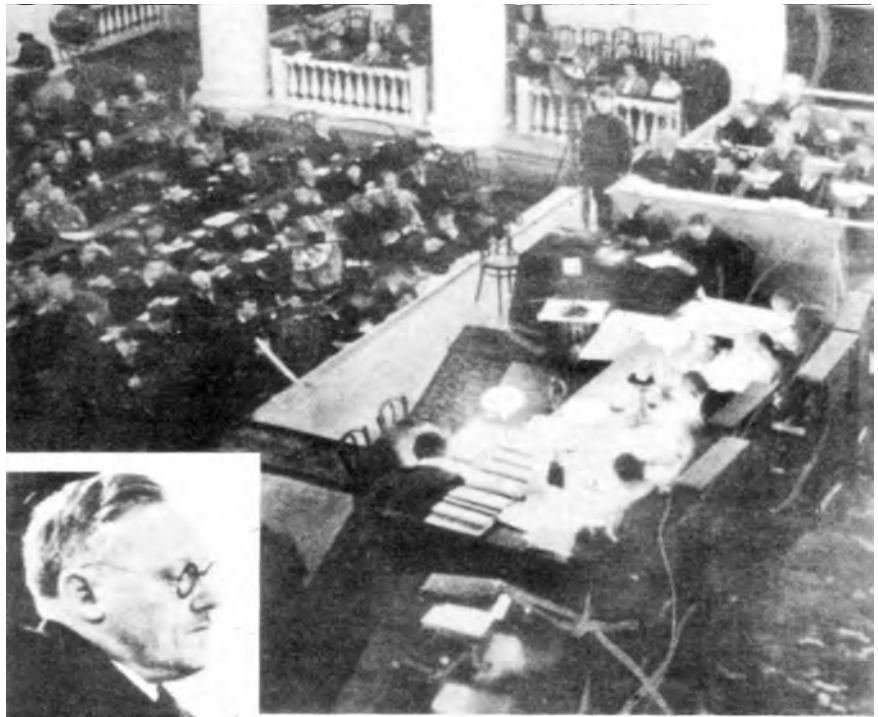
Some of the less gung-ho Castro backers among ostensible

Trotskyists are more queasy about the trial. Janette Habel, a follower of Ernest Mandel, declares that “Ochoa was probably crushed by his own hammer.” She sees in reports of abuse of power, embezzlement, special clinics, and distribution of TVs, VCRs, cars and even yachts to the Cuban *nomenklatura* evidence of “a conflict between the Castroist leading nucleus and its supporters and the new generation of technocrats and officials, often influenced by Moscow.” Habel rejects any analysis that “equates the Cuban leadership with the bureaucratic dictatorships of the East European countries,” because the Castro group “has not come out of a bureaucratic apparatus, even if, through their method of functioning, they have produced one” (*International Viewpoint*, 13 November 1989). Yet Ochoa and de la Guardia were both from the Castroite Old Guard.

As the Spartacists have repeatedly noted, the “Castro group” has run a Stalinist bureaucratic regime from the moment it became a deformed workers state almost three decades ago, although it took a while to congeal. And this has always included attempts to find a *modus vivendi* with the U.S. In this same vein, *Ochoa and the others were executed in an effort to appease Yankee imperialism*, by offering up a sacrificial lamb. Shortly after the trial, Castro made a well-publicized offer to the U.S. to join its “war on drugs.” With typical imperialist arrogance, the Bush administration refused on the grounds that it would lend him legitimacy. “He has turned to the United States for a life preserver,” said chief customs cop William von Raab. “I feel we should throw him an anchor.”

The claims by Washington that Castro was in on the drug dealing, claims repeated by Julia Preston in her *New York Review of Books* article, are absurd on the face of it. More than that, they are blatant war propaganda. In 1985, Castro declared: “I state categorically that not a cent of drugs money has entered this country, and I know of no case in the 26 years of the revolution of any official being involved in the traffic.” Asked by Maria Shriver of NBC in February 1988 if the Colombian drug cartel has ever trafficked drugs through Cuba to the U.S., Castro answered, “Never. Never! We are the country that has fought against drugs most systematically in this hemisphere.” It would be disastrous to stake Cuba’s “credibility” and “prestige” on such statements if they were known to be false. For Castro to lie about this would be to invite an invasion.

It is not that Castro cannot tell a lie, or that Stalinist regimes never run drugs. The key factor is Cuba’s situation as an island just off the U.S. coast. Unlike Burma, for example, the Caribbean is dominated by the American Navy. If Castro were to go in for drug trafficking, Washington would be sure to use this as an excuse to move militarily on him, and Cuba would have trouble holding out as a fortress surrounded by the enemy with no means of military resupply. Moreover, the Medellín cartel are an unsa-



In the infamous Moscow Trials of the late 1930s, prosecuted by Andrei Vyshinsky (inset), Stalin exterminated the old Bolshevik cadre.

vory, untrustworthy and very right-wing bunch. So objectively speaking, it looks powerfully politically inexpedient for the Cuban government to have dealt in drugs. One can therefore reasonably take Castro at face value on these questions.

Washington financed its Nicaraguan contra terrorists through drugs-for-guns trades, brokered by Cuban *gusano* traffickers, and for years kept their anti-Communist “secret armies” going by ferrying opium out of Southeast Asia. Yet today they see same Yankee imperialists wave the banner of a “war on drugs” to justify their interventionism in Latin America. It would surprise no one if their next attempted in invasion of Cuba is conducted under the same pretext. But trying to placate the U.S. rulers with a blood purge of some wayward officers can only whet their reactionary appetites. Washington demanded that Castro prove his seriousness by handing over Admiral Aldo Santamaría, former head of the Cuban navy, and Fernando Ravelo-Renedo, Cuba’s ambassador to Nicaragua, for a frame-up “trial” like they are about to give General Noriega.

Any harm done to the defense of Cuba by Ochoa and the de la Guardia crew is far exceeded by the damage inflicted by Castro himself by legitimizing the Yankee war cry. Like sharks, the smell of blood sends the imperialists into a feeding frenzy. As the bureaucratically deformed Cuban Revolution devours its own children, Castro’s program of clamping down on potential internal dissent and corruption with heightened repression, reinforcing ideological “purity” through Stalinist “rectification” campaigns, and offering to cooperate with imperialism in a “common war” on drugs is a recipe for disaster. The urgent need is instead for waging a class war together with the working people of Latin America and North America against their common capitalist-imperialist oppressors. ■

Soviet Pullout: Set-Up for U.S. Attack

Defend Cuba!

The following article was published in Workers Vanguard No. 535, 27 September 1991.

The collapse of Stalinism in the Soviet Union has sharpened the voracious appetites of U.S. imperialism around the globe *and now directly jeopardizes the Cuban Revolution*. Begging for some paltry crumbs of U.S. “aid,” Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev has given Washington a green light to drown defiant Cuba in blood. The announced pull-out of Soviet troops and cutoff of Soviet aid to Cuba is a betrayal and a set-up for an American attack. As we already warned in our statement, “Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!” (WV No. 533, 30 August): “Cuba, in particular, is in Bush’s cross hairs, and its defense is more than ever a duty of all opponents of Yankee imperialism.”

After meeting in the Kremlin with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, on September 11 Gorbachev announced at a joint press conference that Moscow would in the “near future” withdraw its military contingent from the Caribbean island and end subsidies to Cuba. This far-reaching step was announced without any warning to, much less consultation with, Havana. After the U.S. brought the world to the brink of nuclear Armageddon with the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, several thousand Soviet soldiers and military technicians had remained in Cuba as a trip wire for a Soviet response in case of Yankee invasion.

Denouncing Gorbachev’s stab in the back, on September 13 the Spartacist League held an urgent solidarity demonstration to “Defend Cuba!” outside Cuba’s mission to the U.N. in New York. Spartacist supporters carried placards demanding, “U.S. Killer Cops of the World, Keep Your Bloody Hands Off Cuba!” “U.S. Out of Guantánamo!” “Vietnam Was a Victory – Two, Three, Many Defeats for U.S. Imperialism!” and “Cuba in Peril – High Time for Socialist Democracy.” The Trotskyist SL has from the outset ardently defended Cuba against imperialism, fighting for international workers revolution: other placards carried at the demonstration read, “Stalin’s ‘Socialism in One Country’ Undermines Defense of All Workers States” and “For Socialist



Bettman Archive/Corbis

Women troops of the Territorial Militia march on May Day 1981 in Havana. Trotskyists stand for unconditional military defense of Cuba against imperialism and counterrevolution.

Revolution Throughout the Americas!”

“The American ruling class and its depraved *gusano* henchmen want to bring back gangster-ridden capitalism to Havana,” said a Spartacist spokesman, adding: “The revolution lifted the Cuban working people from the degradation, racism and grinding poverty they suffered under the Batista

dictatorship, the U.S. sugar barons and the Mafia syndicate. Today the Cuban population has medical care and education superior to that in U.S. cities. If the capitalist bloodsuckers return, all that the Cuban people have built in the last three decades will be wiped out. It is our duty, the duty of all opponents of Yankee imperialism, to make clear their stand in solidarity with Cuba in this crucial hour.”

In contrast, a host of self-proclaimed socialists claim to stand in solidarity with Cuba, yet most of these reformists just lined up with Yeltsin’s counter-coup in Moscow, which set the stage for Soviet abandonment of Cuba!

For over 30 years, Washington has tried to roll back the Cuban Revolution – through invasion, assassination, and a decades-long economic blockade intended to starve the Cuban people into submission. On the heels of its invasion of Panama and the hideous slaughter of the Iraqi people, the U.S. is out to impose its “New World Order” on Cuba, 90 miles off the coast of Florida. While U.S. rulers from Democrat Kennedy to Republican Bush have railed against Havana “exporting revolution,” in reality the Castro regime, following the Stalinist line of building “socialism in one country,” counseled the Chilean and Nicaraguan masses not to embark on the road of a “second Cuba.” But all attempts to appease vindictive U.S. imperialism are doomed to failure.

With each Soviet capitulation to imperialist blackmail, from rollback in East Europe to support for the Persian Gulf slaughter, the imperialists up their demands. U.S. rulers are still smarting over their Bay of Pigs fiasco, in April 1961, when Cuban workers mobilized to crush Kennedy’s CIA invasion. Counterrevolution against Cuba is a pathological obsession of U.S. imperialism, which views the Caribbean, indeed all of Latin America, as its “backyard.”

In the wake of Gorbachev’s announcement, Bush’s ranting threats against Fidel Castro have come almost daily. At the United Nations the U.S. president declared Cuba the “lone holdout in an otherwise democratic hemisphere.” Salvadoran death squads, Nicaraguan contras on the loose, butcher Pinochet still running the Chilean army, while millions of Latin American children starve and hundreds of thousands suffer from cholera in a hemisphere held in debt bondage to the imperialist banks – this is the “democracy” that godfather Bush praises.

Cuba’s “Zero Option”

While the size of the soon-to-go Soviet brigade is small compared to the battle-hardened Cuban armed forces of almost 200,000, and almost that many again in the reserve Territorial Militias, their “symbolic” value was that if the United States invaded the island, they would have to kill Soviet soldiers. When Khrushchev provided Cuba with substantial military aid in 1962 to combat CIA-sponsored guerrillas in the Escambray mountains and placed Soviet nuclear weapons and bombers on Cuban soil, the U.S. imposed a naval blockade on the island and threatened to seize Soviet ships. Khrushchev backed down and removed the missiles, but the brigade stayed and the USSR sent substantial economic and military aid to Cuba.

Up to now over three-quarters of Cuba’s imports (including most of its oil) have come from the Soviet Union. While the CIA estimates of a \$5 billion annual Soviet “subsidy” are surely exaggerated, the combined effects of guaranteed Soviet-bloc purchases of Cuba’s sugar crop at 40 cents a pound (while the “free market” price hovered around 8 cents), and stable oil supplies at well below world market prices (one-third the OPEC price per barrel in the late 1970s), set the basis for economic planning and development providing the Cuban working people with a higher standard of living and social services far superior to those available to working people elsewhere in Latin America.

But Soviet oil prices were raised during the ’80s, and then last year deliveries to Cuba were sharply cut back while the price paid by Moscow for Cuban sugar was lowered to 25 cents a pound (the same as paid by the U.S. and the European Common Market to their suppliers under quota agreements). This summer – at the G7 summit in London in July and at the Bush-Gorbachev summit in Moscow – the U.S. insistently demanded the Soviets abandon Cuba as the price for a few dollars in aid (i.e., capitalist penetration of the Soviet Union). When Gorbachev finally came across, even the *New York Times* (12 September) called his action “groveling.” Now Russian threats to impose world market prices on Cuban exports and to require that Cuba pay hard currency for imports spell disaster.

In response to the growing isolation of Cuba, Castro has been digging in his heels. For the past 18 months Cuba has been shifting production and consumption patterns to adjust for reduced imports. Termed a “special period in peacetime,” it is preparation to resist all-out economic war: bicycles instead of bus and taxi transport, oxen instead of tractors to pull plows and carts. There have been drills to rehearse a “zero option,” with drastic electricity cuts anticipating a cutoff of all oil imports.

As a result of the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Cuba is scrambling to find ways to earn hard currency and to import needed machinery, spare parts, medicines and oil. In the last few years, Cuba has been trying to turn away from its almost singular reliance on sugar exports by developing a tourist industry as a necessary evil to obtain crucial hard currency. (One result is “tourism apartheid,” with the socially destabilizing effects of a dollar economy on the impoverished island and revived prostitution.) Cuba is also utilizing its advanced medical services to export high-tech medical equipment and vaccines. A nuclear power system being built with the help of a thousand Soviet technicians was scheduled to come on line in early 1993, providing 30 percent of current energy needs, but its fate is now uncertain.

