
SPARTACIST DISCUSSION BULLETINS
TABLE OF CONTENTS--1961-68

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>
*NOTES ON THE CUBAN DISCUSSION WITHIN THE REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCY (Summary of remarks made in oral discussion) --20 July 1961	Tim Wohlforth ✓
*CUBA AND THE DEFORMED WORKERS STATES (Preliminary Discussion Draft) --20 July 1961	Tim Wohlforth ✓
*LETTER TO ED --18 October 1961	James Robertson ✓
*DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE CUBAN REVOLUTION (With additions by Robertson) 20 November 1961	SHANE MAGE ✓
NOTES ON THE CUBAN DISCUSSION WITHIN THE REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCY (Summary of remarks made in oral discussion --30 April 1963)	James Robertson
CUBA AND THE DEFORMED WORKERS STATES (Preliminary discussion draft).	Tim Wohlforth
THE CASE OF CHARLES SMITH	
1. LETTER TO SMITH BY JAMES ROBERTSON (2 June 1965)	
2. LETTER TO ROBERTSON BY CHARLES SMITH (8 June 1965)	
3. LETTER TO SMITH BY ALBERT NELSON (10 June 1965)	
4. ENDORSEMENT OF NELSON LETTER BY REB (14 June 1965)	
5. LETTER TO NELSON BY CHARLES SMITH (12 June 1965)	
6. DECISION TO TRY CHARLES SMITH BY REB (28 June 1965)	
7. LETTER TO SMITH BY LYNDON HENRY (7 July 1965)	
8. LETTER OF RESIGNATION BY CHARLES SMITH (6 July 1965)	
9. EXPULSION OF CHARLES SMITH BY REB (12 July 1965)	
10. STATEMENT ON SMITH BY NELSON FOR REB (21 July 1965)	
PREFACE: ON THE FOUNDING CONFERENCE BY JR FOR THE REB (15 July 1966)	James Robertson

THE WOHLFORTH DOCUMENT BY LM
(June 1966)

Lynn Marcus
(LaRouche)

DRAFT TASKS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE SPARTACIST
LEAGUE

(Report of the AFCI Drafting Committee--
25 March 1966)

L. Marcus,
(LaRouche)
D. Van Ronk

SOME COMMENTS ON PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUSED
MOVEMENT

(31 March 1966--With attached motion of
AFCI Coordinating Committee, 20 March 1966)

Tim Wohlforth

THESES ON BUILDING THE REVOLUTIONARY
MOVEMENT IN THE U.S.--TASKS OF THE SPARTACIST
LEAGUE, THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR THE FOURTH
INTERNATIONAL BY THE SPARTACIST DELEGATION TO
THE LONDON IC CONFERENCE
(6 April 1966)

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE NEGRO STRUGGLE

Lynne Harper,
M. Small
(Klein)

LETTER TO ROBERTSON BY VOIX OUVRIERE--U.C.I.
(20 June 1966)

Denise

TO ANSWER SOME LIES BY VOIX OUVRIERE--U.C.I.
(7 June 1966)

ABOUT THE P.O.I. BY VOIX OUVRIERE--U.C.I.
(21 June 1966)

DISCUSSION ON PRELIMINARY DRAFT THESES
"TASKS OF THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE" BY
THE ITHACA LOCAL COMMITTEE
(26 June 1966)

AMENDMENT ON PRESS POLICY TO "THESES . . .
ON TASKS OF THE S.L."

Chris Kinder,
Dee Kinder

PERSPECTIVES ON OUR PUBLIC PRESS
(NYC Uptown--29 August 1966)

Mark Tishman

LETTER ON THE SMITH CASE
(11 September 1965)

Everett Wilder

FINANCES--PROPOSAL FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE REB
(NYC Downtown--24 July 1966)

R. Ross,
D. Rosenberg

ORGANIZATIONAL METHODS

Kay Ellens

*TOWARDS BUILDING THE AGITATIONAL PARTY
September 1, 1966

BOB SHERWOOD
Jaime Smith
Joe Clark
Bob Kauffman

THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE, THE MINORITY AND
VOIX OUVRIERE
(6 August 1968)

Liz Gordon

"POLITICALIZING" TO AVOID POLITICS
(13 August 1968)

Jerry E.,
Kay E.,
(Ellens),
Shirley S.

ONCE AGAIN ON VO

Liz Gordon

FACT, FACTION AND THE "VO CONTROVERSY"
(28 August 1968)

Dave Cunningham

LETTER TO THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE
(for Socialist Current, 2 September 1968)

S. Levy

CRAWFORD-GORDON EXCHANGE ON THE SL DISPUTE AND VO
(6 August 1968-21 October 1968)

*Document added after 10/1/89

NOTES ON THE CUBAN DISCUSSION WITHIN THE
REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCY

(Summary of remarks made in oral discussion)

(1) The spawning since 1943 of a whole series of anti-capitalist states in various of the more backward portions of the world has impaled the world Trotskyist movement on assorted dilemma horns. The theoretical impasse and political crisis for the movement arises through the apparent absence of either proletarian base or Bolshevik leadership to the revolutionary civil wars waged in Yugoslavia, China, Indo-China, or Cuba. An additional consideration involves the Cuban revolution whose victorious leadership was not Stalinist in its origins.

Trotskyists have reacted in four kinds of ways in measuring this twenty-year development and in assigning plus and minus signs from the standpoint of the road to socialism: (1) Some, currently Swabeck over China, come to convince themselves that the revolutions in question are clearly proletarian and with a Marxist-Leninist leadership to match. This position continually eliminates itself by the defection from the Trotskyist movement of its supporters and indeed is nothing but an overt writing off of authentic revolutionary working class struggle of which Trotskyism is nothing other than the consistent program in historic depth; (2) The SWP Majority and the European Pabloites have come, by and large and with certain formal pretense to the contrary notwithstanding, to view the revolutions as basically sound, but with any flaws present to be located in the leaderships which are insufficient, unconscious or absent. (Once holders of this view find the leaderships to have become generally sufficient, conscious and present, centrism becomes galloping revisionism rapidly leaving the arena of alleged Trotskyism.) (3) Those who hold the views expressed in these notes look upon the revolutions as fundamentally defective, limited, and moreover with leaderships to match; (4) Finally those who share the stand of the SLL as expressed in 'Trotskyism Betrayed' generate an approach that in large measure either denies that social revolution, solid or defective, has taken place at all and correspondingly that the leaderships are capitalist-bonapartist; or else as over China leave inexplicable the admitted fundamental transformation.

Several observations about this spread in approach are evident. (a) The symmetry between our and Swabeck's positions flows from our both seeing the revolutions and their leaderships as in consonance with one another. (b) The basis for a common stand between ourselves and those such as the SLL exists at this juncture because the same programmatic points flow from each approach. (c) The position of the French IC group is one of straddling the last two basic viewpoints-- thus the amorphousness of 'phantom-like capitalist' or of 'transitional' states.

(2) More specifically, the position of the French IC'ists suffers from the central weakness that it views the Cuban

revolution as analogous to the Spanish experience of the 1930's in which the Stalinist forces propped up the 'Loyalist Government'--an insubstantial capitalist regime--in the face of a raging proletarian revolution and by repression and terror smashed that revolution. The analogy is not merely defective--it emphasizes exactly what is not in common between Spain and Cuba--a bona-fide workers' revolution!

Moreover the French comrades make sweeping denials of the significance or applicability of all elements in the Cuban situation which might be deemed to have led to a fundamental and decisive break from internal and world capitalism. But the depth and extent of the denials are too great. The Chinese revolution, a true analogue to the Cuban, falls under this ban as well. Thus the interpretation 'proves' too much; that is, it does not accurately reflect the true structure of reality.

The phrase 'structural assimilation' and the nebulous but 'magical' qualities attributed to it by some Trotskyists are irrelevant to the Cuban discussion. The phrase was a way for the Trotskyist movement to convince itself that, following the victory of the Soviet Army in Eastern Europe, in certain cases the Kremlin was actually sufficiently unconciliatory to capitalism as to consolidate economic and state power in the wake of military conquest. What is presently under discussion is the creation of those states which came into existence essentially independent of any immediate or direct role of the Soviet Union.

(3) The entire structure of the French IC theoretical viewpoint flows from the initial premise which is treated as axiomatic that any kind of workers state must originate in a workers revolution.

Hence (a) the class nature of the state issuing out of the Cuban revolution is not determined by indigenous events--likewise for China, Yugoslavia, Indo-China--since manifestly the working class was not essentially involved in the domestic revolutionary processes.

And (b) 'structural assimilation' is the way in which these states have had transmitted to them the workers state quality of the only workers revolution still extant, the Russian October of forty-five years ago.

And (c) the proof of 'structural assimilation' as the decisive link in the change in the class character of these new regimes is that they have become in every way in essence identical with the Soviet Union, hence must have been 'structurally assimilated.'

As an aside (d) it is suggested that there are capitalist states (Burma, Egypt, etc.) which have pretty much the same formal economic structure as the emergent anti-capitalist regimes, but which lack the vital sharing in the Russian 'original good' and so cannot transcend state-capitalism.

Sad to say, this example of pure scholasticism is the central core of such a theoretical insight. A critical way of putting its substance is to suggest that in this view 'the class character of a state is determined by its foreign policy'!

(4) In the present discussion it has been proposed that we base our position upon our 'Draft Resolution on the Cuban Revolution,' a three page YSA document printed in Young Socialist Forum No. 15, December 1961. The most serious criticism of this document arises out of its very excellence at many points. As presented, the resolution only makes sense in the context of its viewing Cuba as a deformed workers state; but none-the-less, the characterization is withheld. With the passage of another year and a half, it is high time to grant it! For example, all of the shortcomings and weaknesses of the Cuban revolution as cited in the resolution and all of the measures and demands proposed to combat them are consistent only with the view of Cuba as a variety of deformed workers state. No suggestion is offered at any point in the draft resolution that capitalism still needed to be eliminated in Cuba! (Except that basic consideration common to the entire Soviet bloc that a bureaucratic ruling stratum is itself a reflection of the dominance of capitalist imperialism in the world.)

(5) There is no need among partisans of the deformed workers state interpretation to be excessively modest in upholding the position. There is sometimes encountered a feeling that this view is perhaps the best around--but the best of a bad lot. Essentially this deprecation arises from the circumstance that the theory explains events deeply repugnant to genuine Trotskyists--non-proletarian leaderships and bases in mass struggles--and some of the feeling rubs off. But the dissatisfaction and the ambiguities are lodged in the realities of the interval since the Second World War, not in a now adequate theoretical interpretation and guide to action. The theory has the necessary values of a simplicity to the extent reality will allow, predictability (thus in knowing how the movement should intervene in colonial situations so as to break up the peasant-based military formations by a polarization process through working class activity and in direct opposition to, e.g., section 13. of the SWP Majority's 'For the Early Reunification of the Fourth International'), and as a sharp tool for historical analysis, e.g., as in recognizing the decisive points in the chronology of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, i.e., focusing on the pivot point at the end of the year 1923 over who ruled, for what aims, and by what method.

(6) The fullest and best available document analyzing the Cuban revolution as having led to a deformed workers state is Wohlforth's draft of July 1961, 'Cuba and the Deformed Workers States.'

This document is divided into six sections:

1. Their Method and Ours
2. The Evolution of Cuba
3. Workers States and Deformed Workers States
4. The State in Transition
5. The Role of the Working Class
6. The Political Revolution

Of the material covered in these sections, there are two points about which some reservations should be made. Section 4, the State in Transition, has throughout a rather superficial quality. At one point Wohlforth was reduced to taking refuge in some dubious 'dialectics' to slide over difficulties in his explanations. These difficulties arose out of not paying sufficient attention to the prior history and nature of the newly victorious states which had won in geographically separated dual power situations, i.e., civil wars.

In Section 6, the Political Revolution in Cuba, the call is made 'for us to advocate a political revolution in Cuba.' Yet it is asserted to be one which could be consummated without organizing 'an armed insurrection;' thus hope is seen for the possibility of a 'non-violent political revolution.' Particularly for Cuba this tactical outlook gets matters twisted. The reasons for this approach seem to be taken in large measure from dubious formal definitions contrasting Cuba with pre-1933 Soviet Union.

These criticism should not be allowed to obscure the general correctness and clarity of the document in systematically presenting the deformed workers state interpretation of contemporary Cuba.

(7) Both the delineation of a more considered approach to the political revolution in Cuba and a useful summary for these notes as a whole is found in the letter of 24 February 1963 from J. Robertson to B. Martin, which formally proposed opening a Tendency-wide Cuban discussion in preparation for the party convention:

"As you probably know, I hold that Cuba is a 'deformed workers state,' more precisely expressed by me as a 'workers state of the second kind,' or to put it empirically, as a 'state resulting from the same kind of revolutionary process as won in Yugoslavia and China.' Further, I think 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'). Not only has the Cuban regime issued out of a revolution like China and Yugoslavia (and unlike Stalin's Russia which was created in a political counter-revolution), but in addition in Cuba the lack of a prior formed bureaucratic party and system of rule, i.e., full-blown Stalinist practice, left an initial 'openness' to the undeniable rule from above. 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 were doing in their press up to the time it was closed down.'

(8) Therefore I stand for the adoption by the Revolutionary Tendency of the general line of the viewpoint developed in 'Cuba and the Deformed Workers States.'

James Robertson, 30 April 1963

(expurgated version for use in class on 'The Russian Question--from the October Revolution to Cuba', 24 November 1964.)

Preliminary Discussion Draft:

CUBA AND THE DEFORMED WORKERS STATES

Their Method and Ours:

Ever since the beginning of the discussion of Cuba in the Party, the majority has sought to stampede us into coming to an immediate position on the nature of the Cuban state. For the party majority there was little difficulty in arriving at a position. Their method was that of impressionistic empiricism. They simply described what Cuba appeared to be at the moment and called this description--a theory!