For Socialist Revolution Throughout the Americas!

In response to Gorbachev’s pullout announcement, the Cuban Communist Party daily *Granma* (14 September) published a front-page editorial complaining of Moscow’s unilateral “fait accompli”:

“It fills us with dismay and indignation to think that we are moving towards a world order in which small Third

World countries such as Cuba, whose social systems are not to the liking of the United States, will be forced either to submit or be obliterated ... a new age of barbarism, built upon the technological supremacy and the lust for world domination of the United States."

While vainly seeking to link withdrawal of the Soviet brigade with closure of the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo in eastern Cuba, and saying that "Cuba is willing to contribute to finding negotiated political settlements to regional conflicts" – as in Angola, where Cuban troops have been withdrawn after 15 years of fighting the South African apartheid army – the statement vowed: "Cuba will never agree to be handed over or sold to the United States. It will never return to slavery, and will struggle to the death to resist this."

But as the Castro regime battens down the hatches, it has taken on a real bunker mentality. Symbolic of a tightening of bureaucratic control was the 1989 prosecution and judicial murder of General Arnaldo Ochoa and his associates on charges of drug trafficking in a televised kangaroo court comparable to the infamous Moscow Trials of the 1930s (see "Stalinist Show Trial in Cuba: The Execution of General Ochoa," *WV* No. 500, 20 April 1990, see page 42 of this bulletin). This farce enormously damaged revolutionary morale, grievously undermining the defense of Cuba.

Compared to most Stalinist regimes, Castro's Cuba, directly under Yankee guns, has sought to counter imperialist pressure on it by supporting guerrilla struggles, sending doctors and teachers to Sandinista Nicaragua, etc. In addition to the *more than 400,000* Cuban men and women who fought and taught in Angola, ten times that number reportedly volunteered to go. As a result, internationalist appeals have a real resonance in Cuba. But Castro's various international efforts (some of them not so savory, like his support to the bloody Mengistu regime in Ethiopia) have always been subordinated to a strategy of seeking "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism and regional bourgeoisies.

The Cuban Revolution inspired a generation of radical youth throughout the Americas. Young New Leftists went to cut cane in Cuba on Venceremos Brigades. When Fidel Castro came to Harlem's Hotel Teresa in 1970, the black community came out to greet him. Robert F. Williams received refuge in Cuba when he was being sought for organizing armed self-defense of black people against racist terror in North Carolina. Former Black Panther Assata Shakur received political asylum in Cuba. But the Castro regime did not pursue an internationalist strategy of promoting revolution in the imperialist heartland.

Karl Marx pointed out a century and a half ago that unless communist society is extended internationally to the most advanced industrialized nations, an isolated workers state would be condemned to "want made general" – collectivized poverty. If the nationalist line of "socialism in one country" (a self-justification for the Stalin bureaucracy's attempt to protect its privileges by "renouncing" world revolution) brought the Soviet Union to bankruptcy, as Leon Trotsky warned it would, how much more absurd is it to think that Cuba can go it alone in building "socialism in one

island" in the jaws of the imperialist monster.

Anti-imperialist rhetoric and hunkering down won't be enough to defend the Cuban deformed workers state from the Yankee onslaught – whether a tightened embargo, a naval blockade of invasion. Today it is urgently necessary for all opponents of imperialism to mount an *international* defense of Cuba, through revolutionary struggle at home.

Workers Democracy to Defend Cuba

The Spartacist League from its inception as a tendency called for the defense of the Cuban deformed workers state while fighting for revolutionary workers democracy as opposed to the narrow bureaucratic rule of Castro's Stalinist regime. The first issue of *Spartacist* (February-March 1964) declared, "Defend the Cuban Revolution!" Even earlier, as the Revolutionary tendency in the Socialist Workers Party, we fought against the SWP leadership's praise of the Castro regime as "unconscious Trotskyists." The RT submitted a draft resolution to the SWP's 1963 convention noting Castro's suppression of the Cuban workers' and peasants' democratic rights, the imposition of Stalinist hacks on the labor movement and the proclamation of a one-party system, alongside the enormous social and economic accomplishments of the revolution:

"Thus Trotskyists are at once the most militant and unconditional defenders against imperialism of both the Cuban Revolution and of the deformed workers' state which has issued therefrom. But Trotskyists cannot give confidence and political support, however critical, to a governing regime hostile to the most elementary principles and practices of workers' democracy, even if our tactical approach is not as toward a *hardened* bureaucratic caste."

After 30 years in power, the Stalinist bureaucracy has hardened greatly, as shown lately by the Ochoa affair. Proletarian political revolution is necessary to replace the narrow rule of the Castroite elite with a deepgoing workers democracy in defense of the revolution.

Millions of Cubans are rightly proud of their revolution and defiantly say "socialism or death." Castro does not stay in power through bloody repression, but as a young student working two weeks as a volunteer in the fields told *Time* magazine, "We need a change, but from inside our system. We need to talk about our mistakes and find socialism inside socialism." The reporter noted, "these aren't assembly-line thinkers; they genuinely care about the gains of the revolution."

Genuine workers democracy not only would mobilize the Cuban masses in defense of their revolutionary gains, but is a necessary prerequisite to effectively run a planned economy. The best defense of Cuba is workers revolutions from the U.S. to Mexico and throughout Central and South America. We seek to mobilize the workers movement against the imperialist economic blockade of Cuba, to demand that the U.S. get out of Guantánamo, to defend the Cuban Revolution. U.S. hands off Cuba! For Trotskyist parties to fight for socialist revolution throughout the Americas! ■

New World Disorder and the Collapse of Stalinism



CUBA IN PERIL

We print below an edited speech by Jan Norden, at that time editor of Workers Vanguard and member of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League/U.S., at Columbia University in New York City on 10 September 1993. The speech was published in WV No. 585, 8 October 1993.

To talk about Cuba, we have to talk first about the Russian Revolution. Because you can't understand what's going on in Cuba today outside of the context of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, which is the crux of it.

The Russian October Revolution of 1917 led by Lenin and Trotsky was the key event of this century, a turning point in world history, when for the first time the working class, at the head of all the exploited and oppressed, took the reins of power on an internationalist program pointing to world socialist revolution. The Soviet Union which came out of that revolution, even after Stalin's usurpation of political power at the head of a conservative bureaucracy, was a determining factor in the struggles of the 1930s, of the Second World War, of the postwar colonial independence

movement. Soviet military strength and particularly its nuclear arsenal stayed the hand of the imperialists for 45 years of Cold War and so-called "détente." Today, in like fashion, the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucratic regime in August 1991 leading to the destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state has had and is having consequences throughout the world. The would-be masters of the world in Wall Street, the White House and the Pentagon crow of the "death of communism" and proclaim a "New World Order" dominated by the United States, with some "multilateral" cover from its appendage, the United Nations.

You can see this just by looking at the front page of today's papers, where we see two events that are a direct result of the collapse of Stalinism. On the one hand you have the bloody mass murder of a hundred or more Somalis, a truly wanton slaughter mostly of women and children, by U.S. helicopter gunships. This was billed as a "humanitarian" intervention to feed the starving Somali people, remember? – we said at the time this was hogwash – but it

**Bureaucratic Castro Regime at a Dead End – Defend
Cuba Against Imperialism and Counterrevolution!**

soon showed itself to be an effort to demonstrate U.S. power to its imperialist allies (as in the Persian Gulf War), and recolonize a part of Africa in the process. And on the other hand you have this “peace” agreement between the Zionist state of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Yasir Arafat’s PLO received considerable support from the Soviet Union and the Soviet client state of Syria, as well as from the Saudis and other Gulf “oildoms,” as we dubbed them. After the Gulf War against Iraq, which the U.S. never would have dared undertake as long as the Soviets were a factor, this all dried up. So now you have a “peace” of the oppressor, in which the PLO is to police the Palestinians on behalf of the Zionist masters, and paymasters. And it will be signed in Washington next week with Clinton as the godfather to this Pax Americana.

The Yankee imperialists feel they now have a free hand to go after all their enemies. And right at the top of their “enemies list,” as Nixon called it, whether there is a Republican or a Democrat in the White House, is Cuba. Three and a half decades after the revolution, American rulers are still so incensed at the effrontery of the semi-colony not just in its backyard but on its back doorstep overthrowing capitalism, and the fear that this could inspire revolution elsewhere in their Latin American neocolonial empire, that Washington is determined to strangle the island, which it is continuing to do with its draconian embargo. That was intensified last year with the passage of the Torricelli Amendment, which would never have been passed without the support of the Democrats. And they’re still squeezing.

Cuba is a key question for revolutionaries around the world, particularly in the U.S. and Latin America, and it has been a defining issue for the Spartacist tendency from our origins in the Revolutionary Tendency of the Socialist Workers Party. While the SWP was hailing Fidel Castro as an “unconscious Trotskyist,” the RT noted that his petty-bourgeois nationalist guerrilla movement, which originally sought to carry out a program of bourgeois-democratic reforms, saw itself forced to expropriate the capitalists, both foreign and domestic, as the only alternative to submission to or defeat by U.S. imperialism. And that while the origins of Castro’s 26th of July Movement were different from the Stalinist parties, the nature of the Castro regime and its political program were qualitatively the same as the Stalinist-ruled degenerated and deformed workers states. As we emphasized, the formation of a deformed workers state around late 1960 was due to a particular set of circumstances, including the simultaneous sharp hostility of the U.S. to a revolution on its back doorstep, and a hesitation to intervene for fear that it would spread through Latin America

So amid all the initial enthusiasm for Castroism on the left, the Spartacist tendency, based on a Marxist analysis, held that Cuba was a deformed workers state, which we unconditionally defend against counterrevolution and imperialism. And we have insisted that this narrow, nationalist, bureaucratic regime was a roadblock to extension of the revolution, that there has to be a proletarian political revolution in Cuba to open the way forward. If “socialism in one country” was a nationalist lie and an impossibility in the giant Soviet Union covering a sixth of the globe, the Castro-

Stalinist version of socialism in one small Caribbean island 90 miles from the most powerful imperialist power on earth is far, far more so. And now with the demise of the Soviet degenerated workers state, which provided three-quarters of Cuba’s trade and vital oil supplies as well as a military presence as a trip wire against U.S. invasion, the situation of Cuba has become precarious in the extreme.

In our article “May Day in Havana” in *WV* No. 576 [21 May 1993], we noted that the biggest threat to Cuba today is slow strangulation by U.S. imperialism’s starvation blockade. We wrote, “Isolated, the Cuban Revolution cannot survive: ‘socialism on one island’ has no future. The bureaucratic leadership of the Cuban deformed workers state is driven to seek accommodation, ‘peaceful coexistence,’ with ‘enlightened’ capitalism.” While calling for workers political revolution and a Leninist-Trotskyist party in Cuba, we emphasized that “only a perspective of workers revolution, of proletarian uprisings across Latin America and beyond, into the belly of the imperialist colossus, can offer a road forward to the Cuban masses.” Far more than ever, in this bleak situation the focus of defense of Cuba is *international*, particularly in Latin America, and it is an important task for revolutionaries in the U.S. The decisive aid is not just collecting medicines by various solidarity committees, though that is needed, but by struggle for proletarian revolution *here* and in the key industrial centers of Latin America – Mexico, Brazil, Argentina.

Cuba In Extremis

We recently returned from a two-week trip to Cuba, in which we traveled across the island, so I would like to give you some impressions of the situation in Cuba today. In the first place, it’s important to emphasize that this tiny island achieved the highest standard of living for the working class of anywhere in Latin America. The official statistics list a Gross Domestic Product of \$2,500 per person. That is roughly the same as Argentina, but you can’t directly compare statistics for a workers state with those for a capitalist country. For one thing, the level of inequality is immensely less in Cuba. You can just see that the working-class districts in and around Havana and Santiago de Cuba are much better off than the huge slums surrounding Buenos Aires.

And you see it in a host of statistics: infant mortality in Cuba is now down to 9.3 per thousand, less than New York City, and it has continued to fall during this severe economic crisis. The Cubans say proudly that despite all the shortages they haven’t closed a single hospital – compare that to Harlem and recall Sydenham Hospital. Life expectancy at birth is 72 years for men and 76 for women. The literacy rate of 96.2 percent is above that of the U.S.; 88 percent of school-age children go to secondary school; there is a huge number of university students and graduates, a majority of whom are women.

You could go on like this at length. Cuba had the second-highest food intake per capita in Latin America, with a calorie consumption of over 3,100 a day. Ninety-five percent of the population has electricity. With 22.5 percent of the workforce employed in industry (and another 16 percent in construction and transport), it was far and away the most

industrialized country in Latin America. With a 1988 industrial output per capita of \$1,335, Cuba was closer to the level of a backward European country, like Portugal (\$1,591), which many of Cuba's statistics are similar to. But all of a sudden, this country has been brutally thrown back into a pre-industrial period.

Today Cuba is now facing the most serious and critical moment since the revolution, something that everyone there understands. The situation is excruciating, because they are caught between the American blockade and the collapse of the Soviet bloc. People will tell you that from 1989 on, as the Soviet bloc began crumbling – with capitalist-restorationist governments in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and the capitalist reunification of Germany – they never thought they would even make it this far. Their attitude is, well, we're somehow here, but it can't go on.

The fact that Cuba has been able to hold out against this tremendous pressure is a direct result of the collectivized property. Take the question of energy and transportation. Due to the Soviet cutoff of oil to Cuba, energy supplies were slashed to about 30 percent of what they were. That meant a number of industries have been cut way back, and transport was effectively militarized. They imported more than a million bicycles from China, and Cuba started producing its own bikes. They also began manufacturing carts to serve as horse-drawn taxis – it's infuriating to see this forced regression to a pre-motorized state. And if you have to go further than a bicycle or horse and buggy will take you, you wait at a transport point. There is a policeman at each one of these points, and he simply flags down every passing state-owned vehicle – whether it's a flatbed truck, or a bus, or a little car – and it stops, and people are put on it. People often have to wait for two hours for long-distance transport, but it works and we saw very little discontent with that.

The blackouts when we were there were about eight hours a day per neighborhood. They went up to 16 hours a day in August when they shut down some industries altogether for vacation, although now they have been reduced again. It's put in the paper when you're going to have it. So some people we met, they had a blackout that afternoon when we were sitting there, and the mother of the family was saying how silly her sister-in-law was, who had defrosted the refrigerator that morning; if she had just read the papers, she would have had it defrosted for her that afternoon. Of course, given the paper shortage it is extremely hard to get a newspaper at all: they eliminated all of the dailies except *Granma*, cut them back to weeklies.

But what may become the focus of the crisis here is the question of food. Hungry bellies cast a lot of votes, as the Sandinistas found out in 1990. Whereas people will put up with a lot *if* they have a perspective, there's no prospect of it ending, and it is really, really bad – there is very little to eat. Here let me read you the ration list in Centro Habana: Bread – one roll a day. That's it. Rice – five pounds a month. Sugar – six pounds a month. Cooking oil – half a pound a month. Dried beans – ten *ounces* a month. Cigarettes – well, they have tobacco, so they get four cartons a month. Chicken – half a pound every two months, “*cuando llega*” (when it arrives). Eggs – 16 a month. Fish – two pounds a

month, that's the main source of protein, which they continue to get because Canada lets Cuba fish off Newfoundland. And milk is available for children up to the age of seven, but nobody else.

One scientist who we talked to was in his mid-30s, and he explained that it's not just the lack of food, but how demoralizing this is. He said, “Ten years ago, I would have never bought anything on the black market, I support the revolution. But you have a family, you have kids, so you go out and you buy some milk on the black market, and then you feel so awful. You just feel demoralized because you've done it.”

So what can be done about it? Well, a good part of the food shortage is a result of the fact that they decided, within the framework of COMECON, the Soviet bloc “common market,” to concentrate on sugar production and import food from the Soviet Union. But now that is gone. Cuba is a very fertile island, and has the capability of producing many foods. We saw a lot of brigades out building vegetable gardens in the workers' housing districts. One friend said he planted garlic in his patio, “Well, not really planted, I just threw the seeds there and within a few weeks it was flourishing.” But this is the tropics, and sometimes the lush foliage is deceptive. For example, they successfully managed to adapt milk-producing cows by crossing Holsteins and Cebus. But they need imported feed – tropical grasses are not very nourishing, full of water – for which they now have to pay hard currency, that Cuba doesn't have, to Canada.

Various people we talked to argued that to solve the food crisis what Cuba needs is a “New Economic Policy,” like the NEP in the Soviet Union during the 1920s, allowing small peasants to market their own produce. In fact there are relatively few independent peasants; most are in the cooperatives, and then there are the state farms. But in any case, a NEP won't solve the problems. In the Soviet Union, as soon as they opened up private trade – which Lenin frankly said was a retreat toward capitalism, a temporary retreat – they got what Trotsky called the “scissors crisis,” a disproportion between industrial and agricultural prices and production. Peasants wouldn't produce because they couldn't buy anything with the proceeds. Well, in Cuba, they're way out on one end of the scissors, and it doesn't matter if peasants get paid in pesos or dollars, because there's very little industrial production to supply the products they need.

It would be possible to achieve a considerable increase in food production by undertaking a serious mobilization of the working people. But to do this would require real implementation of workers democracy, for the workers themselves to decide on what needs to be done to meet the crisis. And such a mobilization would go in the opposite direction from introducing capitalist market mechanisms. So while the Cubans still have various things like the Student Work Brigades and Youth Army of Labor dating from the first years of the revolution, the government has not expanded these. There is migration out of the cities, people going back to their rural family homes, but it is overwhelmingly individual. And in any case, the most basic point is that Cuba cannot overcome this crisis by retreating to a pre-industrial society and seeking agricultural self-sufficiency.

Or take the case of this strange eye disease, what they named “optic neuritis.” Last March, they found out by accident about the existence of this epidemic, because the authorities in Pinar del Río province in the west kept asking for more medicines. The doctors decided from the evidence that vitamin deficiency is one of several possible contributing causes. With the food shortages, which have cut the rations down to something like 1,200 calories a day, even though no one is starving there’s a real danger of malnutrition. The government decided to produce a B-complex multivitamin pill, and within 35 days from finding out about the existence of the disease, they started production of this pill. They now produce eleven million of those pills a day; there are eleven million people in the country. These pills are given to the family doctors – yes, they make house calls – who go around and distribute these pills. Once a month you get a package of 30 pills for yourself, another 30 for each child, for everybody in the household.

So faced with an emergency, they were able to take some basic measures and intervene effectively, with the result that the number of new cases has dropped dramatically. This is fundamentally a demonstration of the strength of the collectivized economy to rapidly mobilize resources. But it also shows most dramatically how grim the economic situation is in Cuba today.

Castro Bureaucratic Regime at a Dead End

In the title for this talk we said that the bureaucratic Castro regime is at a “dead end.” Trotsky insisted that if the parasitic bureaucratic caste in Russia were not ousted in time by workers soviets, the Stalinist betrayers of the revolution, by blocking its extension internationally, would lead to social counterrevolution, as has now occurred in East Europe and the Soviet Union, as threatens China and Vietnam, and today looms over Cuba.

So what are the prospects for Cuba today? Without considerable state aid from a far more powerful workers state, the deformed workers state on this island of eleven million people cannot survive on its own forces, and no such aid is available. That is clear. The Castro regime is pretty aware of its

prospects as well, which is why it is trying to present itself as Latin American nationalists, pushing Jose Martí instead of Karl Marx. And it is consciously introducing measures leading to a capitalist market and capitalist property relations. Castro made a speech six or eight months ago where he said, we desperately need dollars, we do not have oil to sell, what we have is beach to sell. So that’s what they’re doing. So far, these are joint ventures, mostly with Spanish or Canadian corporations, they are contracts of limited nature, of five years, and the actual property is retained by the Cuban state. But there is a discussion of going far beyond joint ventures in the tourist trade, and in basic industry as well. They already have joint ventures with the Canadians to explore oil drilling.

Then on the 26th of July, the 40th anniversary of the attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba, Castro made his speech in which he announced that it would be legal to hold dollars in the country. This will likely be a watershed. Interestingly, they didn’t have a mass anniversary demonstration this time. A lot of the underground discussion was that, in addition to the very real economic reasons why it was difficult for them to mobilize for a mass celebration – they had just had a million people in Havana for May Day, the biggest ever – we heard from people in the Communist Party that they were worried that if they had a mass gathering, when Castro got to the point of announcing legalization of dollar holdings, there could be a big “No!” coming from party militants in the crowd.. So instead the speech was given before 4,000 top leaders in a Santiago theater and broadcast over TV.

Legalizing holding the dollar, on the one hand, was a recognition of reality, because there are a lot of people who have dollars in Cuba now. Tourism is a fairly big industry – it has increased 40 percent a year for the past four or five years. In addition, the Cuban exiles in Miami, the *gusanos*, send money in. So partly what they wanted to do is get some of the huge quantities of dollars out from under the mattresses, so that they could use that foreign exchange in order to finance imports. And to do that they reorganized the network of dollar stores to sell to Cubans, something akin to the “Intershops” that they had in East



Internationalist photos

Coping with fuel shortage in Cuba: horse-and-buggy taxis, bicycles and passengers piling aboard truck.

Germany. But mainly, making the dollar legal tender opens a huge breach in the state monopoly of foreign trade, one of the fundamental economic requirements for the existence of a workers state. It will open the floodgates toward the dollarization of the economy.

So in exchange for getting some hard currency, the regime is setting up the dollar as the sought-after goal. Recall that in East Germany, the DDR, they had what we called the “D-mark elections” on 18 March 1990. We fought hard against that, and the Spartakist Workers Party was alone in taking a clear stand of “No to capitalist reunification!” The decisive point was when Gorbachev gave the green light to West German annexation, but key to the vote was when West German chancellor Kohl offered a one-to-one exchange rate of DDR marks to D-marks. And that was prepared by the whole previous period, when the DDR government actually encouraged people, by its policies, to focus on getting D-marks. So this can have a very powerful counterrevolutionary effect.

The decision to legalize dollar transactions is really playing with fire. A recent article in the *New York Times* (1 August) reported that even some of the most rabid *gusanos* in Miami, for instance, want to lift the American blockade because they want to flood the Cuban economy with dollars. The question is, to what degree will the regime be able to stay on top of this? Lenin said of the Russian Revolution that the Soviet Union would be more threatened by the economic undermining of the revolution than by the guns of the imperialists. And Trotsky, in his analysis of Stalin’s USSR, *The Revolution Betrayed*, said:

“Military intervention is a danger. The intervention of cheap goods in the baggage trains of a capitalist army would be an incomparably greater one. The victory of the proletariat in one of the Western countries would, of course, immediately and radically alter the correlation of forces. But so long as the Soviet Union remains isolated, and, worse than that, so long as the European proletariat suffers reverses and continues to fall back, the strength of the Soviet structure is measured in the last analysis by the productivity of labor.”

For tiny Cuba, this is true ten times over. In the meantime, the combination of severe economic crisis and rapidly advancing dollarization is creating explosive resentments in the population. You’re developing sort of a two-track society, those people that are on the dollar economy and those people that are on the peso. All proportions guarded, it recalls something in *900 Days*, Harrison Salisbury’s book about the siege of Leningrad, that there were two types of people: those that had no flesh on their bones, and the people who did have flesh on their bones – and if they did, you wondered who they were eating. Well, in Cuba today, there is a whole nation of thin people, and if you see people who are fat, or just a little chubby, you know they have access to the dollar. They work in tourism, live off the proceeds from prostitution, maybe in the upper bureaucratic elite. The vast majority of the party members, of course, don’t have access to dollars, so it’s no wonder they’re hostile to it.

And here I want to talk about one of the most dramatic and sensitive results of this economic crisis: the impact on

black people. Blacks by and large won’t have legal access to dollars. The *gusanos* in Miami are overwhelmingly white. So the explosive growth of social tensions is going to exacerbate race tensions. And it’s already happening. For the first time, in the inner cities of Havana and Santiago, with the layoffs that have come from the fuel crisis, and with the situation of extreme hunger, there are now large numbers of youth who have nothing to do and are on the streets. Their only access to money is to swarm around the tourists, and engage in begging or petty thievery.

This is particularly shocking because Cuba made great strides in racial equality, and many of the cadres of the state are black. If you look at the Ministry of Interior personnel and army officers there’s a very high percentage of blacks. But blacks were concentrated in two areas, central Havana and downtown Santiago, and for other reasons the government had decided they weren’t going to rebuild the central cities. It was a peasant revolution, so they were going to improve life for the peasantry. And they’ve made tremendous improvements there. But downtown Havana is pretty run-down, and it’s very, heavily black. And with the economic crisis, what the regime labeled a “special period in peacetime” – such classic bureaucratism – there is a process of lumpenization that hits these areas first. As one of our friends remarked, “Old Havana is coming back.”

Now I want to emphasize that this is an indirect result of the economic crisis. We visited other areas, for example walking through a huge housing district of Havana called Alamar, where some 700,000 overwhelmingly working-class residents live, very integrated, right on the ocean front, and there’s a real collective attitude about dealing with the shortages, and a lot of innovation – they just introduced “train-buses” that hold over 300 people, to commute to downtown. Alamar was the product of a planned economy. But now the dollar is coming in, and the bald fact is that unemployed blacks in the central cities will have no legal way to get dollars.

Meanwhile, there is a whole layer of so-called “yummies” – the “Young Upwardly Mobile Marxists” who want to make it even if the system alters its social content to go over to a capitalist economy. These are the people who are currently in these economic think tanks, whose career choice is to be the Gaidars of the counterrevolution in Cuba – like Yeltsin’s “Harvard Boy” in Russia. Right now they are advising the regime with some degree of influence. On our trip we were given a lecture by one of them. Their view is that there has to be unemployment in Cuba, that you need more introduction of the free market, and so forth.

Now these are not marginal people, but constitute the core of the new layer of the bureaucracy that has been promoted recently. The foreign minister Roberto Robaina, economics minister Carlos Lage, and so on. Some of them talk in private of following “the Chinese road.” But it’s obvious that tiny Cuba can’t do what a huge country like China could for a period – introduce huge chunks of capitalist economic measures while maintaining Stalinist bureaucratic rule. And even there it’s heading pell-mell for counterrevolution, as we wrote recently in *Workers Vanguard*. In Cuba, the more right-wing elements are already looking further and are dreaming of

some kind of peaceful counterrevolution, i.e., some kind of social-democratic variety of capitalism.