We properly rejected this whole method. We said that Marxists must do more than describe what appears at the moment. It is our task to view political and social developments in process, in motion. We must study them as they evolve and put this evolution within the framework of the whole world situation and of our whole theoretical outlook. Thus we stated that it is impossible to understand what is at the moment unless we understand what had been and what will be.

We urge those who reproach us for 'not seeing the new reality quickly enough' to study the history of our world movement and to see what happened to others who earlier grasped the 'new reality' so quickly, embraced bureaucratic regimes so lovingly. These comrades embraced the new bureaucratic regimes in the hopes that these alien forces, rather than us, would carry through the socialist revolution. We will not be stampeded into junking Marxist method. We will take the time necessary to study the evolution of Cuba and to define the nature of the state on the basis of an understanding of this evolutionary process.

The Evolution of Cuba:

Most of us are quite familiar with the evolution of Cuba. Let me just sketch briefly those highlights of this evolution that are relevant to an understanding of the nature of the Cuban state. The Cuban Revolution was carried through by a radical petty-bourgeois nationalist group whose primary social base was a petty-bourgeois class--the peasantry. (In passing it is important to note that Che Guevara has specifically repudiated the Hansen-Sweezy thesis that the 26th of July Movement based itself on the rural proletariat in its earlier stages. He noted that in the mountains no such proletariat existed and that the organization based itself on the local peasantry.) Organizing itself in military fashion and utilizing the techniques of rural guerrillas, Castro was able to give cohesiveness to this otherwise unorganized peasant force and with this social grouping to topple a decaying capitalist regime.

Upon coming to power, Castro almost immediately destroyed the old Batista state apparatus and the army upon which it rested. He created a new administrative apparatus composed of the radical petty-bourgeois elements and based on the Rebel Army. From the

very beginning, the relations of this new bonapartist state to capitalist property were quite contradictory. While this new state apparatus based itself for at least a year and a half on these capitalist property relations, the force of the revolution and the opposition of imperialism to the democratic demands of the revolution forced the government to move against capitalist property relations--though in a sporadic, empirical way. However, the ability of the government to so act was at least in part attributable to the fact that the new government had broken up the old state apparatus and was therefore able to act in a bonapartist fashion partly independent of the capitalist class in Cuba.

This process, spurred on primarily by the hostility of U.S. capitalism, reached its culmination in the nationalizations of September, October 1960 which brought at least 80 % of industry, all significant industry, and the entire banking system, under direct government ownership. The agrarian reform, carried out in the previous spring, was not socialist but it was far more extensive than that in the USSR or Eastern Europe. This series of expropriations clearly wiped out of Cuba the national bourgeoisie. Further, the government established a complete monopoly of foreign trade and began a rudimentary form of economic planning.

The September-October nationalizations raised the question of whether the bonapartist governmental apparatus, continuing to be free of control by the working masses, would firmly base itself on the new property forms in Cuba or whether it would seek to return Cuba to essential capitalist relations. We can say that while the sweeping nationalizations of the September-October period laid the basis for Cuba becoming a deformed workers state, it was not automatically determined that the petty-bourgeois state apparatus would defend and develop these property forms. It was therefore incorrect, in my opinion, to characterize Cuba at that time a deformed workers state.

It was the invasion of April 17th which clearly showed that the Castro regime, for all its weaknesses, was definitely committed to the defense of the new property forms. This was shown first of all in the defense of the revolution which Castro carried through so well. More important, the invasion made it perfectly clear that imperialism was not interested in an accommodation with Castro. The imperialists were seeking first of all to overthrow the regime if at all possible. Should this not be possible, as I am sure they now realize, the imperialists wish to force Castro precisely into the arms of the USSR--into becoming a Stalinist country. For this way the imperialists are able to limit the appeal of Castro and contain the revolution. The policy of the U.S. State Department only makes sense if interpreted in this way (and believe it or not, there is a bit of method in their madness!)

Regardless of how we interpret the meaning of the invasion, it was immediately clear that Castro interpreted it as meaning

that he must definitively base himself on the new property forms and on his relations with the Soviet Bloc if his regime was to survive at all. This is the real meaning of his declaration that Cuba is a 'socialist' country. That Castro meant business and that this was no mere passing reference was soon made absolutely clear. A heavy drive towards the Stalinization of the country has been in full force since this declaration. In this respect it is important to note: (a) the Cuban press is now almost exclusively devoted to praise of the Stalinist countries and puts forward an essentially Stalinist political line; (b) economic relations have been stepped up with the deformed workers states; (c) the wide-scale net of arrests during the invasion revealed a highly developed secret police set-up which portends to be dangerous in the future because it is not under the control of the working class; (d) the drive for 'a single party of the revolution' which in the context of these other developments appears to be the setting up of the traditional Stalinist one-party rule, has been underway at fever pitch; (e) the moves against the Trotskyists are the final sign of the deformed nature of the regime.

Workers States and Deformed Workers States:

Our insistence from the very beginning of the discussion on the recognition of the qualitative difference between workers states and deformed workers states was perhaps the most important contribution we made in the whole discussion. Over the past fifteen years an unbelievable amount of theoretical confusion has been generated in all sections of our world movement because of lack of clarification on this central point.

Workers* and deformed workers states have two essentially different and mutually contradictory political systems even though they both rest on a foundation of nationalized property --of working class property forms. The deformed workers state is characterized by the rule of an uncontrolled petty-bourgeois bureaucracy which suppresses the working class and which has a counter-revolutionary outlook. This social stratum finds itself at all times to be in contradiction to the very property forms upon which it must base its rule. The real development of these forms requires the total destruction of this parasitic formation and the creation of a whole new state structure based on the direct rule of the working class. Therefore it takes a political revolution to transform a deformed workers state into a workers state.

* There has been a certain tendency to refer to workers states per se as 'healthy workers states.' This is because the term 'workers state' has been so freely applied to both workers states and deformed workers states. However, I feel this is an unhappy choice of terms, for many workers states are not too healthy but still are not deformed workers states. Therefore, I prefer to continue to use 'workers states' to refer to what Lenin called 'the soviet or commune type of state' and to never use this term also to refer to deformed workers states.

Conversely, in a workers state the working class rules directly through its own representative organs and its own party. The political regime is on consonance with the property forms upon which it is based and therefore the possibility of the advance of society as a whole to communism is opened up. The transformation of a workers state into a deformed (or more precisely degenerated) workers state is a political process so profound that a thermidorean political counter-revolution, what Trotsky called 'a preventative civil war,' which literally removes the working class bodily from all ruling positions and turns power over to a counter-revolutionary petty-bourgeois bureaucracy, is necessary to complete the transformation.

Not all workers states are uniformly healthy nor are all deformed workers states uniformly sick. Within the general framework of each different type of formation there are varying degrees of sickness and health. Thus, the USSR contained within it serious sicknesses or deformations almost from the beginning but it was not a deformed workers state until it had gone through a profound thermidorian counter-revolution which ultimately literally annihilated the former working class leaders. And it is possible also to have a deformed workers state where a clearly defined bureaucratic privileged caste does not as yet exist.

While recognizing these variations we must not fall into the trap of refusing to recognize the qualitative difference between these two forms of political rule. One of the most marked characteristics of the confusionist thinking of the liberal is a tendency to break down qualitative differences and turn everything into what Marx used to call a 'mish-mash.' Thus, since there are some workers who are quite poor and others who are relatively well off, and there are some capitalists that barely make a go of it with their candy store, etc., and others that are very rich--therefore there are no qualitative differences between workers and capitalists--there are no classes. Likewise the same methodology is applied on occasion in our movement to the theory of the state. (Joe Hansen is an expert on this.) You see there exist many different forms of workers states--degenerated, deformed, peculiar, abnormal, yet even healthy ones--all of which more or less approximate the ideal form of the workers state conceived of by Lenin. Suddenly, the qualitative difference between workers states and deformed workers states dissolves into gradations of quantitative differences. Suddenly all Trotskyist theory is destroyed and Joe Hansen sinks comfortably into that odoriferous ooze in which centrists are so happy.

A complete understanding of the qualitative difference between a workers state and a deformed workers state is precisely the basis of our whole theoretical conception of Cuba and of the other deformed workers states. The rest of the theoretical conceptions in this essay are derivative from this basic starting point. If this past political struggle in the party only accomplished this one thing--if it etched in the minds of our comrades this one concept--then the whole wearying struggle was worth it.

The State in Transition:

I feel we were essentially correct in emphasizing the transitional nature of the new Cuban state apparatus. This particular concept has been under the strongest attack. It is said to be in contradiction with the Marxist conception of the state as at all times the instrument of the ruling class of a particular society. But those who have attacked our concept of the Cuban state have been unable to come up with any substitute for it! Shane properly challenged the majority to define the nature of the Chinese state between 1949 and 1952-53 when the party claimed it to be a deformed workers state. Joe Hansen, in his polemical article, simply side-stepped the question, and not one comrade of the majority has answered it to date.

I will expand on the challenge, and state categorically: all the emerging deformed workers states--Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba--went through transitional periods of more or less extended periods of time during which a Bonapartist state apparatus administering a capitalist economy was transformed into a state apparatus, still Bonapartist, administering a nationalized economy. This is simply the reality, and we must face up to it. The Marshall Plan forced the USSR to wipe out the last vestiges of capitalist property in Eastern Europe, but it did this without changing essentially the state apparatus which had originally administered a capitalist economy in these countries. The Korean War forced China to carry through its final expropriations and to definitely become a deformed workers state, but, once again, the state apparatus did not change from that which had come into power in 1949. In Eastern Europe, in China and in Cuba, a strikingly similar pattern emerges: the old state structure and the army upon which it is based are destroyed (in Eastern Europe by the Soviet Army, in China and Cuba by the culmination of a civil war); a new petty-bourgeois apparatus emerges free from direct entanglements with the old system; finally imperialism forces the new state apparatus to consolidate its rule on the basis of new property forms (the effects of the Cold War on Eastern Europe, the Korean War on China, the economic blockade and the April 17th invasion on Cuba.)

Does a recognition of this reality demand that we revise the essentials of the Marxist theory of the state? I think not. I feel the problem the comrades have in comprehending this process flows from two errors: (a) a formal rather than dialectical approach towards social change, and (b) not fully comprehending the contradictory nature of a deformed workers state.

We should take note of the fact that the development of deformed workers states in the post-war period dramatically confirms the Marxist concept of the state in one important way. In all these countries a new state apparatus emerged to replace the former capitalist state apparatus and which based itself on an essentially new and different army. In Eastern Europe

the governmental apparatus was from the very beginning completely dependent on the Soviet Army and on no other significant social force in these countries. In China, Yugoslavia, and Cuba, this pattern becomes even more clear. Here the new state apparatus bases itself on an essentially peasant army which comes to power after defeating in battle the old capitalist army. In all these countries the emerging state, from the very beginning, had a base at least in part independent from the old capitalist structure in the country. In none of these countries does the new state emerge without in reality breaking up the old apparatus and the old army upon which it rested.

It is also important to note that the relations of the new state apparatus with the capitalists in the country was always an uneasy, unnatural one. While on the one hand the petty-bourgeois leaderships of these new states sought the cooperation of the capitalists, the capitalists feared and distrusted the new state power--they recognized that it was not wholly theirs--that it could move decisively against the capitalist class as no previous state could. Thus the fleeing of capitalists was a regular part of the revolutionary process in all these countries.

There is, however, something new involved here which does require a minor modification of our approach to the state--a modification which is consistent with the theory as a whole and with our essential dialectical method. The state which was established in these countries had replaced the old capitalist state apparatus, but its real nature only becomes clear after it goes through a process of transformation. The change in the nature of the state under these particular historical circumstances is not a formal categorical event which can be pin-pointed to a particular week, a particular day, a particular second. It was a process of a truly dialectical nature. Dialectics teaches us that in order to get

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 While in this section I mainly emphasize the similarities between all the deformed workers state which were formed after World War II, I would like to take note in passing of the differences in historical origin of the East European regimes (excluding Yugoslavia) and China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba and in large part Yugoslavia. In these former regimes the transformation into deformed workers states was carried out, not on the basis of any indigenous revolutionary process, but was imposed through the Red Army. Thus the character of the governing regime was least important in these countries because the real government was the USSR through the Red Army. The emerging deformed workers states tended (and still tend) to have less of a mass base and to express more profoundly the contradictions inherent in all the deformed workers states. The other deformed workers states emerged from civil wars with a certain mass base. Therefore the nature of the ruling party and state apparatus, as well as the army, are important in understanding the evolution of these countries.

from point a to point b one must at one and the same time be at point a and not at point a; at point b and not at point b, etc. The new states in these countries both are and are not capitalist states; and are and are not workers states. They go through a transition which, because of particular historical circumstances, is more or less drawn out. But, it must be kept in mind at all times that it is only their original break with the old capitalist state apparatus which frees them so that they can undergo this transformation. (That is, that by breaking with the old capitalist state apparatus the new apparatus has already partially left point a --has already partially reached point b.)

We must keep uppermost in our minds at all times the peculiar historical circumstances which have produced these highly contradictory phenomena and the contradictory result of this process--the deformed workers state itself. The essential contradiction which produces the objective conditions which nurture these deformed workers states is the contradiction between the over-ripeness of the conditions for the overthrow of capitalism and the weakness of the revolutionary vanguard. (The over-ripeness of the objective factor and the under-ripeness of the subjective factor.)

The lack of working class leadership forces horrendous distortions on this revolutionary process--distortions which halt the process part way and prevent its spread on a world-wide scale. These distortions primarily take the form of the creation of a bureaucratic state apparatus which stands in contradiction to the property forms upon which it is based and which prevents the working class from assuming its rightful place at the helm of the state. The governmental apparatus which runs the state thus represents a counter-revolutionary force. Thus this state apparatus represents, in the ultimate sense, the influence of the bourgeoisie within the new deformed workers state.

It is therefore understandable that such a state apparatus can undergo the type of transformation described earlier--can administer essentially both a capitalist and a workers state. It is precisely this similarity it has to a capitalist state which necessitates a political revolution to destroy this state apparatus and erect in its place a truly soviet state apparatus. And this is the crux of the whole theoretical problem--it is precisely because a political revolution is essential to change a deformed workers state into a workers state that a political revolution is not essential during this peculiar transitional period, during which a state apparatus administers first a capitalist and then a deformed workers state, characteristic of all deformed workers states. What is essential for this latter process is a social revolution which wipes out capitalist property but which is not completed in precisely the political or governmental sphere and which must therefore be completed at a later date by means of a political revolution.

Thus the state apparatus which can administer both capitalist and workers property forms is a state apparatus which is in contradiction to both--which is by its very nature unstable, temporary, passing.

The Role of the Working Class:

So far we have stressed what Cuba has in common with all other deformed workers states. We can sum up these characteristics as follows: (1) the revolution was led by petty-bourgeois strata who were forced to go beyond capitalist limits; (2) basing itself on the new army, the old army and the old state apparatus are destroyed and replaced with a new state apparatus free, at least in part, from direct capitalist control; (3) after a period of cohabitation with capitalism, under pressure from imperialism and from the masses, all capitalist holdings of any real significance are taken over; (4) the new state apparatus exhibits a determination to defend these new property forms from imperialism but at the same time rules in a Bonapartist fashion free from the control of the masses; (5) the new government tends to base its outlook on a nationalist rather than a proletarian internationalist outlook.

But Cuba is very significantly different from China in many important ways. Through an understanding of these differences we can arrive at different tactics than those we would apply in China today. Furthermore, I feel that it is through an understanding of these differences that we can get a deeper insight precisely into the essential identity of Cuba with the other deformed workers states. Above all we must assess the full meaning of the fact that Cuba is the first deformed workers state to be formed not under a Stalinist leadership, which lacks a fully-developed bureaucratic caste, and which is not geographically contiguous with the USSR or other deformed workers states.

I have noticed a certain tendency among Trotskyists to read into the political developments which led to the formation of deformed workers states a greater role for the working class than it actually played. Let me state my own view absolutely clearly, for on this I feel the events in Cuba have confirmed this outlook. The motive force for the transformation of the Eastern European countries (excluding Yugoslavia) into deformed workers states was the Soviet Army. The working class played essentially a dispersed, passive role in these events. The motive force behind the Chinese Revolution which deposited Mao and Co. in power was primarily the peasantry. In the major events which led to the CP coming to power, the working class played essentially a passive role not having recovered from the defeats of the 1927 period. The transformation of China into a deformed workers state was instituted, not by the working class of China nor primarily because of great pressure from the working class--it was carried through on top on the initiative of the Maoist bureaucracy itself as a defensive act against imperialism.

It is now quite clear that Cuba has followed the model of China quite closely. It was primarily the support of the peasantry which pushed Castro into power. The extensive nationalizations were primarily initiated by the regime itself in response to imperialist provocation and not by the working class which generally tailed these events.

Cuba makes this process all the more clear precisely because of the central unique feature of the Cuban revolution--that the transformation into a deformed workers state occurred under the leadership of a party which was not even ostensibly 'working class,' by a non-Stalinist petty-bourgeois formation.

Thus the Cuban experience not only illustrates the small role the working class plays in these transformations; it also suggests that the so-called 'working class' nature of the Stalinist parties in many of these colonial countries has been given too much emphasis as well. The fact that Castro's 26th of July Movement was able to carry through a social transformation in an almost identical manner as Mao's CCP reflects, in my opinion, the essential identity in nature of the CCP and the M-26. Both parties were essentially petty-bourgeois formations--petty-bourgeois in the class nature of their leadership, their membership, their mass base, and their ideology.

While the ideology of the Stalinists contains certain socialist elements within it and in this respect is different from that of the M-26, it is questionable as to whether these elements essentially changed the nature of the movement. This is especially doubtful when one realizes that the Stalinist perversion of socialist ideology is precisely in the direction of petty-bourgeois nationalism. Thus these parties must be viewed, in my opinion, as essentially the instruments of the petty-bourgeois classes in society--not as even distorted instruments of the working class.

Here we must understand the difference between a working class party--a party with a broad working class base--such as the Labour Party in Britain or the CP in France, both of which have a petty-bourgeois program and leadership, and these Stalinist parties in a country like China which lack precisely this working-class base. The former is a working class party with a petty-bourgeois program while the latter is a radical petty-bourgeois party with perhaps even a touch of a working-class ideology. The same approach should be taken to the so-called social democratic parties in colonial areas. Except for a few cases where there exists a sizable working class upon which this party bases itself, most of the so-called social democrats in these countries are in reality radical petty-bourgeois nationalists (and some are not so radical). Just ponder over the nature of U Nu's party or the Praja Socialist Party of India. As Marxists we must seek to determine what social class a particular party actually represents in a particular country--in so doing we must probe a bit deeper than the surface manifestations of ideology. What self-respecting bourgeois nationalist isn't a 'socialist' these days?

To sum up: we must reject as a distortion of reality a view which gives undue weight in the process of forming deformed workers states to the working class or to the 'working class character' of these Stalinist parties in such countries as China, North Korea, and North Vietnam.*

Both the Chinese Revolution and the Cuban Revolution are essentially revolutions led by petty-bourgeois movements whose social base is primarily the peasantry and a section of the middle classes rather than the working class. Because of the extreme crisis of capitalism together with the crisis of leadership of the working class, these essentially intermediate social classes have been able to play an extremely radical role which the Marxist movement earlier had not foreseen--they were able to break with capitalism itself. However, their very radical actions proved the essential weakness of this social strata--while they were able to negatively smash the capitalist system they have been unable to positively substitute their own rule for the rule of the capitalists. Rather they are forced to lay the economic basis for the rule of another class, the working class--a class which they in reality distrust and despise. While on the one hand their very historical weakness as an intermediate social class forces them to create property forms for another class, the crisis of leadership of the working class allows them to consolidate a political rule inimical to the working class. Thus the development of a bureaucratic caste and the necessity of political revolution.

The above is frankly crediting to the petty-bourgeois strata in society far more independence than Marxists had previously felt possible. However, to refuse to so credit them or to pretend that these intermediate classes are somehow 'working class' leads immediately to serious political errors (it logically leads to the Sweezy-Pablo-Swabeck school of

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Of course, once the social transformation is completed these parties become the spokesmen for a new social stratum which rests on working class property forms. Since this social stratum must, in part, defend these property forms and therefore defend, in part, the interests of the working class, it is correct to consider the political arm of this stratum to be within the proletarian camp. This goes both for whatever party Castro is in the process of forming as well as for the CP's. However, the working class character is not so much in the party itself but in the social base it must defend. This is an important political distinction. I have been discussing only the nature of these parties before and during the process of the formation of these deformed workers states, not after they have been formed. In other words, it is not that deformed workers parties transform the property forms but that the property forms transform the petty-bourgeois parties. Whatever Theoretical problems this transformation may raise are simply derivative from those posed by the transformation of the state.

illusions about China). Further it distorts the reality and thus is theoretically untenable. Trotsky said somewhere in his Germany writings that 'All great theoretical questions come home to roost.' One simply cannot get away for long with a sloppy or incorrect theoretical conception, for if its political implications are not dangerous at first--they soon will be. Thus unclarity over China must be cleared up before Cuba makes any sense at all. An understanding of Cuba straightens out in retrospect our theories of all the deformed workers states.

If looked at in its proper perspective these new social processes dramatically confirm the Marxist concept of the petty bourgeoisie. A series of extraordinary circumstances in the postwar period literally thrusts power upon these strata with the capitalist class almost melting away right from under them. Given state power, freed from capitalist domination, not threatened by an active working class, history is saying to these social strata: 'Now is your chance. Seize the opportunities I have provided you and create your own new society.' But the petty bourgeoisie has flunked the ultimate test--it simply could not create new property forms. The forms it created are those of its grave diggers, the working class. Its rule is unstable and transitional. Only terror holds the operation together. The petty bourgeoisie is shown to be definitely an intermediate social class.

It is therefore clear that we must reject any view of these deformed workers states as a general stage in the development of society as a whole. This view was implied in Pablo's 'centries of deformed workers states' theory and this outlook is also implicit in many of the views that have been half-formulated in the general political confusion which reigns in our party. These deformed workers states only occur under very specific circumstances: (a) in economically backward countries with a weak national bourgeoisie and with crass imperialist exploitation; (b) where the working class is relatively backward and small or where it has been crushed and demoralized (it is of extreme importance to note that the development of a deformed workers state required the crushing of the working class in both China and Vietnam); (c) where the petty bourgeoisie has taken the military road of struggle, civil war, and carries this struggle to the point of destroying the old capitalist army and state apparatus; (d) where direct military intervention by imperialism is difficult to carry through successfully. Even if all these conditions exist in a country, it is by no means automatic that the petty-bourgeois force will succeed.

It is therefore possible for deformed workers states to come into existence in more countries. Yes, it is possible--in fact it is quite probable during the interim period before the world working class once again siezes the revolutionary initiative. This is precisely why it is so important for us to understand the Cuban experience.

It is extremely important, however, for our movement to pay special attention to the central contributing factor to these deformed revolutions--the general weakness of the working class. Whenever the working class exists as a conscious organized force, such petty-bourgeois formations simply split wide open if they are unable to crush the working class first. (In this latter respect the Vietnamese experience is of special importance. There the Stalinist-led forces literally exterminated the working class movement in the cities of Vietnam, including our comrades. This was a necessary precondition to the development of a deformed workers state in Vietnam at a later date. This is the significance of the present moves against the POR in Cuba. If a working class vanguard is not crushed, then the intervention of the working class could rip apart the petty-bourgeois movement posing immediately the possibility of proletarian leadership of the struggle--and of the development of a real workers state--one we could truly embrace and be at one with.)

It should therefore be absolutely clear that these deformed revolutions are not wholly ours. This is simply another way of saying that they are not wholly the working class's. These petty-bourgeois strata carry through only the most minimum social transformation consistent with the continued rule of the strata itself. At every point in the transformation process they seek to minimize, to control, the intervention of the working class. They are forced to exterminate the working class vanguard or any potential vanguard; they seek to contain the revolutionary development within the boundaries of their own country; and they produce a society so disfigured by bureaucratic deformations as to be unattractive to the working classes (what attractive pull does East Germany have on the West German workers? Why is the Stalinist party in Japan, which is so close to China, so small?) In fact we must frankly admit, as Trotsky did before us, that these deformed workers states give the working class less freedom to function and develop its own vanguard than do many of the capitalist societies. The reason for this is clear--it is precisely because the bureaucratic caste is less stable and more vulnerable to working class overturn than the capitalist class that it feels a greater necessity to suppress the working class.

There is now a certain tendency among those who call themselves Trotskyists to interpret the Cuban experience to mean that we, too, must go into the mountains and build a movement based on the peasantry. The Pabloites have actually formulated this in their Sixth World Congress documents, even suggesting that their comrades set up schools in guerrilla warfare. We completely reject this whole approach. We can only come to power on the basis of one class--the working class--and no other. The defeats of the working class are our defeats; the victories of the working class are our victories. This is our only identity, our only reason to exist. Were we to build a movement based on these petty-bourgeois strata, we, too, would be transformed into a petty-bourgeois party and the revolution would likewise be deformed from the very

beginning. No--our place is first of all in the cities, in the factories. Then, with the working class, as the most advanced section of it, we will reach out to mobilize the peasantry also--to precisely break up any independent formations of the petty bourgeoisie and to win to our banner the most radical section of the intermediate class.

The Political Revolution in Cuba:

We must recognize that precisely because Cuba developed in its initial period without the direct control of a Stalinist party, the revolutionary regime was far more open to the influence of the working class, and the possibilities of developing a true working class revolutionary party in Cuba were far greater. This is shown graphically in the fact that Cuba is the only emerging deformed workers state which has allowed, until recently, a Trotskyist party to legally exist.

Conversely, we must recognize that the growth of Stalinism in Cuba both as an ideology and as an organized movement, is an expression of the bureaucratization process--of the beginnings of the development of a separate ruling bureaucratic caste in Cuba. Stalinism is still the ideology of bureaucratic rule, and the spread of this system of thought, not only through the PSP, but within the Castro ruling group itself, is simply an ideological expression of the deeper bureaucratization process. The fact that Stalinism is emerging so strongly in Cuba today is the final proof that Cuba is a deformed workers state.

In fact the development of a Stalinist ideology in Cuba today gives us a deeper understanding of what exactly the Stalinist ideology is. It is not simply a matter of the ideology of the USSR and of those CP's directly controlled by the USSR. This is what Swabeck suggests when he claims that for Mao to break with the USSR is the same as for Mao to break with Stalinism. Again elements of this approach can be found in the thinking of most of the majority comrades. Stalinism is the ideology of bureaucratic rule which is based on proletarian property forms--it is this and nothing else. Thus the transformation of Cuba into a deformed workers state forced upon the Castro leading group the necessity to transform its ideology so as to be able to defend these new property forms and to defend its own uncontrolled rule. Castro did not create an ideology from new cloth--he is simply

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 This is not to say that we are predicting that the Russian agents that run the PSP are destined to take over in Cuba. It is possible that the Castro regime can maintain a certain independence from the USSR comparable to Yugoslavia or China. In which case we should not rule out a showdown battle of some depth between the Blas Roca Russian agents and the 'independent Stalinists' around Castro. Should Castro launch such a struggle, that would no more free him from Stalinism than it freed Tito when he took a similar step.

taking over wholesale the already existent ideology of bureaucratic rule--Stalinism.

Cuba's geographical position will help it maintain a certain level of independence from the USSR. In fact it may very well require this to maintain the Cuban economy which needs trade relations with the capitalists much more than the other deformed workers states. However, it is clear that whatever economic relations Cuba works out in the foreseeable future, they will be based on the maintenance of its planned economy and monopoly of foreign trade. Again the weakness of imperialism forces it to deal with these deformed workers states since it is incapable of overthrowing them without releasing social forces which could well overthrow it.