At the end of his July 26 speech, Castro put forward a whole series of slogans, which were: “Save the fatherland, save the revolution and save the gains of socialism!” When a Stalinist starts talking about preserving the gains of socialism, hold on to your wallet. You have to realize, they claim that they have socialism. So when they talk of only preserving the *gains*, what they mean is they’re going to try to keep as much of the elements of social equality that they can – the health system, the education system, and so on – while introducing rampant capitalism in the economy. But this idea of sort of molting into a tropical Sweden, a “third way,” is reformist utopianism of the first water. The bigger danger right now is not a *gusano* invasion, but rather development of internal counterrevolutionary forces under the extreme pressure of the imperialist blockade.

For Workers Political Revolution – Defend Cuba Through International Socialist Revolution!

The Castro regime has hunkered down into a bunker mentality, as was exemplified by the Stalinist show trial of General Ochoa in 1988, who was executed evidently for talking back to *El Jefe* and his immediate boss, Raúl Castro, and to appease Yankee imperialism. This was hailed or alibied by a whole bunch of leftists, including the long-since ex-Trotskyist and now explicitly anti-Trotskyist SWP, and the National Lawyers Guild, the same types of Stalinist fellow travelers who whitewashed the Moscow purge trials in the '30s. As we have repeatedly written, you don't defend Cuba by executing its generals. We pointed out how Stalin nearly killed the Soviet Union by the purge of the general staff around Marshal Tukhachevsky in 1938-39. His “evidence” of treason later turned out to be Nazi “disinformation,” but the real reason was he suspected the Red Army of being a nest of “Trotzkyites” and internationalists.

In the aftermath of the Ochoa trial, Castro carried out a purge of the interior ministry and offered to cooperate with Washington in the “war on drugs.” More recently they cashiered the head of the National People's Assembly, Cuba's “parliament,” Carlos Aldana, on charges of having favored Sony in some financial transactions. Actually, Aldana was a well-known Gorbachevite, so this was really a political purge. During the mid-1980s, Cuba went through what the regime called a “rectification process,” in which some of the more notoriously corrupt and right-wing elements were weeded out. But subsequently, they have brought in some younger ministers who are all markedly rightist in their politics.

What's needed in Cuba is not one of the many bureaucratic purges that the Stalinists resort to when their policies lead them to a dead end, but a proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucracy that is leading the country to counterrevolution, and to replace it with a regime based on democratic workers soviets, in which all parties that stand for and defend the workers state can put forward their programs. This revolution requires above all the construction of a Trotskyist vanguard party in Cuba to lead it. The Castro

regime is viscerally hostile to this. If at first it didn't have a consolidated bureaucracy – decisions were taken more often with whoever was sitting with Castro in his jeep – it was nevertheless bonapartist rule by a petty-bourgeois layer that was separate from and hostile to the working class. And they were quick to arrest the Cuban Trotskyist group associated with the Posadas tendency in 1963, and re-arrest them in the mid-1970s for the “crime” of breaking the ban on more than one party.

The Spartacist League has fought for workers political revolution and unconditional defense of Cuba for more than three decades. The SWP, on the other hand, tries to hark back to a heroic period of the 1960s and the figure of Che Guevara. They translated a book by Cuban economist Carlos Tablada on *The Economic Thought of Ernesto Che Guevara*. Now this is pretty funny. Under the planning system set up by Guevara as minister of industry, price accounting was done away with, calculations were done in physical units, so that the economic planners had no way of figuring out relative costs. This led to the brink of disaster symbolized by the failure of the 1970 sugar harvest of “10 million tons.” There's an apocryphal joke about this, that Castro gets up before the Council of Ministers and says, “Che, I don't understand how you could have done this. I mean, we were all sitting around this table, and I asked ‘Who here is an economist?’ And you raised your hand.” Che responds, “Oh, I'm sorry, I thought you asked, ‘Who here is a communist?’”

But basically what they want to say is there should be a return to the ideals of Che's pamphlet “Man and Socialism in Cuba,” where he polemicizes against material incentives. There is a constant tension among Stalinist rulers between material incentives, brutal repression and an idealist emphasis on “moral incentives.” Now we see in the case of Cuba, that after abolishing the peasant markets in 1986 because they were bringing back capitalist market relations, yesterday the Castro regime announced it was reintroducing peasant markets (without middlemen, for now). This kind of zigzagging is typical for this petty-bourgeois caste that sits atop the property forms of a workers state but seeks to reconcile them with imperialism.

A broad spectrum of reformist leftists in the U.S. and elsewhere have joined forces in a Cuba solidarity movement. For example, people like the “Committees of Correspondence,” a social-democratic split-off from the Communist Party USA, for whom this waving of the flag of Cuba solidarity is a cheap way of disguising their flight to the right. Because in the “Cuba solidarity” movement there are now active openly counterrevolutionary forces. There was a recent “caravan for peace” which got a lot of publicity in Cuba (and very little here) because the American authorities stopped it at Laredo on the Mexican border and wouldn't let it go through. The “Pastors for Peace” who organized it made a big point of how they were carrying Bibles as well as medicine. But the dead giveaway was the presence on that caravan of one Ramsey Clark, the former attorney general under Lyndon Johnson who ordered the Chicago

cops to beat up on the antiwar protesters at the 1968 Democratic convention (along with a lot of other crimes).

So what about Cuba? We found a lot of interest there in our analysis of the counterrevolution in East Europe and the Soviet Union. Everyone knows this is behind Cuba's crisis; Castro even admitted such a discussion was necessary, later. But to the extent that you can discern a political drift it is to the right. There is depoliticization of the youth, and we were looking for it, but a lot less than we expected. We found a number of young people who were not party members but did very much support the revolution. However, even in their case, their consciousness is very much impregnated with Stalinism.

There is a kind of internationalist awareness, with people proud of Cuban intervention in Angola and, for example in a sugar mill we visited, of building sugar mills in Nicaragua and Vietnam. Yet this is still Cuban nationalist in content rather than proletarian internationalist. So that while Castro presented Nicaragua with a sugar mill, he also told the Sandinista leaders a week after they took power that Nicaragua should not be "a second Cuba" – in other words, no social revolution. Just as he told Chilean leftists to follow the "democratic" path of Allende's Unidad Popular, which then led to the bloody Santiago coup of 11 September 1973. Tomorrow is the 20th anniversary of that tragic event. Castro visited Chile in that period and even stood shoulder to shoulder with General Pinochet reviewing the supposedly "democratic" Chilean army. And even when it was pushing guerrilla warfare in the late 1960s, the Cuban Stalinist regime was opposing socialist revolution. At the 1966 OLAS [Organization of Latin American Solidarity] conference Castro delivered a blistering denunciation of the Guatemalan MR-13 guerrilla group as Trotskyists because they called for socialism.

The central contradiction for Cuba is that the Castro regime attempted to legitimize and mobilize support for the regime on the basis of Cuban or Latin American nationalism, which they are now doing in a more pronounced way. While this has won them support, it is fundamentally counterposed to proletarian class consciousness, and ultimately spells defeat for the Cuban Revolution. Likewise Stalin's appeal to Russian nationalism in the face of the Nazi invasion won a certain amount of support in the short run. Brezhnev's "great powerism" granted a certain legitimacy to the Soviet Stalinist regime so long as living standards were rising. But the long-term effects of that program guaranteed the destruction of the remaining communist consciousness of the Soviet proletariat, ultimately leading to the destruction of the Soviet Union and a counterrevolution marked by rabid nationalism.

During July they held a meeting of the Latin American left in Havana, the "Forum of São Paulo." Not even a hint of aid to revolutionaries elsewhere in Latin America. On the contrary, Castro spent most of his speech telling stories about his participation in the Hispano-American Summit of heads of state in Brazil, and he told his supporters to get out of the guerrilla business

and repeatedly praised the "strength of the unarmed masses"! Meanwhile, the program of the Forum called for "combining the market with democratic development and social justice." This kind of social-democratic crap is what Lula of the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), for example, is running on in next year's elections as he hobnobs with international bankers. And that program offers no aid whatsoever to an embattled Cuba. Castro's program of hemispheric coexistence with the Latin American bourgeoisies and their Yankee imperialist patrons certainly won't defend the existence of a workers state.

So how can Cuba be defended? As we have said, the fundamental defense of Cuba is outside the island, the need for revolutionary struggle in Latin America, in the U.S. and elsewhere. The prospects for Cuba are indeed bleak, but that only makes all the more urgent the need to fight, and the obligation to raise a Trotskyist program to defend the revolution, centrally through revolutionary struggle internationally. And this fight itself could change the outcome. Talking of mass struggle in Latin America in defense of Cuba against counterrevolution is not just a pipe dream. Just look at the thousands who turned out when Castro visited Brazil and Bolivia recently. And it makes a difference in this regard if the Cuban working people are prepared to fight to defend their revolution. Because their holding out against a murderous economic blockade is an inspiration to the Latin American masses.

But more than the will to fight, what's needed is a revolutionary program. In Cuba, and here, this means drawing a balance sheet of the Castro regime, understanding that the Stalinist program of socialism in one country, or a bloc of countries, or a single island, is a program for disaster. This program of defeat must be replaced with the proletarian internationalist program of permanent revolution, to mobilize the mass of the down-trodden and the rural and urban poor of Latin America behind the working class led by Trotskyist parties in a fight for workers revolution. And this fight must extend right into the "entrails of the monster;" as José Martí called the United States, for it is socialist revolution here, in the imperialist center, that is the only guarantee that Cuba can be truly free of imperialist domination and able to proceed toward genuine socialism, a classless society built on material abundance rather than grinding scarcity.

We must raise the issue of the defense of Cuba prominently in our work in the U.S. and particularly in Mexico, explaining that the key is struggle for socialist revolution internationally. The Cuban masses' will to resist must be an inspiration to us to fight for that program. Cuba alone can't survive, but it is not inevitable that Cuba be alone. We of the International Communist League, of which the Spartacist League is the U.S. section, are fighting to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International on this program of world socialist revolution, which was the program of the October Revolution and the very reason for existence for the Communist International. We urge you to join us in this struggle. ■

Blacks and the Cuban Revolution

The following is an edited excerpt from a speech by Marjorie Stamberg at that time a member of the Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee at Howard University in Washington, D.C. on September 25. The speech was published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 585, 8 October 1993.

The Cuban Revolution had a huge impact on American radicals, black and white. Two issues were to shake the U.S. out of the torpor of the 1950s Cold War McCarthyism: Cuba and the civil rights movement. This was just after the Montgomery bus boycott and at the beginning of the freedom rides and the sit-in movement in Greensboro. So when in 1960 Fidel Castro came to the United Nations, refusing to stay in some fancy midtown hotel but instead moving into the Hotel Theresa in Harlem where he met with Malcolm X, black people lined the streets.

In Cuba, where about a third of the population is black, and especially in Havana, and in Santiago province which is majority black and had a crucial participation in the insurrection, one of the first acts of the revolution was to formally abolish discrimination. In many ways Havana was a Southern city – there were restaurants blacks couldn't go into, for example. And slavery was not abolished in Cuba until the 1880s.



James Sparshatt/Corbis

Cuban blacks have benefited most from education, health care gains of the revolution, which would be wiped out in a counterrevolution. Above, school girls dancing in Havana.

After the revolution, Cuba provided exile for such black radicals as Robert Williams, the Monroe County, North Carolina NAACP leader who advocated black self-defense, the author of *Negroes with Guns* who was framed up on kidnapping charges in 1961 after he led militant self-defense against the Klan.

More recently, it has offered haven to Assata Shakur, one of the New York Black Panthers, who has been living in Cuba since the early '80s. And Cuba's fate has been bound up with black struggle, for example, in the over 400,000 troops who served in Angola defending that country against the South African puppet Jonas Savimbi and direct South African invasion. And in black Grenada, where Cuban construction workers were killed in the 1983 U.S. invasion.

These two issues, of the Cuban Revolution and of the emerging civil rights movement, were the two central questions around which our tendency, the Spartacist League, was forged. Both centered on the necessity for a conscious revolutionary vanguard at the head of these struggles. In the civil rights movement, the absence of such leadership meant that in the split between the radical "black power" wing and the reformist "nonviolent" preachers, there was not the revolutionary leadership to win those radicals away from a ghetto-based vision to see the need for working-class power.



Fidel Castro meets with Malcolm X in the Hotel Theresa in October 1960.

The black question in Cuba has come up lately with a book *Castro, the Blacks and Africa* (1988), by Carlos Moore, an Afro-Cuban writer who left the island in 1963. That alone tells you a lot, because he left when Cuba was implementing socially revolutionary measures and under greatest attack from U.S. imperialism.

Carlos Moore says that there was always racism in Cuba. It certainly had a legacy of slavery no less than the U.S. And the antislavery struggle was closely linked to the struggle for independence in the 19th century – Antonio Maceo was a black freeman who led the *mambises*, the “swamp fighters” who rose up against the Spaniards in 1868. Maceo also played a major role in the 1898 uprising, which the U.S. eventually moved in to head off.

Moore also claims that there was racism after the revolution. Well, blacks were among the most enthusiastic early supporters of the revolution. They were the majority in Oriente province, where much of the fighting took place, and also in the sugar mills, where they lived in semi-slave conditions. In contrast, the early refugees who fled the revolution were overwhelmingly white.