Is it proper to characterize Cuba as a deformed workers state when it does not as yet have a clearly defined bureaucratic caste and if we so label it, is it proper for us to call for a political revolution in Cuba? Yes, I feel it is proper to so characterize Cuba, for Cuba has the essential characteristics of a deformed workers state: (a) a nationalized economy; (b) a ruling stratum which is not under the control of the working class. However, it is highly important to understand that Cuba is a developing revolution and that the bureaucratic caste is in the process of formation right at the present moment. A recognition of this reality allows for the working out of a considerably different strategy and tactics than that which we would apply in a more stable (relatively) deformed workers state such as China. Because of this fluid situation, the intervention of the working class to counteract this bureaucratization process is not only possible but essential. In Cuba the possibility of establishing the direct rule of the working class is far greater than in any other of the deformed workers states, and Trotskyists in Cuba must work energetically towards this end despite the persecutions against them. We must counsel the Cuban Trotskyists to neither write off the Cuban revolution and act as if this bureaucratization process is completed nor to rely upon the bureaucrats themselves to counter it. Only the conscious intervention of the working class into Cuban politics can save the situation. The achievement of this intervention must be the central strategic goal of our movement in Cuba. All tactical questions, such as our attitude towards conflicts between Castro and the PSP, must be judged according to whether or not they further this strategic goal.

Since there is no clearly defined bureaucratic caste in Cuba is it proper for us to advocate a political revolution in Cuba today? My answer to that is also emphatically, yes! The establishment of workers rule in Cuba today would be a profound political change. It would necessitate the creation of a revolutionary Marxist party with a mass base and the formation of representative institutions of the masses. These institutions would have to replace the present administrative apparatus in Cuba, infusing all governmental levels with working class elements. The Marxist party would have to

replace the present petty-bourgeois Castro leadership in Cuba. Such changes can only be described as revolutionary changes in the political structure of the country. That is, that what is involved is more than mere quantitative changes (the amount of working class democracy as the majority likes to put it)--what is essential is a qualitative change in the political structure of the country. It is a matter of replacing the rule of a petty-bourgeois apparatus with the rule of the working class itself. Changes in the economic structure would not be so profound, and that is why we characterize such a change as a political as contrasted to a social revolution.

It is possible that someone may suggest that instead of applying the concept of political revolution to Cuba we should follow Trotsky's approach to the USSR before 1933 and work for political reform. I feel that this would be an incorrect approach and would reflect a lack of understanding of the only real difference between the degenerated workers state in the USSR and the postwar deformed workers states--that is, its unique political evolution.

The USSR was established as the first workers state led by a genuine revolutionary working class party. The evolution of the USSR was the evolution of the decay of this working class party under conditions of isolation, etc. Thus revolutionists must take a different attitude towards the process of decay within a working class party than we would towards a petty bourgeois party which never was a working class party in any real sense. We must never write off too quickly the possibility of reform from within the former and never count on reform from within the latter.

An even clearer understanding of the important theoretical distinction between the process of political revolution and the process of political reform can be gained if we refer to the distinction made earlier between a workers state and a deformed workers state. It is possible to discuss reform, that is, a quantitative change, within a workers state which is seriously sick. In a deformed workers state, no matter how much it may be in flux, only revolution, a qualitative change, can bring about the leap of society to a new form of rule--that of the working class itself. To raise the question of reform in a deformed workers state, even like Cuba, is to break down the qualitative difference between a deformed workers state and a workers state--that is to bring into question the very concept of a deformed workers state. Thus raising the question of reform automatically raises the question of whether or not the society in question is a deformed workers state. But there is one thing that is certain--Cuba is not now nor has it ever been a workers state, sick or not, for the working class has never ruled in Cuba!

While it is possible for comrades to question this approach in general, it is unquestionably correct, in my opinion, once we approach it within the framework of the

concrete reality of Cuba itself. Castro rules with a governmental apparatus alone, while the Stalinists always rule through a disciplined party. Thus what is at issue here is not calling for the reform of a party--but of the governmental apparatus itself. Thus we immediately begin to orient towards this or that section of the governmental apparatus and lose sight of--the working class. Since the governmental apparatus has virtually no working class elements within it, it cannot be reformed from within. Only the independent mobilization of the working class can push forward the revolutionary process in Cuba. We, of course, expect that such independent intervention will swing to the side of the working class a section of those who support Castro including people in the Government. But this is a by-product of the independent struggle, not the central axis of our strategy.

Does this mean that we are stating that we would approach the political revolution in Cuba as we do in other deformed workers states--that is, that we would in effect organize an armed insurrection? Not at all. It is precisely because of the fluid state of things in Cuba today--that the bureaucratization process has not been finalized--that we can hope for the possibility of a non-violent political revolution. (Or more accurately one of limited violence, for it is my conviction that our relations with the Stalinists will be settled one way or the other violently.) Marx held open the possibility of a non-violent revolution in the U.S. because he felt that the bureaucratic apparatus and the standing army were not developed on the scale of the European capitalist countries. Lenin ruled this out on the basis of the later evolution of the U.S. Today, if there is any government which fits Marx's description of one where its overturn could be carried through without an armed insurrection, it is the Castro regime in Cuba.

However, as recent moves against the POR show, time is fast running out in which the political revolution can proceed with little violent disruption. The party majority, of course, is interested in none of this. It has completely deserted the methodology of Marxism in its knovtist urge to wipe Castro's rear. The development of Marxist thought in our movement here rests now with us. We, at least, will give these questions the serious attention they deserve.

Tim Wohlforth
July 20, 1961

CUBA AND THE DEFERRED MEMBERS STATES

Their Method and Ours:

Ever since the beginning of the discussion of Cuba in the party, the majority has sought to stampede us into coming to an immediate position on the nature of the Cuban state. For the party majority there was little difficulty in arriving at a position. Their method was that of impressionistic empiricism. They simply described what Cuba appeared to be at the moment and called this description -- a theory.

We properly rejected this whole method. We said that Marxists must do more than describe what appears at the moment. It is our task to view political and social developments in process, in motion. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ We must study them as they evolve and put this evolution within the framework of the whole world situation and of our whole theoretical outlook. Thus we stated that it is impossible to understand what is at the moment ~~xxxx~~ unless we understand what had been and what will be.

We urge those who reproach us for "not seeing the new reality quickly enough" to study the history of our world movement and to see what happened to others who earlier grasped the "new reality" so quickly, embraced bureaucratic regimes so lovingly. These comrades embraced the new bureaucratic regimes in the hopes that these alien forces, rather than us, would carry through the socialist revolution. We will not be stampeded into junking Marxist method. We will take the time necessary to study the evolution of Cuba and to define the nature of the state on the basis of an understanding of this evolutionary process.

The Evolution of Cuba:

Most of us ^{are quite} familiar with the evolution of Cuba. Let me just sketch briefly those highlights of this evolution that are relevant to an understanding of the nature of the Cuban state. The Cuban Revolution has carried through by a radi-

cal petty-bourgeois nationalist group whose primary social base was a petty bourgeois class -- the peasantry. (In passing it is important to note that Guevara ^h was specifically repudiated the Hansen-Sweezy thesis that the 26th of July Movement based its^lof on the rural proletariat in its earlier stages^p. He noted that in the mountains no such proletariat existed and that the organization based itself on the local peasantry.) Organizing itself in military fashion and utilizing the techniques of rural guerillas, Castro was able to give ~~the~~ cohesiveness to this otherwise unorganized peasant force and with this social grouping to topple a decaying capitalist regime.

Upon coming to power, Castro almost immediately destroyed the old Batista state apparatus and the army upon which it rested. He created a new administrative apparatus composed of the radical petty bourgeois elements and based on the Rebel Army. From the very beginning, the relations of this new bonapartist state to capitalist property ^{were} was quite contradictory. While this new state apparatus based itself for at least a year and a half on these capitalist property relations, the force of the revolution and the opposition of imperialism to the democratic demands of the revolution forced the government to move against capitalist property relations -- though in a sporadic, empirical way. However, the ability of the government to so act was at least in part attributable to the fact that the new ^government had broken up the old state apparatus and was therefore able to act in a bonapartist fashion partly independent of the capitalist class in Cuba.

This process, spurred on primarily by the hostility of U.S. capitalism, reached its culmination in the nationalizations of September, October 1960 which brought at least 80% of industry, all significant industry, and the entire banking system, under direct government ownership. The agrarian reform, carried out in the previous spring, was not socialist but it was far more extensive than that in the USSR or Eastern Europe. This series of expropriations clearly wiped out of Cuba the national bourgeoisie. Further, the government established a complete monopoly of foreign trade and began a rudimentary form

of economic planning.

The September-October nationalizations raised the question of whether the nonpartist governmental apparatus would, continuing to be free of control by the working masses, would firmly base itself on the new property forms in Cuba or whether it would seek to return Cuba to essential capitalist relations. We can say that while the sweeping nationalizations of the September-October period played the basis for Cuba becoming a deformed workers state, it was not automatically determined that the petty bourgeois state apparatus would defend and develop these property forms. It was therefore incorrect, in my opinion, to characterize Cuba at that time a deformed workers state.

It was the invasion of April 17th which clearly showed that the Castro regime, for all its weaknesses, was definitely committed to the defense of the new property forms. This was shown first of all in the defense of the revolution which Castro carried through so well. More important, the invasion made it perfectly clear that imperialism was not interested in an accommodation with Castro. The imperialists were seeking first of all to overthrow the regime if at all possible. Should this not be possible, as I am sure they now realize, the imperialists wish to force Castro precisely into the arms of the USSR -- into becoming a stalinist country. For this way the imperialists are able to limit the appeal of Castro and contain the revolution. The policy of the U.S. State Department only makes sense if interpreted in this way (and believe it or not there is a bit of method in their madness!)

Regardless of how we interpret the meaning of the invasion, it was immediately clear that Castro interpreted it as meaning that he must definitively base himself on the new property forms and on his relations with the Soviet Bloc if his regime was to survive at all. This is the real meaning of his declaration that Cuba is a "socialist" country. That Castro meant business and that this was no mere passing reference was soon made absolutely clear. A heavy drive towards the stalinization of the country has been in full force since this declaration. In this respect it is important to note: a) the Cuban press is now almost exclusively devoted to praise of the Stalinist countries and puts forwards an essential

Stalinist political line; b) economic relations have been stepped up with the deformed workers states; c) the widespread net of arrests during the invasion revealed a highly developed secret police set-up which portends to be dangerous in the future because it is not under the control of the working class; d) the drive for "a single party of the revolution" which in the context of these other developments appears to be the setting up of the traditional stalinist one party rule, has been underway at fever pitch; e) the moves against the Trotskyists are the final sign of the deformed nature of the regime.

These series of events, following as they do the extensive nationalizations, clearly show the Cuba has become in essence a deformed workers state -- that is that working class property forms have been established in Cuba but that the working class is as yet barred from exercising its dictatorship directly.

of the state

Workers States and Deformed Workers States:

Our insistence from the very beginning of the discussion on the recognition of the qualitative difference between workers states and deformed workers states was perhaps the most important contribution we made in the whole discussion. Over the past fifteen years an unbelievable amount of theoretical confusion has been generated in all sections of our world movement because of lack of clarification on this central point.

Workers states ~~AND~~ ~~ARE~~ deformed workers states have two essentially different and mutually contradictory political systems even though they both

* There has been a certain tendency to refer to workers states per se as "healthy workers states". This is because the term "workers state" has been so freely applied to both workers states and deformed workers states. However, I feel this is an unhappy choice of terms for many workers states are not too healthy but still are not deformed workers states. Therefore I prefer to continue to use "workers states" to refer to what Lenin called "the soviet or commune type of state" and to never use this term also to refer to deformed workers states.

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rest on a foundation of nationalized property--of working class property forms. The deformed workers state is characterized by the rule of an uncontrolled petty bourgeois bureaucracy which suppresses the working class and which has a counter-revolutionary outlook. This social stratum finds itself at all times to be in contradiction to the very property forms upon which it must base its rule. The real development of these forms requires the total destruction of this parasitic formation and the creation of a whole new state structure based on the direct rule of the working class. ~~THE~~ Therefore it takes a political revolution to transform a deformed workers state into a workers state.

Conversely, in a workers state the working class rules directly through its own representative organs and its own party. The political regime is in consonance with the property forms upon which it is based and therefore the possibility of the advance of society as a whole to communism is opened up. The transformation of a workers state into a deformed (or more precisely degenerated) workers state is a political process so profound that a thermidorean political counterrevolution or what Trotsky called "a preventative civil war", which literally removes the working class bodily from all ruling positions and turns power over to a counter-revolutionary petty bourgeois bureaucracy, is necessary to complete the transformation.

Not all workers states are uniformly healthy nor are all deformed workers state uniformly sick. Within the general framework of each different type of formation there are varying degrees of sickness and health. This, the USSR contained within it serious sicknesses or deformations almost from the beginning but it was not a deformed workers state until it had gone through a profound thermidorean counterrevolution which ultimately literally annihilated the former working class leaders. And it is possible also to have a deformed workers state where a clearly defined bureaucratic privileged caste does not as yet exist.

While recognizing these variations we must not fall into the trap of refusing to recognize the qualitative difference between these two forms of political rule. One of the most marked characteristics of the confusionist thinking of the liberal is a tendency to break down qualitative differences and turn everything into what

Marx used to call a "mish-mash". Thus, since there are some workers who are quite poor and others who are relatively well off; and there are some capitalist that barely make a go of it with their candy store or something and others that are very rich--therefore there are no qualitative differences between workers and capitalists--there are no classes. Likewise the same methodology is applied on occasion in our movement to the theory of the state. (Joe Hansen is an expert on this.) You see there exist many different forms of workers states--degenerated, deformed, peculiar, abnormal, yes even healthy ones--all of which more or less approximate the ideal form of the workers state conceived of by Lenin. Suddenly, the qualitative difference between workers states and deformed workers states dissolves into gradations of quantitative differences. Suddenly all Trotskyist theory is destroyed and Joe Hansen sinks comfortably into that odoriferous ooze in which centrists are so happy.

A complete understanding of the qualitative difference between a workers state and a deformed workers state is precisely the basis of our whole theoretical conception of Cuba and of the other deformed workers state. The rest of the theoretical conceptions in this essay are derivative from this basic starting point. If this past political struggle in the party only accomplished this one thing--if it etched in the minds of our comrades this one concept--then the whole wearying struggle was worth it.

The State in Transition:

I feel we were essentially correct in emphasizing the transitional nature of the new Cuban state apparatus. This particular concept has been under the strongest attack. It is said to be in contradiction with the Marxist conception of the state as at all times the instrument of the ruling class of a particular society. But those who have attacked our concept of the Cuban state have been unable to come up with any substitute for it! Shane properly challenged the majority to define the nature of the Chinese state between 1949 and 1952-53 when the party ^{clearly} it to be a deformed workers state. Joe Hansen, in his polemical article,

7-7-7

simply sidestepped the question and not one comrade of the majority has answered it to date.

I will expand on the challenge and state catagorically: all the ~~origing~~^{ing} deformed workers states -- Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba -- went through transitional period of more or less extended periods of time during which a bonapartist state apparatus administered a capitalist economy was transformed into a state apparatus, still bonapartist, ~~admini~~ administering a nationalized economy. This is simply the reality and we must face up to it. The Marshall plan forced the USSR to wipe out the last vestiges of capitalist property in Eastern Europe but it did this without changing essentially the state apparatus which had originally administered a capitalist economy in these countries. The Korean War forced China to carry through its final expropriations and to definitively become a deformed workers state but, one again, the state apparatus did not change from that which has come into power in 1949. In Eastern Europe, in China and in Cuba a strikingly similar pattern emerges: the old state structure and the army upon which it is based are destroyed (in Eastern Europe by the Soviet Army in China and Cuba by the culmination of a ~~primarily~~ civil war); a new petty bourgeois apparatus emerges free from direct entanglements with the old system; finally imperialism forces the new state apparatus to consolidate its rule on the basis of new property forms (the effects of the Cold War on Eastern Europe, the Korean War on China, the economic blockade and the April 17th invasion on Cuba.)

Does a recognition of this reality demand that we revise the essentials of the Marxist theory of the state? I think not. I feel the problem the comrades have in comprehending this process flows from two errors: a) a formal rather than dialectical approach towards social change and b) not fully comprehending the contradictory nature of a deformed workers state.

WE should take note of the fact that the development of deformed workers states in the post war period dramatically confirms the Marxist concept of the state in one important way. In all these countries a new state apparatus emerged to replace the former capitalist state apparatus and which based itself on an

essentially new and different army. In Eastern Europe the governmental apparatus was from the very beginning completely dependent on the Soviet Army on and no other significant social force in these countries.* In China, Yugoslavia and Cuba, this pattern becomes even more clear. Here the new state apparatus bases itself on an essentially peasant army which comes to power after defeating in battle the old capitalist army. In all these countries the emerging state, from the very beginning, had a base at least in part independent from the old capitalist structure in the country. In none of these countries does the new state emerge without in reality breaking up the old apparatus and the old army upon which it rested.

It is also important to note that the relations of the new state apparatus with the capitalists in the country was always an uneasy, unnatural one. While on the one hand the ~~capitalist~~ petty bourgeois leaderships of these new states sought the cooperation of the capitalists, the capitalists feared and distrusted the new state power-- they recognized that it was not wholly theirs -- that it could move decisively against the capitalist class as no previous state could. Thus the fleeing of capitalists was a regular part of the revolutionary process in all these countries.

There is, however, something new involved here which does require a minor modification of our approach to the state-- a modification which is consistent with the theory as a whole and with our essential dialectical method. The state

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While in this section I mainly emphasize the similarities between all the deformed workers states which were formed after World War II, I would like to take note in passing of the differences in historical origin of the East European regimes (excluding Yugoslavia) and China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba and in large part Yugoslavia. In these former regimes the transformation into deformed workers states was carried out, not on the basis of any indigenous revolutionary process, but was imposed through the Red Army. Thus the character of the governing regime was least important in these countries because the real government was the USSR through the Red Army. The emerging deformed workers states tended (and still tend) to have less of a mass base ~~to~~ to express more profoundly the contradictions inherent in all the deformed workers states. The other deformed workers states emerged from civil wars with a certain mass base. Therefore the nature of the ruling party and state apparatus, as well as the army, is important in understanding the evolution of these countries.

which was established in those countries had replaced the old capitalist state apparatus but its real nature only becomes clear after it goes through a process of transformation. The change in the nature of the state under these particular historical circumstances is not a formal categorical event which can be pinpointed to a particular week, a particular day, a particular second. It was a process of a truly dialectical nature. Dialectics teaches us that in order to get from point a to point b one must ~~be~~ at one and the same time be at point a and not at point a; at point b and not at point b, etc. The new states in these countries both are and are not capitalist states; are and are not workers states. They go through a transition which because of particular historical circumstances is more or less drawn out. But, it must be kept in mind at all times that it is only ~~because of~~ their original break with the old capitalist state apparatus which frees them so that they can undergo this transformation. (That is that by breaking with the old capitalist state apparatus the new apparatus has already partially left point a--has already partially reached point b).

We must keep uppermost in our minds at all times the peculiar ~~historical~~ historical circumstances which have produced these highly contradictory phenomena and the contradictory result of this process--the deformed workers state itself. The essential contradiction which produces the objective conditions which nurture these deformed workers states is the contradiction between the overripeness of the conditions for the overthrow of capitalism and the weakness of the revolutionary vanguard. (The overripeness of the objective factor and the underripeness of the subjective factor.)

The lack of working class leadership forces horrendous distortions on this revolutionary process--distortions which halt the process partway and prevent its spread on a world wide scale. These distortions primarily take the form of the creation of a bureaucratic state apparatus which stands in contradiction to the property forms upon which it is based and which prevents the working class from assuming its rightful place at the helm of the state. The governmental apparatus which runs the state thus represents a counterrevolutionary force. Thus this state apparatus represents in the ultimate sense, the influence of the bourgeoisie

within the new deformed workers state.

It is therefore understandable that such a state apparatus can undergo the type of transformation described earlier -- can administer essentially both a capitalist and a workers state. It is precisely this similarity it has to a capitalist ⁽¹⁹²¹⁾ which necessitates a political revolution to destroy this state apparatus and erect in its place a truly soviet state apparatus. And this is the crux of the whole theoretical problem -- it is precisely because a political revolution is essential to change a deformed workers state into a workers state that a political revolution is not essential during this peculiar transitional period, during which a state apparatus administers first a capitalist and then a ~~xxxx~~ deformed workers state, characteristic of all deformed workers states. What is essential for this latter process is a social revolution which wipes out capitalist property but which is not completed in precisely the political or governmental sphere and which must therefore be completed at a later date by means of a political revolution.

Thus the state ^{apparatus} which can administer both a capitalist and workers property forms is a state apparatus which is in contradiction to both -- which is by its very nature instable, temporary, passing.

The Role of the Working Class:

So far we have stressed what Cuba has in common with all other deformed workers states. We can sum up these characteristics as follows: 1) the revolution was led by petty bourgeois strata who were forced to go beyond capitalist limits; 2) basing itself on the new army, the old army and the old state apparatus are destroyed and replaced with a new state apparatus free, at least in part, from direct capitalist control; 3) after a period of cohabitation with capitalism, under pressure from imperialism and from the masses, all capitalist holdings of any real significance are taken over; 4) the new state apparatus exhibit a determination to defend these new property forms from imperialism but at the same time rules in a bonapartist fashion free from the control of the masses; 5) the new government

tends to base its outlook on a nationalist rather than a proletarian internationalist outlook.

But Cuba is very significantly different from China in ~~many~~ many important ways. Through an understanding of these differences we can arrive at different tactics than those we would apply in China today. Furthermore, I feel that it is through an understanding of these differences that we can get a deeper insight precisely ~~into~~ the essential identity of Cuba with the other deformed workers states. Above all we must assess the full meaning of the fact that Cuba is the first deformed workers state to be formed not under a Stalinist leadership, which lacks a fully developed bureaucratic caste, and which is not geographically contiguous with the USSR or other deformed workers states.

I have noticed a certain tendency among Trotskyists to read into the political developments which led to the formation of deformed workers states a greater role for the working class than it actually played. Let me state my own view absolutely clearly for on this I feel the events in Cuba have confirmed this outlook. The motive force for the transformation of the East European countries (excluding Yugoslavia) into deformed workers states was the Soviet Army. The working class played essentially a dispersed, passive role in these events. The motive force behind the Chinese Revolution which deposited Mao & Co. in power was primarily the peasantry. In the major events which led to the CP coming to power, the working class played essentially a passive role not having recovered from the defeats of the 1927 period. The transformation of China into a deformed workers state was instituted, not by the working class of China nor primarily because of great pressure from the working class -- it was carried through on top on the initiative of the Maoist bureaucracy itself as a defensive act against imperialism.

It is now quite clear that Cuba has followed the model of China quite closely. It was primarily the support of the peasantry which pushed Castro into power. The extensive nationalizations were primarily initiated by the regime itself in response to imperialist provocation and not by working class which generally tail-
ed these events.

12-12-12

Cuba makes this process all the more clear precisely because of the central unique feature of the Cuban revolution--that the ^Stransformation into a deformed workers state occurred under the leadership of a party which was not even ostensibly "working class", by a non-stalinist petty bourgeois formation.

Thus the Cuban experience not only illustrates the small role the working class plays in these transformations^S; it also suggests that the so-called "working class" nature of the stalinist parties in many of these colonial countries has been given too much emphasis as well. The fact that Castro's 26th of July Movement was able to carry through a social transformation in an almost identical manner as Mao's CCP reflects, in my opinion, the essential identity in nature of the CCP and the M26. Both parties ~~are~~ were essentially petty bourgeois formations -- petty bourgeois in the ^Sclass nature of their leadership, their membership, their mass base, and their ideology.

While the ideology of the stalinists contains certain socialist elements within it and in this respect is different from that of the M26, it is questionable as to whether these elements essentially changed the nature of the movement. This is especially doubtful when one realizes that the stalinist perversion of socialist ideology is precisely in the direction of petty bourgeois nationalism. Thus these parties must be viewed, in my opinion, as essentially the instruments of the petty bourgeois classes in society-- not as even distorted instruments of the working class.

Here we must understand the difference between a working class party -- a party with a broad working class base -- such as the Labour Party in Britain or the CP in France both of which have a petty bourgeois program and leadership and these stalinist parties in a country like China which lack precisely this working class base. The former is a ~~xxxxxxx~~ working class party with a petty bourgeois program while the latter is a radical petty bourgeois party with perhaps even a touch of a working class ideology. The same approach should be taken to the so-called social democratic parties in colonial areas. Except for a few cases where there exists a sizable working class upon which this party bases itself, most of

so-called social democrats in these countries are in reality radical petty bourgeois nationalists (and some are not so radical). Just ponder over the nature of U Nu's party or the Praja Socialist Party of India. As Marxists we must seek to determine what social class a particular party actually represents in a particular country-- in so doing we must probe a bit deeper than the surface manifestations of ideology. What self-respecting bourgeois nationalist isn't a "socialist" these days?

To sum up: we must reject as a distortion of reality a view which gives undue weight in the process of forming deformed workers states to the working class to the "working class character" of these stalinist parties in such countries as China, North Korea and North Vietnam. *

Both the Chinese Revolution and the Cuban Revolution are essentially revolutions led by petty bourgeois movements whose social base is primarily the peasantry and a section of the middle classes rather than the working class. Because of the extreme crisis of capitalism together with the crisis of leadership of the working class, these essentially intermediate social classes have been able to play an extremely radical role which the Marxist movement earlier had not foreseen--they were able to break with capitalism itself. However, their very radical actions proved the essential weakness of this social strata -- while they were able to negatively smash the capitalist system they have been unable to positively substitute their own rule for the rule of the capitalists. Rather they are forced to lay the economic basis for the rule of another class, the working class-- a class which they in reality distrust and despise. While on the one hand their very historical weakness as an intermediate social class forces them to create property forms for another class the crisis of leadership of the working class allows them to ^{impose} ~~co-opt~~ a political rule inimical to the working class. Thus the development of a bureaucratic caste and the necessity of political revolution.

The above is frankly crediting to the petty bourgeois strata in society ^{independence} far more than Marxists had previously felt they ^{possible} ~~could accomplish~~. However, to refuse to so credit them or to pretend that these intermediate classes are somehow

"working class"

"working class" leads immediately to serious political errors (it logically leads to the Sweezy-Pablo-Swabeck school of illusions about China). Further it distorts the reality and thus is theoretically untenable. Trotsky said somewhere in his Germany writings that "All great theoretical questions come home to roost". One simply cannot get away for long with a sloppy or incorrect theoretical conception for if its political implications are not dangerous at first--they soon will be. Thus unclarity over China must be cleared up before Cuba makes any sense at all. An understanding of Cuba straitens out in retrospect our ~~then~~ theories of all the deformed workers states.

If looked at in its proper perspective these new social processes dramatically ~~confirm~~ the Marxist concept of the petty bourgeoisie. A series of extraordinary circumstances in the postwar period literally thrusts power upon these strata with the capitalist class almost melting away right from under them. Given state power, freed from capitalist domination, not threatened by an active working class history is saying to these social strata: "Now is your chance. Seize the opportunities I have provided you and create your own new society." But the petty bourgeoisie has flunked the ultimate test; it simply could not create new property forms. The forms it created are those of its grave diggers, the working class. Its rule is unstable and transitional. Only terror holds the operation together. The petty bourgeoisie is shown to be definitively an intermediate social class.