Contrary to Moore, under the revolution there were tremendous strides made in abolishing discrimination and oppression of blacks. And blacks benefited disproportionately as the revolution raised the poor out of poverty. But the Castroites left it at that. They didn’t actively seek to promote black leaders, black proletarian leaders, and instead sought to cohere a privileged petty-bourgeois caste dominating the state, which meant that the top Communist Party leadership remained very white, with the signal exception of Juan Almeida, who was one of the top commanders of the army.

One of the conflicts that Robert F. Williams had there was with the Cuban CP, which like the CPUSA was promoting Martin Luther King and his pacifist liberalism. Williams had enough experience to know in his gut that the CP was stone reformist. He saw how they supported the “peaceful legal” types in the civil rights movement, whose politics the radical black movement was breaking from. Cuban officials gave Williams a hard time in broadcasting his “Radio Free Dixie,” for instance complaining about a show he did on jazz, saying it was “decadent” music!

In the middle of all this came the Sino-Soviet split. Cuba, which was economically dependent on the Soviet Union for its survival, supported the Soviets, whereas the radical rhetoric of the Maoists appealed to Williams. Eventually, the Cubans shut down “Radio Free Dixie” because of his support for the Chinese, and Williams went to China. But we said at the time that China was just “Stalinism under the gun,” and despite its more radical posture, because the



Afro Cubans are underrepresented in the leadership, except in the military. Above: officers at ceremony on anniversary of the Revolution, 1 January 2009.

main target of U.S. imperialism was the Soviet Union, we said that the Mao regime could eventually get together with the U.S. And that’s exactly what happened. Williams eventually returned to the United States in 1969, where he, like many disillusioned black radicals, attempted to make his peace with the American bourgeois order.

To return to Carlos Moore, he sees Cuban politics as a fight between Hispanics and blacks, says that revolution “duped” blacks, and downplays their central role in the revolution. Moore cites repression of Afro-Cuban religious groups, and in fact these groups were viewed apprehensively in the early days. He is also a hard opponent of Cuba’s intervention in Grenada and Angola, claiming that because of the presence of Cuban troops in Angola the South Africans might have used nuclear weapons against black Africans! These are cynical pro-Savimbi arguments. The fact is that the defeat of the South African apartheid army’s offensive at Cuito Cuanavale in Angola in 1988 was decisive in opening up the latest round of antiapartheid struggle.

Stalinism and nationalism – whether Latin American anti-Yankee nationalism, or black nationalism – were not able to give a revolutionary answer to black struggle. American black radicals who looked to Cuba had tremendous potential. But they did not have a Trotskyist program of revolutionary integrationism – that only through socialist revolution can black people be emancipated and fully integrated into an egalitarian society. The multiracial proletariat under communist leadership must take aim at all manifestations of discrimination, from Woolworth’s in the ’60s to Denny’s today, drawing on the power of black industrial workers in the struggle against black oppression throughout society.

Both black separatism and liberal integrationism had no program for urban ghetto blacks in the North, and no program for revolutionary-minded black radicals like Williams and many others who were attracted by the black power movement. ■

U.S. Threats Over Crackdown on Counterrevolutionaries Liberals, Reformists Join Imperialist Hue and Cry

For Revolutionary Internationalist Defense of Cuba!

The following article was published in The Internationalist No. 16, May-June 2003.

MAY 17 – For the past two months, there has been a dramatic increase in U.S. provocations and threats against Cuba. A rash of hijackings is followed by an outcry over Cuba’s repression of counterrevolutionary plotters. Fantastical charges of Cuban “biological warfare” are resuscitated. Last week the U.S. expelled 14 Cuban diplomats; next week Bush is scheduled to announce drastic new measures tightening the travel ban and economic blockade. This is not just stepped-up harassment, it’s preparation for war: Washington is itching to give Cuba the “Iraq treatment.” The imperialist warmongers must be defeated, and it will take class war to do it.

For the Bush regime, the war didn’t end with the U.S. taking of Baghdad. Now they want to “take back” Havana. For the last four decades, American rulers, Republicans and Democrats alike, have shown their unrelenting hostility to the Cuban Revolution, seeing its very existence as a direct threat to U.S. domination of Latin America. The purpose of the vicious 40-year-old U.S. embargo, which has cost more than \$70 billion in lost trade, has been to strangle the rebel Caribbean island economically. But the Yankee imperialists have manifestly failed in their attempt to bully and starve the Cuban people into submission.

Now the White House and Pentagon are gearing up for more “robust” action against Havana. The escalation of imperialist hounding of Cuba is directly tied to the invasion and colonial occupation of Iraq. And while the Bush gang gnashes its teeth over the Castro regime’s suppression of counterrevolutionary plotters, a layer of liberals and left intellectuals in the U.S. and Europe have been bleating over repression in Cuba. This hue and cry demonstrates that their objections to the Iraq invasion were only tactical: they want a “soft” version of imperialist domination – in the Cuban case, a kind of “counterrevolution light.”

It is precisely to this layer that Fidel Castro has appealed over the years in pursuing the pipe dream of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism. But as the war hawks in Washington



Cristóbal Herrera/AP

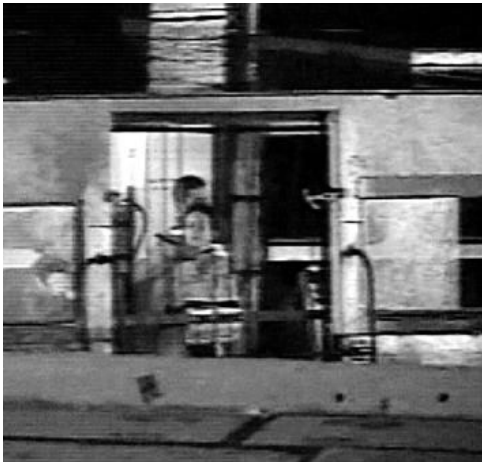
Cuban youth protest invasion of Iraq outside U.S. Interests Section in Havana, 22 March 2003.

rampage, the pacifist doves have taken flight. The fickle liberal bourgeois “friends of Cuba” are friends no longer. Various reformist leftists and Latin American nationalists have responded by calling for support for Cuba’s sovereignty and right to self-determination. Posing the issue in purely “democratic” terms misses that what is at stake is the fate of revolutionary gains, however bureaucratically deformed.

What is posed here is not just intensified U.S. hostility but a very real threat of war on Cuba. Many in the current administration in Washington would make the overthrow of “Castro’s Cuba” the centerpiece of a second Bush term. Attempts to conciliate them are illusory. Genuine communists call for all-out defense of Cuba against counterrevolution from without and within. Trotskyists fight to smash the imperialist stranglehold by international socialist revolution throughout Latin America and extending into what José Martí called the “belly of the beast,” the heartland of Yankee imperialism.

Escalation of U.S. Provocation

The current uproar began with a reevaluation of Washington’s Cuba policy undertaken by the White House a year ago. The point man was Otto Reich, an ultra-rightist Cuban exile who in the 1980s was in charge of stonewalling Con-



Photos from Quan TV

Hijacker threatens kidnapped passenger on ferry boat with a knife to the neck (left), 3 April 2003. Passengers jumped over board to safety as Cuban security forces stormed the boat (center). Child rescued from hijacked ferry (right).

gress over the Reagan administration's "contra" war against Sandinista Nicaragua. Last year Reich was caught conspiring with Venezuelan contras in the failed coup against bourgeois nationalist colonel Hugo Chávez. In their policy review, Bush & Co. decided to push for a "transition to democracy" in Cuba. These are code words for counterrevolution. What they mean by democracy is the dictatorship of capitalism; their talk of freedom means "free markets" and enslaved workers.

One result of the policy shift has been to sharply restrict Cuban immigration to the U.S. Although Washington agreed with Havana in 1994 to accept 20,000 Cubans a year, only 7,200 entry visas were issued last year and barely 500 so far this year. This is a deliberate attempt to provoke the kind of hysteria that the Democratic Clinton administration instigated at the height of the economic crisis in 1994, leading hundreds of *balseros* ("raft people") to sail out into the Florida straits. Over the last seven months there have been seven hijacking incidents, a sharp increase. Meanwhile, a new chief of the U.S. Interests Section (equivalent to an embassy, since Washington broke diplomatic relations with Havana in the early '60s), James Cason, has been ostentatiously conspiring with pro-U.S. "dissidents" in Cuba as a deliberate provocation.

When he took over last fall, Cason vowed to "bring freedom and democracy" to Cuba. He told a press conference in Miami that he regularly meets with the National Cuban-American Foundation and other organizations of the *gusano* exiles (the counterrevolutionary "worms" who fled Cuba after the revolution overthrew the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Bastista).

- In early February, Cason held a meeting in the ambassador's residence with 21 members of Cuban counterrevolutionary groups which are on the U.S. payroll.
- On February 24, he staged a press conference at the home of one of the "dissident" plotters to denounce the Cuban government for violating "freedom of conscience," "freedom of expression" and "human rights."
- On March 12, another meeting in the ambassador's residence with 18 counterrevolutionaries.

- On March 14, yet another meeting, this time an all-day session at the Interests Section (embassy) itself.

In addition to provocatively turning its diplomatic representation into the headquarters of a counterrevolutionary conspiracy, Washington has been pouring dollars into the effort to overthrow the Cuban government. More than \$22 million has been funneled to Cuban anti-Communist groups since 1997 by the U.S. Agency for International Development, including \$8 million for promoting "solidarity with activists in Cuba," \$1.6 million to "non-governmental organizations" in Cuba, \$2.3 million to a Center for a Free Cuba, \$1.2 million to a Center for Support of Dissidents, etc. Some 7,000 radios have been distributed set to receive the CIA's "Radio Martí," on which the U.S. spends over \$25 million a year.

Liberals Go Ballistic Over Repression of Counterrevolutionaries

On March 19, as Bush was about to launch the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Cuba arrested 75 of the plotters who had been conspiring with the U.S. "diplomats." Almost immediately, as if on signal, a Cuban DC-3 aircraft was hijacked to Key West by terrorists who held knives to the throats of the pilots. American authorities announced they would grant bail to the hijackers and refused to return the aircraft, as required under a 1995 agreement with Cuba. With this encouragement, on March 31 another Cuban plane was hijacked. Then on April 2, a ferry boat was seized with 50 passengers on board and headed toward Florida. When the boat ran out of fuel, the hijackers threatened to shoot two passengers, who then jumped overboard in rough waters to escape their tormentors. As Cuban navy boats rescued them, other passengers jumped from the ferry as well.

In early April, summary trials were held of the 75 arrested conspirators and the ferry boat hijackers. Ten Cuban intelligence agents who had infiltrated the counterrevolutionary groups testified about the plotting in the U.S. Interests Section. Proof was given of thousands of dollars received from the U.S., including receipts. Official passes were exhibited giving the defendants "free passage" at any

time of day or night to enter and move about the U.S. diplomatic enclave. Evidence was shown of their collaboration with well-known CIA agents. These mercenary “dissidents” were given sentences ranging from eight to 26 years in prison for secretly receiving funds from their U.S. paymasters and collaborating with the former colonial masters to reassert Yankee control of Cuba. Ten people were found guilty of hijacking the ferry, and the three main hijackers were sentenced to death; they were executed on April 11.

Washington predictably howled over the repression that it had brazenly provoked. But the Bush administration’s feigned outrage soon received reinforcement from a chorus of condemnation by a number of prominent liberals. On April 23, the Cuban Policy Forum, a group headed by former U.S. secretary of state William Rogers which opposed the embargo, disbanded in protest over the executions and jailings. Leftish intellectuals began circulating statements denouncing Cuba’s supposed suppression of dissidence. Portuguese Nobel Prize-winning author José Saramago, a former friend of Castro, wrote that “from now on, Cuba can follow its own course, and leave me out.”

Saramago was followed by the Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano and the Mexican Carlos Fuentes. Prior to the court verdicts a letter from 62 American and European intellectuals had called on the Castro government to release the so-called “peaceful opponents and independent journalists.” Among the signers were the writers Günter Grass, Mario Vargas Llosa, Jorge Edwards and the Mexicans Carlos Monsiváis, Enrique Krauze and (former foreign minister) Jorge Castañeda. After the sentences, 50 Spanish artists and intellectuals signed a statement condemning the repression, including Joan Manuel Serrat, Pedro Almodóvar, Ana Belén and other reputed “progressives.” They professed their “solidarity with the Cuban people” while joining the hue and cry instigated by Washington.

In the U.S. at least two different petitions have been circulating. One, promoted by *The Nation* magazine, denounced Cuba’s “brute repression” of “independent thinkers and writers, human rights activists and democrats” which supposedly showed that the Cuban government is “just one more dictatorship.” Its signers include prominent social democrats, Greens and red-baiters, including Bogdan Denitch, Stanley Aronowitz and Todd Gitlin. A second petition, circulated by a newly formed Campaign for Peace and Democracy, adopts a more leftist-sounding tack, declaring that they oppose the occupation of Iraq, U.S. intervention in Latin America, etc., and also protest the repression in Cuba. This includes some of the same signers but also a roster of “progressives” including Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein, Michael Lerner, Immanuel Wallerstein, James Weinstein, Cornel West and Howard Zinn.

Like Washington’s provocations against Cuba, these petitions are closely connected to the war on Iraq. The first petition doesn’t even mention the U.S. invasion (thus including those who support the war), and the second one “even-handedly”



Lynne Sladkey/AP

Prisoner being marched off for interrogation in U.S. prison camp at Guantánamo, February 2002. U.S. Navy base was stolen from Cuba. Prisoners are held incommunicado, U.S. refuses to grant them rights of prisoners of war, and they are to be judged by military tribunals according them no rights, if they are not simply held indefinitely.

declares “we condemned the brutal Saddam Hussein regime, and we oppose the United States occupation of Iraq” (but not the war). This “third camp” position is no accident, for the main writer and organizer of the petition was one Joanne Landy. During the Cold War, this right-wing social democrat and follower of the anti-Trotskyist renegade Max Shachtman played a leading role in organizing support for the U.S.’ favorite anti-Soviet counterrevolutionaries, putting out a bulletin in support of Solidarność and backing the CIA’s mujahedin against Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. She opposed the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions and has long advocated the violent overthrow of the Cuban government. As a reward for her counterrevolutionary services to U.S. imperialism, she has been made a member of the Council of Foreign Relations.

Yet another petition is circulating internationally, this one in support of Cuba. It was read at the May Day celebration in Havana by Pablo González Casanova, former rector of the National University of Mexico, and was signed by Gabriel García Márquez and other leftist intellectuals of a more nationalist bent. This appeal “To the Conscience of the World,” warns that the present war of words against Cuba could easily become the pretext for an invasion. Yet its defense of Cuba is purely on the basis of “universal principles of national sovereignty, respect of territorial integrity and self-determination” and of defense of “the international order” threatened by the domination of “a single power” as a “consequence of the invasion of Iraq.” U.S. imperialist hegemony of course predates the invasion of Iraq, but this is an appeal to supporters of other imperialist powers (such as France and Germany) who hesitated over the Bush government’s blatant go-it-alone policy summed up in the “doctrine” of “preemptive war.”

In fact, many of the signers of the petitions denouncing the Cuban government’s actions have supported various of Washington’s wars in the name of “human rights,” such as recent wars on Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, while others waffled. (Indeed, Cuba abstained in the UN in the vote on

Gulf War I.) In contrast, revolutionary Trotskyists called on the Viet Cong to take Saigon, hailed the Soviet Army's fight against the CIA's "holy warriors" in Afghanistan, called for stopping Solidarność counterrevolution and have defended Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq against imperialist war. We fight for the defeat of the imperialists across the globe by seeking to mobilize the power of the working class for international socialist revolution. And contrary to the Castro bureaucracy's illusory policy of "peaceful coexistence" with the imperialists, as followers of Trotsky and Lenin we stand four-square for the internationalist defense of the Cuban Revolution against imperialism.

Fake Lefts Split: Pro-Imperialist "Democrats" and Castro Cheerleaders

It is not only the openly social-democratic reformists and liberals who have joined the chorus against repression in Cuba. In France, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) of Alain Krivine published a disgusting article titled "Cuba: We Know, So What?" (*Rouge*, 24 April), in which these pseudo-Trotskyists say they know that imperialist "democrats" denounce the lack of democracy on the island and that the Bush government practices state terrorism. "We know all that, so what?" They declare that "defense of elementary democratic rights and freedoms are not dishes à la carte," that they are "against any crimes of opinion," that they are against the death penalty which is "morally intolerable and politically ineffective," and that they "totally condemn the parody of justice that has just taken place" in Cuba. There is not even a hint of proletarian class program in this statement. It has nothing in common with Trotskyism and everything in common with bourgeois liberal "morality." And not surprisingly, like the liberals, the LCR called on the NATO imperialists to intervene in Yugoslavia in the name of "human rights."

The decaying "international" the LCR is part of, which calls itself the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec) although it is neither united nor Trotskyist, has a slightly softer version of the same pro-imperialist policy in a May 14 declaration. In that statement, the USec declares the Cuban government's methods to be "unacceptable from a revolutionary democratic point of view." Their self-definition as "revolutionary" democrats speaks volumes about the social-democratization of the followers of the late Ernest Mandel. A few years ago the French LCR debated changing its name to something more appropriate, but couldn't decide whether to strike the word "communist" or the word "revolutionary," and ended up doing nothing, out of lethargy. "Undeniably, Cuba is in an even more difficult situation than in the past," the USec admits, but this does not permit using the "unacceptable death penalty" and other "extreme repressive methods." So here we have the ostensibly Trotskyist USec, which apologized for and defended the jailing of the Cuban Trotskyists in the 1960s now objecting to extreme repressive methods against counterrevolutionaries openly working with U.S. spy agencies.

In standing for military defense of Cuba against counterrevolution, the Internationalist Group declares that the repression against the U.S.-linked conspirators and terrorists

in Cuba is utterly justified. They are imperialist agents, not "dissidents." They are not exercising the freedom of opinion or right of expression but plotting the restoration of capitalism in cahoots with the U.S. ambassador, working out of the U.S. embassy and receiving bundles of U.S. dollars for their efforts. As Trotskyists we have long opposed the death penalty in Cuba, as we do in the United States and everywhere in the world. We give no political support to the Castro bureaucratic regime and have denounced the 1990 Stalinist show trial and execution of Cuban general Arnaldo Ochoa, carried out in an effort to curry favor with the U.S. in the "war on drugs." But the masterminds of the ferry boat hijacking were engaged in a *counterrevolutionary act of war* as part of escalating U.S. threats against Cuba. Not to have responded decisively to this provocation would have facilitated U.S. attempts to whip up hysteria such as led to the wave of raft launching in the early 1990s, or the Mariel exodus a decade earlier. Only this time, in the wake of the war on Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. is poised to use such a frenzy to intervene militarily seeking to extirpate the Cuban Revolution with blood and fire.

Our communist program is counterposed to the vast bulk of the self-proclaimed socialist left, which *politically* supports the Cuban government while constantly seeking to gain popularity by building "popular fronts" *with precisely the layer of liberals who are now howling about repression in Cuba*. Thus Nat Weinstein of the ostensibly Trotskyist organization Socialist Action laments that "Chomsky's proud antiwar record has been marred by his anarchist bent toward equating the heinous deeds of the oppressor imperialist state to the defensive actions of its victims in the Cuban workers' state" (*Socialist Action*, May 2003). Yet despite his sometime "anarchist" pretensions, Chomsky has been trumpeted by the Democratic Socialists of America as one of their members and is at bottom a petty-bourgeois liberal who wants the United States to pursue a different policy. That is in fact the program of the various "antiwar" coalitions which seek a more "humane," more "people-friendly" imperialism.

Groups such as the Workers World Party, Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Action who regularly hail the Castro regime praise the fairness of the trials of the counterrevolutionaries. They were defended by 54 lawyers, many of their own choosing, more than 3,000 people attended. Certainly this compares favorably to another 624 prisoners in Cuba ... the detainees being held by the United States in a prison camp in the base the U.S. illegally occupies in Guantánamo. Their names have not been released, they have not been charged with any crime, they are held incommunicado and are denied contact with any legal defender, and (if they are not simply held indefinitely) they will face a military tribunal where they have no rights. But that comparison hardly makes Cuba a model of socialist rectitude. For example, the Castro regime jailed the Cuban Trotskyists for a decade and a half, briefly released them, and then jailed them again in a prime example of Stalinist bureaucratic arbitrariness and repression of revolutionaries.

Marginally more "critical" than the Castro cheerleaders of the SWP and WWP, Socialist Action notes that Bolshe-

vik rule was based on soviets, or councils, directly elected by the working people, while “Cuba has yet to create similar institutions of direct working class rule.” But the absence of revolutionary workers democracy is not simply a blemish on the regime. The Cuban deformed workers state which was established through the expropriation of the foreign and domestic capitalists in 1960-61 is a state qualitatively similar to that of the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet Union under Stalin and his heirs. The fight to establish genuine *soviet* rule of workers councils that defend the gains of the revolution and seek to extend them requires a political revolution by the Cuban proletariat against the narrow Castro bureaucracy which grew out of the petty-bourgeois guerrilla army and has monopolized political power ever since.

This struggle can only be successful if it is led by an authentically Leninist-Trotskyist party, which fights on the basis of the Bolshevik program of international socialist revolution. Castroism, like all other variants of Stalinism, embraces a nationalist and conservative ideology of building “socialism in one country.” But as communists from Marx and Engels to Lenin and Trotsky have insisted, socialism can only be built internationally, at the highest level of development of the productive forces. As long as the revolution is nationally limited, particularly in an economically less developed country, it will be prey to the tremendous economic pressures of imperialism – whether through an economic blockade or through the operation of the “free market.” In Cuba, the machinations of the Miami gusano mafia and their agents or the intrigues run out of the U.S. Interests Section may be contained by an efficient intelligence apparatus. But as the collapse of the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc deformed workers states underlined, repression cannot indefinitely stave off the economic power of imperialism.

As Trotsky wrote of Stalin’s Russia, “Military intervention is a danger. The intervention of cheap goods in the baggage trains of a capitalist army would be an incomparably greater one” (*The Revolution Betrayed* [1936]). Or as Karl Marx put it 90 years earlier, “this development of productive forces...is an absolutely necessary practical premise because without it want is merely made general, and with destitution the struggle for necessities and all the old crap would necessarily be reproduced.” He added that the universal development of the productive forces “makes each nation dependent on the revolutions of the others” (*The German Ideology* [1847]).

Smash Imperialism Through International Socialist Revolution!

The economic pressures of imperialism on Cuba are seen not only in the millions of dollars which enter the country from relatives in Miami or the U.S. government in Washington. They also encourage the development of pro-imperialist elements in the Castro bureaucracy itself. The recent May Day march in Havana, which again drew a million participants, had as its main slogan “defense of socialism.” Yet a year ago, Roberto Robaina was purged as foreign minister on charges of hobnobbing with foreign capitalists. Robaina became foreign minister in 1993, at the time that Castro decided to permit the free circulation of the U.S. dollar, a step consti-

tuting a grave threat to the collectivized Cuban economy. Robaina was closely identified with that policy of “opening” the island to capital, which exacerbated social tensions on the beleaguered island. Together with Robaina a number of upper-level functionaries involved with these policies were expelled from the Communist Party, the political organization of the bureaucracy. But they are only the tip of the iceberg, and more pro-capitalist elements undoubtedly exist.

Because of the island’s small size and exposed location, just “90 miles from Florida,” Cubans are acutely aware that their fate depends on world developments. But while the Castro regime occasionally dabbled (several decades ago) in promoting petty-bourgeois guerrilla warfare elsewhere in Latin America, its Stalinist-nationalist program was frontally opposed to proletarian internationalism. It looked to the peasantry, not the working class, whose power it feared, and when struggles took on a mass character posing the possibility of revolution, such as in Brazil in the early ’60s, Castro (and Guevara) cut them off in order not to inconvenience friendly popular-front governments. Moreover, while showing interest in the situation of blacks in the U.S., Cuba never sought to encourage revolutionary struggles in the United States, which is key to any revolution in the hemisphere.

So long as Cuba remains in national isolation (far greater now than when the Soviet Union still existed and Havana benefited from substantial Soviet supplies of oil), it will be constrained to play on and exploit contradictions between the imperialist powers. But following the demise of the Soviet Union, the core of the Castro regime’s policy has been to look to the European and Latin American bourgeoisies as a counterweight to the United States. Havana also sought to offer its services to the U.S., first in the “war on drugs” and later in the “war on terrorism,” in a vain attempt to “peacefully coexist” with the imperialist giant next door. But the Washington Cold Warriors and Miami *gusanos* are bent on counterrevolution, and to stop them it is necessary to defeat them. This cannot be accomplished by appealing to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois “friends of Cuba,” who are now up in arms over the repression of counterrevolutionaries, or by looking to other bourgeois governments.

In contrast to Stalinist-nationalist illusions of “building socialism in one country” and its programmatic counterpart internationally – “revolution in stages” (beginning with a “democratic” bourgeois stage) and “popular fronts” to head off workers revolution – Trotsky put forward the perspective and program of *permanent revolution*. Summing up the experience of two Russian Revolutions (1905 and 1917), Lenin’s comrade-in-arms and the founder of the Red Army noted that in the imperialist epoch, the period of capitalism’s decline, even elementary democratic demands cannot be accomplished by the bourgeoisie, as at the time of the great French Revolution. Instead, achieving *national liberation* from the yoke of imperialism, *agrarian revolution* against the latifundistas, and *democracy* for working masses can only be brought about by the victory of *workers revolution*, supported by the impoverished peasantry and other oppressed sectors.

Such a revolution requires the leadership of a Leninist-Trotskyist communist party to come to power, and it must be extended to the advanced capitalist (imperialist) countries if it is to go forward to building a classless socialist society, which can only be built internationally on the basis of plenty and not the penury of a besieged island. In contrast to the impossibility of a “socialist Cuba” alone, Trotskyists fight for a federation of Caribbean workers republics in a socialist united states of Latin America. Rather than looking for “alliances” with the likes of Mexico’s Coca-Cola capitalist president Vicente Fox or others of Washington’s neo-colonial satraps, revolutionaries look to the millions-strong proletariat throughout the continent. In the face of threatened invasion of Cuba by the Bush war hawks and their *gusano* partners, it is necessary to look not to the liberal intelligentsia but to working people, blacks, Latinos, immigrants and other sectors oppressed by the same bourgeoisie as threatens Cuban workers.

Cuba has made important social gains compared to any other country of Latin America. The lowest infant mortality rate in the continent, equal to that of the United States, and substantially less than that in New York City or Washington. Universal literacy and education. Universal health care far better than that available to the poor of the U.S.’ inner cities and even than that available to the middle classes of much of the continent. But these gains are mortally threatened by the advance of counterrevolutionary forces from within and without.