* (See page 13) Of course, once the social transformation is completed these parties become the spokesmen for a new social stratum which rests on working class property forms. Since this social stratum must, in part, defend these property forms and therefore defend, in part, the interest of the working class, it is correct to consider the political arm of this stratum to be within the proletarian camp. This goes both for whatever party Castro is in the process of forming as well as for the CPS. However, the working class character is not so much in the party itself but in the social base it must defend. This is an important political distinction. I have been discussing only the nature of these parties before and during the process of the formation of these deformed workers states, not after they have been formed. In other words it is not that deformed workers parties transform the property forms but that the property forms ~~transform~~ ~~the~~ ~~petty~~ ~~bourgeois~~ ~~parties~~. ~~Whatever~~ ~~theoretical~~ ~~problems~~ ~~this~~ ~~transformation~~ ~~may~~ ~~raise~~ are simply derivative from those posed by the transformation of the state.

It is therefore clear that we must reject any view of these deformed workers states as a general stage in the development of society as a whole. This view was implied in Pablo's "centuries of deformed workers states" theory and this outlook is also implicit in many of the views that have been half-formulated in the general political confusion which reigns in our party. These deformed workers states only occur under very specific circumstances: a) in economically backward countries with a weak national bourgeoisie and with crass imperialist exploitation; b) where the working class is relatively backward and small or where it has been crushed and demoralized (it is of extreme importance to note that the development of a deformed workers state required the crushing of the working class in both China and Vietnam); c) where the petty bourgeoisie has taken the military road of struggle, civil war, and carries this struggle to the point of destroying the old capitalist army and state apparatus; d) where direct military intervention by imperialism is difficult to carry through successfully. Even if all these conditions exist in a country it is by no means automatic that the petty bourgeois force will succeed.

It is therefore possible for deformed workers states to come into existence in more countries. Yes, it is possible--in fact it is quite probable during the interim period before the world working class once again seizes the revolutionary initiative. This is precisely why it is so important for us to understand the Cuban experience.

It is extremely important, however, for our movement to pay special attention to the central contributing factor to these deformed revolutions-- the general weakness of the working class. Whether the working class exists as a conscious organized force such petty bourgeois formations simply split wide open if they are unable to crush the working class first (In this latter respect the Vietnamese experience is of special importance. There the Stalinist led forces literally exterminated the working class movement in the cities of Vietnam, including our comrades. This was a necessary precondition to the development of a deformed workers state in Vietnam at a later date. This is the significance of the present moves against the POR in Cuba. If a working class vanguard is not

crushed then the intervention of the working class could rip apart the petty bourgeois movement posing immediately the possibility proletarian leadership of the struggle--and of the development of a real workers state--one we could truly embrace and be at one with.)

It should therefore ~~be~~ ^{it} absolutely clear that these deformed revolutions are not wholly ours. This is simply another way of saying that they are not wholly the working class's. These petty bourgeois strata carry through only the most minimum social transformation consistent with the continued rule of the strata itself. At every point in the transformation process they seek to minimize, to control, the intervention of the working class. They are forced to exterminate the working class vanguard or any potential vanguard; they seek to contain the revolutionary development within the boundaries of their own country; and they produce a society so disfigured by bureaucratic deformations as to be unattractive to the working classes (what attractive pull does East Germany have on the West German workers? Why is the Stalinist party in Japan, which is so close to China, so small?) In fact we must frankly admit, as Trotsky did before us, that these deformed workers states give the working class less freedom to function and develop its own vanguard than do many of the capitalist societies. The reason for this is clear--it is precisely because the bureaucratic caste is less stable and more vulnerable to working class overturn than the capitalist class that it feels a greater necessity to suppress the working class.

There is now a certain tendency among those who call themselves Trotskyists to interpret the Cuban experience to mean that we, too, must go into the mountains and build a movement based on the peasantry. The Pabloites have actually formulated this in their Sixth World Congress documents even suggesting that their comrades set up schools in guerilla warfare. We completely reject this ~~whole~~ ^{whole} approach. We can only come to power on the basis of one class -- the working class and no other. The defeats of the working class are our defeats; the victories of the working class are our victories. This is our only identity, our only reason to exist. Were we to build a movement based on these petty bourgeois strata, we, too, would be transformed into a petty bourgeois party and

17-17-17

the revolution would likewise be deformed from the very beginning. No --our place is first of all in the cities, in the factories. Then, with the working class, as the most advanced section of it, we will reach out to mobilize the peasantry also -- to precisely break up any independent formations of the petty bourgeoisie and to win to our banner the most radical section of this intermediate class.

The Political Revolution in Cuba:

We must recognize that precisely because Cuba developed in its initial period without the direct control of a stalinist party, the revolutionary regime was far more open to the influence of the working class and the possibilities of developing a true working class revolutionary party in Cuba were far greater. This is shown graphically in the fact that Cuba is the only emerging deformed workers state which has allowed, until recently, a Trotskyist party to legally exist.

Conversely, we must recognize that the growth of Stalinism in Cuba both as an ideology and as an organized movement, is ~~the expression~~ an expression of the bureaucratization process -- of the beginnings of the development of a separate ruling bureaucratic caste in Cuba. Stalinism is still the ideology of bureaucratic rule and the spread of this system of thought, not only through the PSP but within the Castro ruling group itself, is simply an ideological expression of the deeper bureaucratization process. The fact that stalinism is emerging so strongly in Cuba today is the final proof that Cuba is a deformed workers state.

*This is not to say that we are predicting that the Russian agents that run the PSP are destined to take over in Cuba. It is possible that the Castro regime can maintain a certain independence from the USSR comparable to Yugoslavia or China. In which case we should not rule out a showdown battle of some depth between the Blas Roca Russian agents and the "independent stalinists" around Castro. Should Castro launch such a struggle that would no more free him from stalinism than it freed Tito when he took a similar step.

In fact the development of a stalinist ideology in Cuba today gives us a deeper understanding of what exactly the stalinist ideology is. It is not simply a matter of the ideology of the USSR and of those CPs directly controlled by the USSR. This is what Swabeck suggest when he claims that for Mao to break with the USSR is the same as for Mao to break with stalinism. Again elements of this approach can be found in the thinking of most of the majority comrades. Stalinism is the ideology of bureaucratic rule which is based on proletarian property forms-- it is this and nothing else. Thus the transformation of Cuba into a deformed workers state forced upon the Castro leading group the necessity to transform its ideology so as to be able to defend these new property forms and to defend its own uncontrolled rule. Castro did not create an ideology from new cloth--he is simply taking over wholesale the already existent ideology of bureaucratic rule--stalinism.

Cuba's geographical position will help it maintain a certain level of independence from the USSR. In fact it may very well require this to maintain the Cuban economy which needs trade relations with the capitalists much more than the other deformed workers states. However, it is clear that whatever economic relations Cuba works out in the foreseeable future, they will be based on the maintenance of its planned economy and monopoly of foreign trade. Again the weakness of imperialism forces it to deal with these deformed workers states since it is incapable of overthrowing them without releasing social forces which could well overthrow it.

Is it proper to characterize Cuba as a deformed workers state when it does not as yet have a clearly defined bureaucratic caste and if we so label it is it proper for us to call for a political revolution in Cuba? Yes, I feel it is proper to so characterize Cuba, for Cuba has the essential characteristics of a deformed workers state: a) ~~xx~~ a nationalized economy; b) a ruling stratum which is not under the control of the working class. However, it is highly important to understand that Cuba is a developing revolution and that the bureaucratic caste is in the process of formation right at the present moment. A recognition of this reality

allows for the working out of a considerably different strategy and tactics than that which we would apply in a more stable (relatively) deformed workers state such as China. Because of this fluid situation the intervention of the working class to counteract this bureaucratization process is not only possible but essential. In Cuba the possibility of establishing the direct rule of the working class is far greater than in any other of the deformed workers states and Trotskyists in Cuba must work energetically towards this end despite the persecutions against them. We must counsel the Cuban Trotskyists to neither write off the Cuban revolution and act as if this bureaucratization process is completed nor to rely upon the bureaucrats themselves to counter it. Only the the conscious intervention of the working class into Cuban politics can save the situation. The achievement of this intervention must be the central strategic goal of our movement in Cuba. All tactical questions, such as our attitude towards conflicts between Castro and the PSP, must be judged according to whether or not they further this strategic goal.

Since there is no clearly defined bureaucratic caste in Cuba is it proper for us to advocate a political revolution in Cuba today? My answer to that is also emphatically, yes! The establishment of workers rule in Cuba today would be a profound political change. It would necessitate the creation of a revolutionary Marxist party with a mass base and the formation of representative institutions of the masses. These institutions would have to replace the present administrative apparatus in Cuba infusing all governmental levels with working class elements. The Marxist party would have to replace the present petty bourgeois Castro leadership in Cuba. Such changes can only be described as revolutionary changes in the political structure of the country. That is, that what is involved is more than mere quantitative changes (the amount of working class democracy as the majority likes to put it) ^{is} essential ^{is} a qualitative change in the political structure of the country. It is a matter of replacing the rule of a petty bourgeois apparatus with the rule of the working class itself. Changes in the economic structure would not be so profound and that is why we characterize such a change as a political as contrasted to a social revolution.

It is possible that someone may suggest that instead of applying the concept of political revolution to Cuba we should follow Trotsky's approach to the USSR before 1933 and work for political reform. I feel that this would be an incorrect approach and would reflect a lack of understanding of the only real difference between the degenerated workers state in the USSR and the postwar deformed workers states--that is its unique political evolution.

The USSR was established as the first workers state led by a genuine revolutionary working class party. The evolution of the USSR was the evolution of the decay of this working class party under conditions of isolation, etc. Thus revolutionists must take a different attitude towards the process of decay within a working class party than we would towards a petty bourgeois party which never was a working class party in any real sense. We must never write off too quickly the possibility of reform from within the former and never count on reform from within the latter.

An even clearer understanding of the important theoretical distinction between the process of political revolution and the process of political reform can be gained if we refer to the distinction made earlier between a workers state and a deformed workers state. It is possible to discuss reform, that is a quantitative change, within a workers state which is seriously sick. In a deformed workers state, no matter how much it may be in flux, only revolution, a qualitative change, can bring about the leap of society to a new form of rule--that of the working class itself. To raise the question of reform in a deformed workers state, even like Cuba, is to break down the qualitative difference between a deformed workers state and a workers state--that is to bring into question the very concept of a deformed workers state. Thus raising the question of reform automatically raises the question of whether or not the society in question is a deformed workers state. But there is one thing that is certain--Cuba is not now nor has it ever been a workers state, sick or not, for the working class has never ruled in Cuba!

While it is possible for comrades to question this approach in general, it is unquestionably correct, in my opinion, once we approach it within the framework of the concrete reality of Cuba itself. Castro rules with a governmental

apparatus alone, while the Stalinists always rule through a disciplined party. That what is at issue here is not calling for the reform of a party -- but of the governmental apparatus itself. Thus we immediately begin to orient towards this or that section of the governmental apparatus and lose sight of-- the working class. Since the governmental apparatus has virtually no working class elements within it, it cannot be reformed from within. Only the independent mobilization of the working class can push forward the revolutionary process in Cuba. We, of course, expect that such independent intervention will swing to the side of the working class a section of those who support Castro including people in the Government. But this is a by-product of the independent struggle, not the central axis of our strategy.

Does this mean that we are stating that we would approach the political revolution in Cuba as we do in other deformed workers states -- that is that we would in effect organize an armed insurrection? Not at all. It is precisely because of the fluid state of things in Cuba today -- that the bureaucratization process has not been finalized -- that we can hope for the possibility of a non-violent political revolution. (of more accurately one of limited violence for it is my conviction that our relations with the stalinists will be settled one way or the other violently.) Marx held open the possibility of a non-violent revolution in the U.S. because he felt that the bureaucratic apparatus and the standing army were not developed on the scale of the European capitalist countries. Lenin ruled this out on the basis of the later evolution of the U.S. Today, if there is any government which fits Marx's description of one where its over turn could be carried through without an armed insurrection, it is the Castro regime in Cuba.

However, as recent moves against the POR show time is fast running out in which the political revolution can proceed with little violent disruptions. The party majority, of course, is interested in ~~xxxxxx~~ none of this. It has completely deserted the methodology of Marxism in its knowtist urge to wipe Castro's rear. The development of Marxist thought on our movement here rests now with us. We, at least, will give these questions the serious attention they deserve.

--Tim Wohlforth
July 20, 1961

file

New York City
Oct. 18, 1961

Oakland, Calif.

Dear Ed,

I'm taking a couple days off work in order to formulate my notes and incorporate them into this letter to you. The intersection of events in the past couple of weeks both within the American, particularly the youth, movement and of IC-SWP developments have forced a stock taking, reevaluation and affirmation of our working perspectives. And I mean taking a hard look at a more fundamental level than the merely tactical, 180 degree turns which have been executed every few weeks in the period since the party convention.

Within the American movement: In the post-party convention period we have in part sinned against our intended underlying perspective. At the very first gatherings of comrades of our tendency in NYC brought together because of the needs of factional struggle for the pre-convention period, I recall explaining that we were embarking on a long, hard road and one which the party would react to with all the considerable means at its disposal and in particular, that our majority in the YSA-NEC was rendered highly transitory thereby. This was then and since even put forth as a sort of a slogan: "To Transform Ourselves from the Youth Leadership Into a Tendency in the Movement as a Whole." I.e. The party majority would itself aid us in bringing about the first half, but it was up to us to bring about the second by rooting ourselves, and seeking to become local majorities, in the party branches and youth units. And to do this not merely as an organizational defense measure, but as a process of the political delineation of our minority as that of the consistent Trotskyists within the party.

You were at the national gathering just after the party convention when we recognized without dissent that the period of working as a faction was over with the close of the convention and that we would seek to consolidate and extend ourselves in the next period in the more general form of a political tendency within the movement. At that point prospects along these lines were pretty good, if modest: we had with the excellent pre-convention and convention arguments won a general recognition for ourselves as "the American minority". But since then we have not gone forward.