A revolutionary workers party must be built in Cuba that can defend and extend these gains. It can only be built in the struggle for a reforged Fourth International, the continuation of the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky. It must be infused with the internationalist spirit of the founder of Cuban communism, Julio Antonio Mella. In a letter from Havana prison in December 1925, Mella wrote:

“The unity of America has already been made by Yankee imperialism. The Panamerican Union is the International of the future political empire whose only capital is Wall Street and whose royalty is made up of the kings of the various industries. The unity of America which the most elevated minds dream of at present is the unity of our America, of America based on social justice, of free America, not of exploited America, colonial America, America which is the fiefdom of a few capitalist companies served by a few governments that are simply agents of the imperialist invader. This unity of America can only be realized by the revolutionary forces who are enemies of international capitalism: workers, peasants, Indians, students and vanguard intellectuals. No revolutionary at the present time can cease to be an internationalist. That would be ceasing to be revolutionary. No program of renovation, or for the destruction of any tyranny, can take place without a joint action of all the peoples of America, including the United States....

“Considering that the enemy called imperialism outside the United States is capitalism inside that nation, it is necessary to extend this united front beyond the Rio Grande. It is necessary to form a single army of all those exploited by Wall Street.”

—Mella: *Documentos y Artículos* (Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1975)



A million people demonstrate in Havana on May Day under the slogan of “Defense of Socialism and the Revolution.” Sign says “No to Fascist Warmongering.” Trotskyists defend Cuba against internal and external counter-revolution, while warning that socialism cannot be built on one embattled island but instead requires fight for workers revolution throughout Latin America and in the “belly of the imperialist beast,” the United States.



Defend Cuba Against Counterrevolution, External and Internal!

Decades of U.S. Biowarfare Against Cuba

The following article was published in The Internationalist No. 16, May-June 2003.

In May 2002, the U.S. undersecretary of state for arms control, John Bolton, made a speech at the ultra-conservative Heritage Foundation accusing Cuba of having “at least a limited offensive biological warfare research and development effort.” He also claimed Cuba had “provided dual-use biotechnology to other rogue states,” and called on Cuba to “fully comply with all of its obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention” (BWC). This is pretty rich coming from the U.S., which the summer before walked out of a meeting to strengthen enforcement provisions of the BWC. But the threat was clear: Bolton’s speech was ominously titled, “Beyond the Axis of Evil,” and in it he threatened that states that do not “renounce terror and abandon weapons of mass destruction...can expect to become our targets.” Like Iraq. A spokesman for the Cuban Interests Section in Washington labeled this attack “a big lie and a big slander.”

Bolton is a rabid right-winger and protégé of ultra-conservative former senator Jesse Helms. But he was not off on a tangent of his own. The same accusation against Cuba was made two months earlier in Congressional testimony by Carl Ford, the undersecretary of state for intelligence and research. This is the first time the U.S. has charged Cuba with developing chemical/biological arms. Washington offered no proof of its allegations, and when challenged, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer retreated into nebulous talk of “concerns.” That did not stop bioweapons “expert” Judith Miller from writing a scurrilous piece in the *New York Times* (7 May 2002) retailing the trumped-up claims and quoting unnamed “administration officials” who said the U.S. “believes that Cuba has been experimenting with anthrax.” The Center for Defense Information published an article skewering Bolton, titled “Cuba: Bioweapons Threat or Political Punching Bag?” (22 May 2002). Even former U.S. president Jimmy Carter dismissed the politically motivated charges during a visit to Cuba’s famed biomedical research center.

What is true is that Cuba has become a world leader in biotechnology research and production. Cuban researchers at the Finlay Institute and the Western Havana Scientific Pole have produced a number of important new drugs, including a meningitis vaccine, a vaccine for hepatitis B and medicines for treating diseases afflicting the impoverished populations of “Third World” countries which are typically ignored by the profit-driven multinational giants of “Big Pharma.” Cuba’s investment in scientific education (it has 2 percent of Latin America’s population and 22 percent of the region’s scientists) could potentially reap large export earnings in desperately needed hard currency.

As Washington tries to tighten the screws on the four-decade-old embargo on Cuba in an attempt to strangle the country economically, the U.S. wants to shut down this key

industry. This bureaucratically deformed workers state has been a prime target of Yankee imperialism in its drive to “roll back” the Cuban Revolution and to spike revolutionary struggle throughout the hemisphere. Trotskyists defend Cuba against counterrevolution, external and internal, while fighting for workers political revolution to replace the Castro bureaucracy, with its nationalist outlook, by a revolutionary internationalist workers government dedicated to extending the revolution throughout South, Central and North America and the Caribbean.

While accusations of biological warfare by Cuba are utterly bogus, a typical Cold War “disinformation” campaign, *the United States government has a long history of using biological and chemical warfare against the Caribbean island nation.* In 1961-62, the CIA’s infamous “Operation Mongoose” sought to cause sickness among sugar cane workers by spreading chemicals on the cane fields. U.S. agents repeatedly contaminated exported Cuban sugar. The CIA later admitted that during the 1960s it undertook clandestine anti-crop warfare “research” targeting a number of countries under its MK-ULTRA program, but claimed its records had been destroyed. At the end of the decade, as Castro tried to mobilize the population to bring in ten million tons of sugar, in addition to the regime’s rampant bureaucratic snafus the CIA sabotaged the harvest by seeding clouds to cause torrential rains in nearby provinces while leaving the cane fields parched (see William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* [Common Courage Press, 1995]).

After that “success,” the U.S. moved on to introduce African swine fever to Cuba in 1971. This was the first outbreak of swine fever in the Western Hemisphere. As a result of the epidemic, Cuba was forced to slaughter the entire pig population (some 500,000 animals), eliminating the supply of pork, a staple of the Cuban diet. When Cuban government spokesmen first accused Washington of unleashing the biological attack, U.S. officials dismissed this with a wave of the hand. However, six years later, following the post-Watergate Congressional investigations of skullduggery by U.S. intelligence agencies, a New York paper reported that a “U.S. intelligence source” told the paper that “he was given the virus in a sealed, unmarked container at a U.S. Army base and CIA training ground in Panama with instructions to turn it over to the anti-Castro group” (“CIA Link to Cuban Pig Virus Reported,” *Newsday*, 10 January 1977). The article explained in detail how the virus was transferred from Fort Gulick to Cuba.

A decade later, the U.S. introduced a virulent strain of dengue fever in Cuba, as a result of which 273,000 people on the island came down with the illness and 158 died, including 101 children. An article in *Covert Action* (Summer 1982) detailed U.S. experiments with dengue fever at the Army’s Fort Detrick chemical/biological warfare center and its research into the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito which delivers

it. The article noted that only Cuba of all the Caribbean countries was affected, and concluded that “the dengue epidemic *could* have been a covert U.S. operation.” Two years later, a leader of the Omega 7 *gusano* (Cuban counterrevolutionary) terrorist group, Eduardo Victor Arocena Pérez, admitted (in a Manhattan trial in which he was convicted of murdering an attaché of the Cuban Mission to the UN) that one of their groups had a mission to “carry some germs to introduce them in Cuba to be used against the Soviets and against the Cuban economy, to begin what was called chemical war” just before simultaneous outbreaks of hemorrhagic dengue fever, hemorrhagic conjunctivitis, tobacco mold, sugar cane fungus and a new outbreak of African swine fever (*Covert Action*, Fall 1984).

These are only a few of the most spectacular and best documented cases of U.S. biological warfare against Cuba. James Banford in his book *Body of Secrets* (Doubleday, 2001) revealed that while the Pentagon was refining plans for a biological strike on Cuba, in “Operation Northwoods” the U.S. military developed plans to fake incidents to cause popular outrage. These included shooting people on American streets, sinking refugee boats on the high seas and blowing up a U.S. ship in Guantánamo. These were no mere contingency plans. They were drawn up by rabidly anti-Communist general Lyman Lemnitzer, head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the suggestion of U.S. president (former general) Eisenhower, and were signed by all of the service chiefs. But they pale in comparison with the operation code-named “Marshall Plan,” which was to have been unleashed if U.S. forces invaded Cuba at the time of the 1962 missile crisis.

The plan was to attack all of Cuba with incapacitating agents, in a biological strike that would affect millions of Cubans. The scientific director at Fort Detrick said that one alternative considered was spraying Cuban troops with le-

thal botulinum toxin, arguing that this would be “a good thing” since it would save American lives in an invasion. Judith Miller, who reported this plan in her book *Germs: Biological Weapons and America’s Secret War* (Simon & Schuster, 2001), says that it involved a “cocktail” of two germs and a biological toxin producing extreme nausea, fevers of up to 106 degrees Fht. (close to what produces comas and death), Venezuelan equine encephalitis and Q fever. “Teams at Pine Bluff [the main U.S. chemical weapons plant] made thousands of gallons of the cocktail, enough to fill a swimming pool,” Miller reports. The head of Pine Bluff argued, “We could move our forces in and take over the country and that would be it.”


The Fort Detrick director argued that there was “a humane aspect” to the plan, because it would reduce the number of casualties from fighting. The plan was to spray from East to West, to take advantage of the prevailing trade winds, and blanket Havana. And this “humane” U.S. biological warfare would “only” kill 1 to 2 percent of the Cuban population. Given the island’s population of roughly 7 million at the time, this means *the Pentagon was planning to kill between 70,000 and 140,000 Cuban civilians*. Actual fatalities would probably have been far higher. When Harvard biologist Matthew Meselson learned of the plan, he went to his former colleague McGeorge Bundy, the evil genius of the Vietnam War who was U.S. president John Kennedy’s national security advisor. Bundy promised that the Marshall Plan would be kept out of the war plans. But according to Miller, “In fact, the germs stayed in the war plans, former officials said.”

And the U.S. government dares to accuse Cuba of possible biological warfare!

Defend Cuba against bloodthirsty Yankee imperialism!

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Reforging of the Fourth International**

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For Revolutionary Defense of Cuba!

Free the Cuban Five!



Fernando González



Ramón Labañino



Antonio Guerrero



Gerardo Hernández



René González

Heroic Fighters Against U.S. Imperialist Terror

**No to the Democrats – Imperialist War Party from Bay of Pigs to Iraq
Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

The following article was published in The Internationalist No. 27, May-June 2008

On June 5, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta upheld the convictions of the “Cuban Five.” The sentences of René González (15 years) and Gerardo Hernández (2 life sentences plus 15 years) were upheld. At the same time, the three-judge panel vacated the sentences of the other three. Ramón Labañino (life sentence plus 18 years), Fernando González (19 years) and Antonio Guerrero (life plus 10 years) are to be resentenced in a hearing to be held in Miami, which is notoriously infested by Cuban *gusanos* (“worms”), the counterrevolutionary scum who for decades have waged a dirty terrorist war against the Cuban people. The Five have committed no crime, but rather they heroically risked their lives to defend the Cuban Revolution against terror attacks launched from the U.S. *We demand that the Cuban Five be freed, now!*

For almost a decade the Cuban Five have been held in separate federal high security prisons in Florida, California, Colorado, Kentucky and Indiana. They were among ten Cuban immigrants arrested in September 1998 and accused of being part of a Cuban spy ring. At the time, prosecutors presented evidence that the five had infiltrated the *gusano* outfit *Hermanos al Rescate* (Brothers to the Rescue) and other ultrarightist terror groups in Miami. Some were also accused of conspiracy to commit espionage. Since there was no evidence of secret U.S. military or intelligence information being obtained, or even sought, the prosecutors later threw in the additional charge of conspiracy to commit murder. Under draconian U.S. conspiracy laws no actual espionage or murder has to be proved, only a supposed agreement (even implicit) to commit such acts.

There is no question that the Five sought to obtain information about the activities of *gusano* terrorists in Miami, and that they successfully infiltrated some of these murder-

ous squads. The information they supplied to Havana was then passed on to the U.S. government. When Washington naturally did nothing about it (after all, the U.S. is the sponsor of these mercenaries), the Cubans gave the *New York Times* names and addresses of these assassins, and locations of their paramilitary training camps. The *Times*, which considers itself the quintessence of the “free but responsible” imperialist press, didn’t publish a word about this, just as it suppressed news of preparations for the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. The Five also reportedly gathered information about U.S. military activities, but all of this was gleaned from publicly available sources.

The legal odyssey of the Cuban Five is a case history in capitalist injustice. The 2001 trial was held in Miami, home to 650,000 Cuban exiles. The right-wing press whipped up a hysteria against the government of Fidel Castro. The foreman of the jury openly expressed his hatred of the Cuban leader, and the jury declared the defendants guilty on all 26 counts without asking a single question. In August 2005, a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously threw out all the convictions and ordered a new trial on the grounds of the location and prejudicial publicity. But the U.S. government appealed the ruling to the full court, which in November 2005 reinstated the original convictions. The defense then appealed, leading to the latest ruling by another three-judge panel of this court.

Various human rights organizations have objected to the rigged trial and persecution of the Cuban Five. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights denounced the arbitrary detention of the prisoners, calling on the U.S. to rectify this abuse. Amnesty International has criticized the U.S.’ refusal to grant visas to the wives of René González and Gerardo Hernández so that they can visit their imprisoned husbands. Eighteen Nobel prize winners have written to the U.S. attorney general asking for release of the

Five. All of this has predictably fallen on deaf ears, for the Yankee imperialists are still desperate to crush the Cuban Revolution almost half a century after Castro's guerrillas toppled the corrupt U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista on 1 January 1959.