It has been our activity in the youth field which has compromised our intended line and which in the balance has been an error. For we continued with a series of factional maneuvers in the youth organization. There was to be sure plenty of justification, even compulsion, for our actions which were in addition utterly principled in nature. The particular whys and wherefores have been gone into in earlier letters; eg. my letter to Roger of 9-14-61. Our post-convention course arose out of the contradiction in the YSA of our grouping (except for my removal) continuing as the one nominally in a majority on the NEC and responsible to and for the YSA which we had founded and largely built. But at the same time we were entirely a lame duck leadership visibly, but not formally, repudiated by the party leadership which had swung a majority of the party-youth activists behind it. In the attempt to discharge our responsibilities to the YSA our comrades were drawn into a series of organizational wrangles which, with the party in a fundamentally powerful position, was a situation which the party could and did degrade and muddy, using every turn to pose an image of "Wohlforth a party disloyal-burocrat-cliquist" thus making milage in a campaign to reduce our political tendency to a matter of bringing a disrupter to heel.

Additionally there has been another underlying obstacle to our ability to carry out the requisite turn. Our central grouping in NYC was largely formed as a political and especially organizational youth leadership habituated to disciplined administrative practice and of reducing questions to a matter of taking assignments in a division of labor. These are fine and necessary habits for a majority, but over-reliance on them for a minority is to display its least significant and weakest side.

To put our error in general form: we continued to work as a faction, rather than as a tendency. A faction is a grouping organized for struggle, emphasizing internal discipline, mobilizing for and executing uniform tactics, etc. A tendency is a grouping of comrades who hold essentially the same viewpoint on more-or-less fundamental questions and who may be, but are not necessarily organized for power struggles, i.e. a faction. (For a brief refresher I recommend rereading Cannon's "Faction Struggle and Party Leadership" in the Nov.-Dec. 1953 FI.) Additionally preoccupation with more organizational questions places us most fully at the mercy of the party leadership's mastery of organizational judo i.e. puts the plane of struggle within the sphere of the party's greatest competence - handling org questions.

At the same time that we were drawn into extending ourselves in organizational struggles we entirely failed to move in other directions. I.e. until just two nights ago and then on the basis of this present perspective, the NYC tendency comrades never have had a political discussion as such! Even for example Mage's Cuba resolution was presented to the party for convention vote with neither discussion nor vote on it by its proponents (many of whom accepted it only in a general way). And the needs of a factional center in NYC have determined our geographic allocation of forces up until the present time.

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The widening breach in the International Committee: The present situation in the IC, opened by the SLL letter to the SWP of Jan. 2, '61, has gone rapidly through several stages. (1) The SLL began by finally moving to put some life in the IC for the first time and toward the aim of reconstructing a Trotskyist International. It sought to win the concurrence of the SWP and at the same time very gently warned the SWP that political weaknesses had been noticed of late within the American Party (eg unity sentiments toward the Pablo grouping). What was essentially new was that the SLL would no longer be held off from these aims by the private demurrs of the passive and obscuring SWP. From now on things were to be out in the open within the IC. The SWP refused to visibly react in any direction in the ensuing correspondence series, almost entirely one sided, from SLL to SWP leading bodies. (2) Then the SLL brought out its draft world resolution (about which you will recall my enthusiasm when I talked with you when on tour, because, as I put it, the draft contained points which I had thought were even personal prejudices on my part and shared by no one else.) The draft contained a section which said among other things: "The revolutionaries in the SWP need periodically to take a hard look at themselves and check over their political work constantly." The party response was to bring out its own draft international resolution which by its objectivist methodology and gaping evasions served to sharpen the concern of the SLL leadership. (3) In June the party printed in the internal bulletin the Cannon letters of the previous month which said: "The breach between us and Gerry is obviously widening." and "...I get the definite impression that the SLL is off on an Oehlerite binge." In July at the IC session in which the SLL won a clear majority, C. Slaughter, main reporter to the meeting, concluded his summary with the no longer implied or gentle: "The question that follows from the SWP resolution today is: why not liquidate the Trotskyist parties? We must stop this trend before it is too late." The SWP has ignored the invitation to defend its views at the next IC meeting and has never replied directly to these or earlier SLL criticisms. It was the reading of the Slaughter report two weeks ago which pushed me to look at our situation since open rupture is plainly a near thing.

I believe that the SLL is doubly correct vis a vis the SWP. First that the SLL-IC position on the central task of the Trotskyists is incontestible - the need for a revolutionary Marxist International, not an international publicity agency for assorted "leftward-moving" bureaucracies. Further, that the resulting critique of SWP views and motion is true. Second, and given the first part, it is then incumbent upon the SLL to force clarification within the IC by moving through all the stages necessary to achieve a real political discussion and consolidation within a world body which can then become an international instrument instead of the passive, semi-fiction of the past 8 years. The internal deadlock must be broken, even though it places us within the SWP in an extremely precarious, but also important, position.

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What the main elements in our perspective must be: With the foregoing as a preliminary let me move into the question of what is indicated for us to do. To recapitulate - the growing dissatisfaction with mere tactical zig-zags in the YSA together with the recognition of the implications for us of the trend of SLL-SWP relations are together what has led to the determination for a real assessment.

If the present course of IC developments are followed out along their current path, there will be a collision and an organizational rupture. The SWP will not long endure the present level of pressure on it to discuss, rather viewing this pressure as sectarian name calling and insults. But it will not acquiesce to an intra-IC discussion either, since that would contradict the course actively being followed: eg. right now Hanson is in Latin America seeking to get next to the kinds of forces which the IC would like to debate how rotten they are.

The SWP tops have an easy and natural rationale to cover a split from the IC and one which the SWP is already largely prepared for: "we choose to openly discuss with all Trotskyist and leftward moving forces in the world on an equal basis and seeking common actions and fraternal solidarity. We have tried to deal with the unfortunately misoriented IC comrades in the same spirit, only they won't have it, so we choose to continue on the broader road of general fraternal relations, not into an ingrown isolation." I can hear Dobbs saying it at a plenum in which a split is passed off as really a move toward unity in "the big picture".

We have a primary duty to our political views and goals to the future of Trotskyism in this country ie. the American revolution. This duty entails (1) to uphold the views which we share with the IC majority, and (2) therefore to urge and stand for the maintenance of SWP unity with the IC and, if that unity is broken, to advocate its reestablishment. It is also necessary to take this course with great circumspection and with a clear and real affirmation that we are an indigenous wing of the SWP and organizationally loyal and disciplined. Otherwise a break with the IC can well automatically lead to our own exclusion.

At bottom, the reason I hold a perspective of struggle against split from the SWP is because the party is far from one in which all the revolutionary juices have been drained. Factionalism now is linked with and only has use in a split perspective. In the past few years the party has begun to react to opportunities by turning each one into a cycle of opportunism until the given opening is exhausted. Each time a selection takes place, some - notably the Weiss grouping - get worse and move toward liquidationism, but others react and are impelled in a leftward direction. This process has just begun, if one stops to view the SWP historically. There are two roads open. Either each wave of oppositionals will let themselves get washed out of the party, making it ever harder for succeeding left-wingers, or each opportunist venture into fresh fields will augment the revolutionary Marxists with additional forces.

There is one and only one reason for which the SWP should be able to find grounds for our expulsion: the advocacy within the movement and within those circumstances as expressly laid down by the SWP leadership of our Trotskyist views.

Not only would failure to follow this course be a sectarian gift per se to the SWP tops, but in the next period it could well mean our extinction. To take a clear look at ourselves: we are a nominal 35 or so comrades. About 15 in NYC where there is a certain spread of opinion and orientation among the leading comrades; in addition, a similar number in the Bay Area, but of generally less commitment so that there is as well a spread between the two areas as well as a lack of common orientation within the Bay Area as well. Then there are a couple of valuable but isolated comrades who are rather passive toward their views, elsewhere.

This nascent grouping is not one which, even if part of it could maneuver the other part into a split against its will, would hold strong promise for the demanding life of an organizationally independent existence. (Correct programme is not by itself enough; the development of cadres counts, too. Trotskyist groupings of our size keep turning up and disappearing in half the counttries on earth.) We hold in our hands a body of comrades with great demonstrated qualities of work and seriousness. The chemistry of transforming this into a cadre is not an easy thing. Abortion is.

It is necessary to orient for the best, the optimistic variant before us (what Trotsky called revolutionary optimism). An example along this line would be for the upsurge in the union movement (so long deferred-but note what is happening now in the auto workers) to produce a cleavage in which our party opportunists seek to become the agents for the inevitable "more progressive wing" of the T.U. bureaucracy, while every other element in the party and possessing an essential militancy orients toward the rank-and-file movement. Then we'll have the reckoning for which the pressures are building and in the most favorable, fullest, clear-cut circumstances.

Immediate tasks: # # #

To put ourselves on the correct track we have to open up and act like what we aim to be - a tendency that is a part of the party. One never gets something for nothing. Switching over the mechanism that holds our grouping together from that of an organizational disciplinary sense imposed upon a minimal political agreement to that of a developing political cohesiveness offers threats of losing some comrades along the way. The danger is that we may do it raggedly or fail to fill the new modes of functioning with a real, live, content. But should we go in the other direction and simply quiet down on practically all issues through the means of seeking a vastly intensified discipline, even if the turn aimed at were the one sketched here ^{in the Party} because the majority would clearly see and trumpet it about that we were approaching the party in a military fashion. J.P. Cannon is not at all stupid and we would not deceive him by one more tactical product of what he has so frequently stated his hatred - a permanent faction.

^{is urgent}
This line of conduct ^{is urgent} for another reason; we have failed for so long to engage in political discussion and clarification even within the tendency that some comrades fear that beginning to do so now will cause some of those in the NYC tendency to go over to the majority. This fear that we may be in actuality some kind of clique is not only groundless - our comrades here certainly all agree, for example, with the July '61 IC minimal position adopted on Cuba - but this view only serves to exacerbate real centrifugal forces of other kinds. Rather than conjure up such fears we should seek as much political discussion as we can, and as much of that as we can before and with the movement as a whole rather than within the tendency. Politics and a political identity should be our hall mark rather than clinging to the habits of a vanished role in the YSA leadership.

The principal threat to a perspective of political struggle with the party is in finding ourselves (1) isolated, (2) discredited, or (3) thrown out through 'violating' party decisions and 'proving' that we are all the usual stuff - anti-party elements, agents of a foreign power (Healy), etc. About (1) isolation this is in some ways and with some elements inevitable in any case, simply on the basis of the party tops power and authority and our lack of same. But those whose primary respect is for power are not the best elements for us to approach anyhow. None-the-less the feeling of isolation on our people's a constant strain liable to induce hasty and unstable

conduct on our part. It is in the isolation of discreditment and the danger of being expelled that we must counter as our principal external task at this time.

The question of how to deal with the Cuba discussion in the YSA is both a matter with which we must deal and is a good example of how to proceed as an SWP disciplined tendency. The new youth leadership - ie. the party leadership - has made Cuba the only political point on the agenda of the coming YSA national conference. What was intended as a trap for us fell through when a surprise majority on the PC voted unambiguously that party members in the youth were free to state their views on the Cuban question within the YSA.

Now the YSA is in general not a matter of struggle for us; the party has made it clear that the YSA is a party property. We therefore must avoid anything that smacks of obstructionism or of organizing non-party youth against the party. Hence we seek to raise and work out our political views in the party primarily. The only question of real import to the YSA is that of youth-party relations. But youth-party relations can't even be touched on without making at least an implied attack on the social-democratic practices the party is imposing. At a minimum we should leave the question entirely alone in the discussion unless the party expressly permits the expression of views and resolutions on this subject. Best is to present within the party our model of youth-party relations eg. the Mage draft resolution, rather than seeking the right to try to implement it within the youth at this juncture. All the youth will know where we stand in any case and the intra-party existence of this position, kept active, will serve as a good measuring rod for the evolution of party conduct toward the youth.

Certainly we must absolutely avoid getting involved in any mutual recriminations about past record, etc. in the YSA. That would open the door wide to exactly what the party majority is looking for - a big messy, senseless organizational squabble at the coming youth conference. We do not carry a responsible role in the youth leadership any longer and any time we act otherwise we are going to get hurt and do the YSA no good either.

But about the Cuban question we need to and indeed have the opportunity to move differently. We have been virtually ordered to discuss it in the YSA and would politically discredited and pilloried by our opponents should we fail to offer the differing views from the SWP position which practically all YSA members know exist since they were invited into the party pre-convention discussion as observers. But there is a trap: the party PC rep to the YSA-NEC has "invited" us to request the introduction of our SWP bulletin pre-convention material into the YSA discussion. To do so would center the discussion on the on a simple continuation of our attacks upon what has in the interim become the SWP position ie. make it appear we are warring with the party in the youth. Rather we should request the introduction only of comrade Mage's draft resolution on Cuba which is entirely objective (ie. doesn't mention the SWP) for the information of the YSA.

The next step in dealing with the Cuba-youth business is crucial to our whole perspective. Rather than seek to a priori bind tendency supporters to the particular interpretations contained in the Mage resolution ie. to work as a faction facing the rest of the YSA with an internal discipline, rather than this our comrades should present their various views on Cuba and even alternative discussion drafts of resolutions should they feel it necessary - thus treating the YSA to a real, live discussion. We are not in any power fight in the youth and the certain attempts of the surely surprised party majority comrades to exploit intra-IC type differences can in fact have only beneficial effects. We will present a far more attractive appearance to non-party youth as serious about working out the Cuban and colonial questions not in subordinating them to organizational aims within the YSA as the party majority is doing. At the same time we are placed in the strongest defensive position toward the discussion from the party side. It makes it clear that the rumors

circulating in NYC that "we intend to split at the youth conference" are nonsense. Further with this conduct we are most closely following the PC motion as stated: i.e. members presenting their views, not a party faction presenting its views to line up non-party youth against the party.