A number of the defenders of the Cuban Five seek to tiptoe around the issue of the *Hermanos al Rescate*, two of whose planes were shot down by Cuban Air Force pilots on 24 February 1996. They emphasize that there is no evidence that the Five "conspired" to have the *gusano* planes shot down, which is true. But as Trotskyists who defend Cuba against imperialism, we unequivocally *defend the shoot-down of the Hermanos planes* as an act of self-defense. The planes violated Cuban airspace that day and had repeatedly done so in the previous weeks. A Cuban air force pilot who had infiltrated the Hermanos gang returned to Cuba to denounce their provocative activities at a press conference the day before the incident. The U.S. was well aware of these brazen provocations. An internal State Department memo warned that "one of these days the Cubans will shoot down one of these planes." On February 24, the pilots were told by Cuban air traffic control that they were entering prohibited airspace and putting themselves in danger. The Hermanos leader, Bay of Pigs veteran and "ex-"CIA agent José Basulto laughed (he survived), and they continued on.

The United States has waged a relentless war on Cuba, from the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion to the hundreds of plots to assassinate Fidel Castro to the decades-long economic embargo aimed at starving the island into submission. The *gusano* terrorist attacks could not take place without the knowledge, and in many cases outright approval of the U.S. government. These include the bombing of hotels and tourist spots in Havana, the murder of a Cuban diplomat on the streets of New York, the attempted bombing of the Cuban mission to the United Nations, and the shooting down of a Cubana Airlines plane in October 1976, killing all 73 people on board. The authors of that attack, Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles, who has admitted organizing terrorist bombings, walk freely around Miami, protected by the U.S., while the heroic Cuban Five have been jailed for almost a decade.

Bourgeois liberals may criticize a blatantly rigged trial, but they are not about to defend Cuba. After all, Democrat John F. Kennedy launched the Bay of Pigs invasion and it was the Democratic administration of Bill Clinton that arrested the Cuban Five. Recently, the presumptive Democratic nominee Barack Obama on May 23 gave a disgusting speech at a Cuban American National Foundation luncheon in which he vituperated against the "tyranny" of the Castro regime! This from a representative of U.S. imperialism which maintains its infamous torture center at the Guantánamo Naval Base stolen from Cuba. Those defenders of the Cuban Five who look to Democratic "elected officials" to aid them are searching in vain.

Likewise, Noam Chomsky and other liberal luminaries viciously denounced Cuba when in 2003 it jailed scores of Cubans who had been meeting with U.S. diplomats and receiving U.S. funds, and executed several hijackers of a ferry. The arrests and ferry hijacking took place in the immediate aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, when the



Photojournalista

Protest outside federal building in New York against court decision on Cuban Five case, June 6.

Bush regime was using its "shock and awe" strategy of massive bombing to create panic in Baghdad. No doubt it hoped to provoke a wave of "raft people" heading into the Caribbean from Cuba as well. Shamefully, various opportunist would-be socialists from the outright reformists of the International Socialist Organization to the centrist pseudo-Trotskyist Spartacist League joined the liberal hue and cry, at a crucial moment when it was the duty of all revolutionaries to stand at their posts in defense of Cuba.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International oppose the death penalty in Cuba as we do in the United States and throughout the world. We denounced the 1990 Stalinist show trial of General Arnaldo Ochoa, which was part of an effort to gain favor with the U.S. in the "war on drugs." But the execution of the ferry hijackers was an elementary matter of military defense against a counterrevolutionary act of war, to which it was necessary to give a firm response. Some of the initial appeals for the Cuban Five sought common ground with the U.S. against "terrorism." Yet the U.S. government is by far the greatest sponsor of state terrorism in the world, much of it directed against Cuba. Indeed, the Five were arrested shortly after the Cuban government handed information they had gathered about *gusano* terrorist activity to the U.S. Washington's predictable response was to arrest the messengers, not the terrorists.

We Trotskyists defend the Cuban bureaucratically deformed workers state against imperialism – first and foremost the U.S. imperialists, but also against their Spanish, British and Canadian counterparts – while fighting for a workers political revolution to

oust the bureaucracy and defend the gains of the Cuban Revolution against the danger of counter-revolution from within and without. It is no secret that important elements of the Cuban bureaucracy would like to negotiate a deal with Washington. Yet the U.S. imperialists have made it quite clear that they are not the least interested in “peaceful coexistence” with a Cuban workers state, and any restoration of capitalism on the island will be a bloody affair. With the retirement of Fidel Castro and the substitution of his brother Raúl at the helm, the imperialists will seek to intensify pressure on the besieged island.

Key to a revolutionary defense of the Cuban Five is the fight to extend the revolution internationally. It is necessary to break with all the capitalist parties of war and counterrevolution; to forge Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard parties of the working class in the U.S., Cuba and throughout the world; and to mobilize the workers movement, oppressed racial minorities and all opponents of imperialism in the United States in defense of Cuba. The Cuban Five understand the link between the struggle for their freedom and that of other class-war prisoners in the U.S., including Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier. We demand that the Cuban Five be immediately released and returned to Cuba where they will be rightly greeted as heroes. We demand that Posada Carriles and Bosch be extradited to Cuba to stand trial before a jury of the relatives of their victims. We demand freedom now for Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier! And we demand that the Guantánamo naval base be returned to Cuba and the inmates of this infamous imperialist torture center be set free! ■

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An Answer to Some Slanders

As tensions built leading up to and following the collapse of Stalinist rule in the USSR and East Europe, disputes erupted inside the Spartacist League and International Communist League over Cuba. Jan Norden, who was editor of *Workers Vanguard* from 1973 until 1996 as well as member of the Central Committee and Political Bureau, and Marjorie Stamberg, a member of the editorial board and CC, were slanderously attacked as being pro-Stalinist. These smears were repeated in the SL's article justifying its bureaucratic purge, printed in *Workers Vanguard* No. 648, 5 July 1996.

The WV hatchet job claimed that “Norden also had a Stalinoid bent particularly vis-à-vis Castro's Cuba, which was expressed, perhaps most grotesquely, in initial attempts to alibi the Stalinist show trial and execution of General Ochoa on charges of international drug dealing.” It added that “Norden insisted on ‘disproving’ Washington's claims that the Havana regime was involved in the drug trade by upholding Castro's integrity,” and goes on to claim that “to assert, as Norden did,

that Castro couldn't tell a lie about this was a statement of blind faith in the Cuban Stalinist bureaucracy.”

The article on the Ochoa trial is included in this compilation (see page 40), so readers can see for themselves that we said no such thing. We did not apologize for the show trial, uphold Castro's integrity or claim he couldn't tell a lie. The fact is that several comrades objected to the statement in our article that Washington's claims that the Castro regime was running drugs, retailed by Julia Preston in the *New York Review of Books* (a notoriously anti-communist publication of the liberal intelligentsia), “were absurd on the face of it.” And the article explained why this was so, that such activity would lay Cuba open to military attack by the Yankee imperialists (who themselves are up to their necks in the drug traffic). In fact, the objectors were claiming that Washington's lies were plausible, if not true. They were succumbing to liberal imperialist propaganda.

After a heated debate, a “clarification” was published in the next issue of *Workers Vanguard* (which is included in the

article published here) that did not take back one word of the original article and simply further explained why what was written in the article denouncing the Ochoa show trial was true. But in order to justify the expulsions, this invention was dug up and recycled. The careful reader will note that nowhere did the “new” *WV* quote what Norden allegedly asserted. This is the hallmark of professional fabricators, which is what the latter-day *WV* and *SL* have become.

The second fight was over a report on a trip by Norden and Stamberg to Cuba in 1993, at the height of the economic crisis caused by the disappearance of Soviet aid. *WV*'s purge article simply invents a statement by Stamberg, that “The Cuban revolution is going to make it,” and then takes her to task for saying that people were prepared to fight and Cuban workers “are class conscious.” *WV* counters by quoting some nameless comrade saying, “They are not class conscious. It’s populist consciousness; it’s exactly the consciousness that the Stalinists have instilled.” Readers can read the two speeches about the 1993 Cuba trip (see page 42 and 49 of this bulletin), which were printed in *WV* at the time, and where they will find none of the spurious statements the *SL* expellers attribute to the expellees. Instead, they will find a detailed analysis of why and how the Cuban Revolution was (and still is) in peril, and why the Castro regime is “at a dead end.”

Meanwhile, the *SL*'s claim that Cuban workers are *not* class conscious but only have populist consciousness is part of a broader view of semi-colonial countries in the *SL/ICL* today that is heavily influenced by imperialist arrogance. In Mexico, the *ICL* insisted that Mexican workers are so infused with bourgeois nationalist consciousness that they can't even form a popular front – at the very moment (1997) when a popular-front candidate was elected to head the government of the federal district (Mexico City). The following year, the *SL* junked its longstanding position of calling for independence for Puerto Rico, on the grounds that Puerto Ricans don't vote for it in colonial referendums. Thus they motivate their own capitulations to imperialism by blaming the backward consciousness of the working masses.

More recently, in January 2010 and for three months thereafter, the *SL/ICL* scandalously supported, and then upheld its support, for U.S. occupation of Haiti under the guise of providing aid to the survivors of the January 12 earthquake. Once again they heaped lie upon distortion upon fabrication upon smear of the Internationalist Group and *LFI* in order to justify their grotesque support for Yankee imperialism's “humanitarian” invasion of Haiti, a semicolonial country. They sneered about “romantic” illusions and supposed “Third World nationalism” of the *IG* in order to praise the Pentagon's tanks and special forces for being the only forces capable of delivering needed aid – at the very moment when the U.S. military was in fact blocking aid and refusing to let medical flights land so Washington could bring in more troops!

Beyond the despicable antics of these poseurs who would drag the revolutionary banner of Trotskyism into the mud, a clear understanding of the nature of the Cuban Revolution and the Stalinist regime in Havana is fundamental to revolutionary struggle throughout Latin America and the

world. At a time when the United States under the liberal Democrat Obama is once again fomenting coups (such as in Honduras), invading Caribbean countries (Haiti) and intensifying threats against bourgeois-nationalist Venezuela and the bureaucratically deformed workers state in Cuba, it is vital that revolutionaries combine their uncompromising, unconditional defense of Cuba and the Cuban Revolution with no less intransigent struggle to build a genuinely communist, Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard that can lead the fight for workers political revolution in Cuba to defend the gains of the past and extend them by fighting for permanent revolution throughout Latin America and for workers revolution “in the belly of the imperialist beast.”

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The Internationalist
No. 39 April-May 2015 50¢

Baltimore Rises Up Over Police Murder of Freddie Gray – National Guard, State Police Impose Emergency Rule

Defend Black Baltimore Cops and Troops Out!

For Labor Black / Immigrant Mobilization Against Police Killings Stamp Out Racist Cop Terror – Fight for Workers Revolution



April 17 Baltimore, Md. – The national news anchor of the Baltimore Sun, Michael Smith, said that the Baltimore Police Department's "shoot-to-kill" policy was "the most racist and brutal" he had ever seen. This is the same Baltimore Police Department that shot Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old Black man, in the back of the head while he was in custody. The Baltimore Sun's editorial board also called the police's actions "racist and brutal".

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May Day Oakland Port Shutdown Against Racist Cop Terror

On May 1, 2015, Oakland, California, workers and community members gathered for a May Day demonstration. The event was held in solidarity with the Black community and against the racist and brutal actions of the Oakland Police Department. The demonstration was a success, with thousands of people participating and demanding an end to the police's "shoot-to-kill" policy.

The Internationalist, newspaper of the Internationalist Group/U.S.

Revolución Permanente
Nº 5 abril de 2015 \$5

Masacre de Igualta: fue el asesino estado capitalista

Ayotzinapa: Para lograr justicia, luchar por la revolución socialista



El 26 de septiembre de 2014, en el estado de Guerrero, México, se llevó a cabo una masacre en el pueblo de Igualta. Los responsables de esta masacre fueron los agentes del estado capitalista. La masacre fue el resultado de la lucha por la justicia y la revolución socialista.

Asamblea Constituyente, (trampa burguesa!)

¡Huelga nacional rumbo a un gobierno obrero y campesino! ¡Forjar un partido obrero revolucionario!

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Revolución Permanente, newspaper of the Grupo Internacinalista/México

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Balanco da greve: história de uma vil traição

Reformistas apunham greve histórica do magistério fluminense



Os culpados do fracasso: a liderança PSOL-PTSTU, junto com governistas do PT-PC do RJ do BEPE-RJ

Reformistas apunham a greve do magistério fluminense. A greve histórica do magistério fluminense foi interrompida pelos reformistas da liderança PSOL-PTSTU, junto com governistas do PT-PC do RJ do BEPE-RJ.

Os culpados do fracasso: a liderança PSOL-PTSTU, junto com governistas do PT-PC do RJ do BEPE-RJ

Vanguarda Operária, newspaper of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

octubre de 2010 No. 8 US\$ 2 México \$10

Internacionalista

¡Forjar un partido obrero revolucionario!

México: La clase obrera entre la espada y la pared



Dossier Cananea: un siglo de lucha de clases... 14, 43-59
La batalla del SME y el frente popular electoral... 17-42

Elecciones en Brasil: la buguesia opta por la continuidad lulista... 3

Argentina 81, Bolivia 84, Chile 85, Ecuador 81, Francia 42, Venezuela B F 2

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On August 9, 2014, a 18-year-old Black man, Michael Brown, was shot and killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. His death was the result of a police officer's excessive use of force. Brown's death was part of a larger pattern of police brutality and racism in the United States.

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