The party majority seems sure to make the Cuban question the voting issue of division at the youth conference. If so, the left wing delegates can at that time decide how to formulate our common position as it has evolved in the light of the discussion. At a minimum something like the July IC statement is quite sufficient should no draft resolution introduced into the discussion prove satisfactory. But to seek a common plank at the beginning - either an elaborate or a minimal one - then go into the discussion bound to such a stand and refusing to be drawn out would open us up to the various difficulties and charges as indicated above.

I think that to work along these lines by our tendency comrades in the youth will not only avoid many pitfalls, but cause us to emerge a politically strengthened and defined tendency and with our nature better understood and strengthened in the eyes of the movement as a whole. This provided that we don't get carried away into investing the discussion with the importance of a party convention and lose sight of more primary aims within the party. Likewise comrades must not begin to attack the party or party leaders no matter what the provocation - and there may be deliberate provocation. Should such a situation start to develop in any form responsible comrades should on the spot call any offender to order in an educational way and as a loyal party member should. So much for the question of Cuba in the YSA.

As has been mentioned before, we must deal with the matter of the disposition of our comrades geographically. Our concentration in NYC has weaknesses which will soon be even more sharply apparent when larger numbers of older party youth are taken out of the YSA after the coming conference. The NYC party branch is from the standpoint of rooting our tendency in the party one of the least likely in the country. In addition to the common NYC political disease of ingrownness and isolation, the branch is very heavily and directly administered from the National Office and is policed by numerous comrades eager to prove their zeal to the party tops. (After considerable pressing I've been given a minor and sharply delimited branch educational post - this is a strictly stopgap effort on my part.)

We will have to make some decisions after the youth conference and perhaps move rapidly to carry out a redistribution at that time. Hence in the meantime we must weigh various alternatives.

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Summary: All our proposals for the next months must revolve around strengthening ourselves within the party so that we make it as difficult as possible to be dumped out as "Healyite agents" as the fight in the IC sharpens. This means bringing to the fore the political character of our tendency (and working to clarify and extend it by so doing) and emphasizing our organizational loyalty and discipline to the SWP. This can not be accomplished by some tactical maneuver, but by a real, if delayed going over in our functioning to what it should have become earlier.

Should we be squeezed out of the SWP none-the-less we will still be in the strongest position - our comrades and not only those in our tendency vividly aware that we did everything in our power short of surrender of our Bolshevik convictions to remain in our party. But if we approach the situation in this spirit we diminish to the minimum the likelihood of this more pessimistic variant. The party tops will then be in the least advantageous position to move against us organizationally; and we seek political confrontation within the party.

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I know this is a long letter, but its been four months since we've been able to discuss personally and a great deal has piled up and become urgent in the meantime. I know you don't write much but you should make some response upon due consideration. In addition I'm sending copies of this letter to other comrades to the extent I can get out carbons in a single typing. I hope these proposals elicit a strong response from all who read it, both of consideration and reply and of implimentation to the extent feasible in particular circumstances.

There is a whole separate area worthy of another long letter just in going into the politics of our tendency at this juncture and the related tasks. Citing and relating the most pressing questions, sketching a line content and suggesting the ways and levels of dealing with them. I'll try to crank something out next weekend.

Certainly much of what I've covered is not as directly applicable to the Bay Area as it is to New York. For example because your branch is at a great distance from the center and our comrades are a force in it, you are necessarily plunged into struggles in the branch from time to time since many practical decisions are made by the branch itself. But the general tenor is, I believe, applicable to the Bay Area and the other parts of the country. And much of it is intended precisely for strengthening the processes for pulling our tendency more closely together on a nation-wide basis. For this job programmatic agreement is the strongest bond and the one which we must heighten.

With Leninist greetings,

Jim

Draft Resolution on the Cuban Revolution*Nov 20, 1961 Shane Mage*

1.) The Cuban revolution constitutes the highest point of revolutionary development hitherto attained in the Western hemisphere; it is potentially the commencement of the American socialist revolution. Realization of this potential is possible only if the Cuban revolution once more surges forward, internally and externally, to the establishment of workers' democracy in Cuba and the spread of the revolution to at least the decisive countries of Latin America.

2.) Despite enormous accomplishments, Cuba remains economically backward and isolated in a Western Hemisphere under the domination of U.S. imperialism. This situation is the direct cause not only of the obstacles to the further progress of the Cuban revolution but also of powerful tendencies toward degeneration.

3.) For the masses of Cuba the most significant economic achievement of the revolution has been a substantial increase in living standards. This has been accomplished through a radically egalitarian redistribution of income and wealth, and a reorientation of the pattern of investment to give priority to the construction of schools, homes, and cultural and recreational facilities. At the same time a start has been made toward diversification of Cuban agriculture.

4.) The revolution has basically overturned the previous Cuban property forms. The U.S. and Cuban owned latifundia have become the property either of the working peasantry or of the state. All U.S. owned industry has been confiscated and the properties of a considerable portion of the Cuban bourgeoisie have likewise been expropriated. If Cuba remains free from the burden of meaningful compensation and indemnification payments these measures can provide the structural basis for a non-capitalist type of planned economy.

5.) The speed and depth of the property overturn has been essentially a response to the actions of U.S. imperialism. Although the Cuban revolution began with purely bourgeois-democratic aims (agrarian reform, overthrow of the Batista dictatorship, national independence) these could not be achieved without a fierce struggle against U.S. imperialism and its Cuban bourgeois retainers. The refusal of the Castro regime to back down before U.S. blackmail and economic aggression led it to mobilize the Cuban masses and strike against the economic bases of imperialist and bourgeois rule. Its very survival compelled it to destroy the old army and police which had been the bulwark of the "democracy" of Grau and Prio as well as of the dictatorships of Batista, and replace them with a new revolutionary army and a vast popular militia.

6.) The main concern of U.S. imperialism in its vicious hostility to the Cuban revolution has been to safeguard U.S. economic positions throughout Latin America. The U.S. has been held back from a military invasion of Cuba only by the probability that such action would spread the revolution instead of suppressing it, and the certainty that a U.S. attempt to occupy Cuba would be met by the Cuban people with resistance of the utmost ferocity and would lead to a long war dwarfing the Algerian conflict. U.S. policy toward Cuba therefore has attempted to strangle and distort the Cuban economy through a combination of military and diplomatic pressure with naked economic aggression.

7.) The Cuban economy has been able to continue functioning under these blows only because the Soviet Union came to its aid by taking Cuban sugar in return for oil, munitions, and essential industrial products. Far from being

altruistic, this action is entirely to the economic and political advantage of the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy which rules in the Soviet Union and the other countries of the "Socialist Camp." It is aimed at bringing the Cuban revolution under control and using it to put pressure on the U.S. in order to gain more concessions in an eventual "peaceful co-existence" deal.

81) Under cover of screams about "Communist penetration into the Western Hemisphere" the U.S. government under both Eisenhower and Kennedy has been doing everything possible to force revolutionary Cuba into complete subjugation to the Kremlin in order to destroy its dynamism, isolate it within the hemisphere, and discredit it as an example, preparatory to an ultimate settlement of the question with Khrushchev. The April 17 invasion, which from a military point of view was an absolutely insane proposition, in fact constituted an important and effective move in this political strategy.

9.) The political development of the Cuban revolution has throughout been marked by the absence of a sizeable revolutionary-Marxist political party and the total lack of democratic structures whereby the government would be responsible to and controlled by the workers and peasants. For a considerable period these factors were overshadowed by the revolutionary actions of the Castro regime and its responsiveness to mass pressure. Nevertheless the fact remained that the Cuban state and economy were in the hands of a separate administrative apparatus independent of the workers and peasants because not subject to election and recall by them. Even that most democratic of institutions, the popular militia, was deprived of the essential democratic right to elect its own officers.

10.) Even in the period of revolutionary upsurge there were strong tendencies toward the imposition of bureaucratic structures upon the revolution. This was most clearly evident in the case of the Cuban Trade Unions whose democratically elected leadership, whatever its vices, was composed of Fidelistas who had ousted the old pro-Batista bureaucrats in 1959. During 1960 this leadership was arbitrarily Stalinist in origin, subservient to the government. Subsequently the structure of the union movement was revised to eliminate the autonomy of individual unions, placing centralized control in the hands of a small bureaucratic group.

11.) Since the April 17 invasion there has been a real intensification and acceleration of the trend toward bureaucratization and authoritarianism. Most agrarian co-operatives, theoretically controlled by their peasant members, have been transformed into "People's Farms" under centralized state administration. Tentative forms of workers control in industry, the "Technical Advisory Councils", have been allowed to lapse into inactivity. Government policy, as represented by Che Guevara, is specifically opposed to workers' control and assigns to Cuban Trade Unions the exclusive role of increasing production, not defending the specific class interests of the workers.

12.) As the Cuban regime develops political structures these likewise tend to be bureaucratic and authoritarian. After April 17, under cover of phrases about the "socialist revolution," a single-party system has been developed through the amalgamation of all remaining political groups into the "Integrated Revolutionary Organization." The Stalinist apparatus of the former "Peoples Socialist Party" plays a major role in the ORI which was represented at the recent "National Production Congress" by the veteran Stalinist leader Carlos Rafael Rodriguez.

13.) Far from guaranteeing freedom of speech to all tendencies supporting the revolution, the Cuban government since April 17 has begun major repressions. Most important has been the suppression of the Trotskyist paper "Voz Proletaria" and the book "Permanent Revolution" by Leon Trotsky. Political censorship has been imposed on films, and the independent cultural publication "Lunes" forced out of existence. The arbitrary arrests and long detentions without charges of North American revolutionary socialists strikingly indicate the existence of a well developed secret police apparatus free from legal or democratic restraints.

14.) The Cuban workers and peasants are today confronted with a twofold task: to defend their revolution from the attacks of the U.S. and native counter-revolutionaries, and to defeat and reverse the tendencies toward bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution. To confront this task they crucially need the establishment of workers democracy.

15.) Workers democracy, for us, signifies that all state and administrative officials are elected by and responsible to the working people of city and country through representative institutions of democratic rule. The best historical models for such institutions were the Soviets of the Russian revolution of 1917 and the Workers Councils of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The Cuban workers and peasants can, no doubt, develop their own original variants of these forms. There is only one essential attribute without which any democratic form is but pretense and mockery: there must be full freedom of organization and expression for all political groups and tendencies that support the revolution, without any concession to the Stalinist monolithism of the one-party system.

16.) The full victory of every modern revolution, the Cuban revolution included, requires the emergence in a leading role of a mass revolutionary-Marxist party. The small Trotskyist groups, in Cuba and elsewhere, have a vital role as the nucleus of such parties. They can fill this role only if they continually *preserve* ~~preserve~~ their political independence and ability to act, and if they avoid the peril of yielding to non-Marxist and non-proletarian leaderships their own ideological responsibilities and the historic mission of the working class.

17.) In its relation to the Cuban revolution the YSA, like every revolutionary group, has two principal tasks:

a.) To exert the utmost effort to defend the Cuban revolution not only against the military and other attacks of U.S. imperialism, but also against the political attacks of the social-democratic agents of imperialism.

b.) To struggle for the development and extension of the Cuban revolution and against the attempts of counter-revolutionary Stalinism to corrupt the revolution from within. We seek to further their development and extension both by supporting revolutionary actions of the existing leadership and by constructively criticizing, openly and frankly, the mistakes and inadequacies of that leadership. Both to develop the Cuban revolution and to extend it throughout the hemisphere. We base ourselves on the imperative necessity for the establishment of workers democracy and the formation of the mass party of revolutionary Marxism.

--submitted by Shane Mage
to the NEC November 20, 1961

[] } to/from Nov. 20 draft
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NYC circulating

Draft Resolution on the Cuban Revolution

Dec. 21, 1961 *Shane Mage*

1.) The Cuban revolution constitutes the highest point of revolutionary development hitherto attained in the Western Hemisphere; it is potentially the commencement of the American socialist revolution. Realization of this potential is possible only if the Cuban revolution once more surges forward, internally and externally, to the establishment of workers' democracy in Cuba and the spread of the revolution to at least the decisive countries of Latin America.

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3.) For the masses of Cuba the most significant economic achievement of the revolution has been a substantial increase in living standards. This has been accomplished through a radically egalitarian redistribution of income and wealth, and a reorientation of the pattern of investment to give priority to the construction of schools, homes, and cultural and recreational facilities. At the same time, a start has been made toward diversification of Cuban agriculture. [The direct action of the working class in seizing industry and, in many cases, in exerting democratic control over this industry; the organization of the peasantry into democratically run cooperatives; the arming of the masses with the formation of the militias--all this, while it was not consummated in the actual control over the state by the working class, did give the masses ~~xx~~ a very real weight in the political life of the country. This was an important acquisition of the Cuban masses and marked the Revolution as a profound social upheaval which brought the Cuban masses for the first time in history into partial control of their own destiny.]

4.) The revolution has basically overturned the previous Cuban property forms. The U.S. and Cuban owned latifundia have become the property either of the working peasantry or of the state. All U.S. owned industry has been confiscated and the properties of a considerable portion of the Cuban bourgeoisie have likewise been expropriated. Since Cuba remains free from the burden of meaningful compensation and indemnification payments, these measures can provide the structural basis for a non-capitalist type of planned economy.

5.) The speed and depth of the property overturn has been essentially a response to the actions of U.S. imperialism. Although the Cuban revolution began with purely bourgeois-democratic aims (agrarian reform, overthrow of the Batista dictatorship, national independence) these could not be achieved without a fierce struggle against U.S. imperialism and its Cuban bourgeois retainers. The

refusal of the Castro regime to back down before U.S. blackmail and economic aggression led it to mobilize the Cuban masses and strike against the economic bases of imperialist and bourgeois rule. Its very survival compelled it to destroy the old army and police which had been the bulward of the "democracy" of Grau and Prio as well as of the dictatorships of Batista, and replace them with a new revolutionary army and a vast popular militia.

6. The main concern of U.S. imperialism in its vicious hostility to the Cuban revolution has been to safeguard U.S. economic positions throughout Latin America. The U.S. has been held back from a military invasion of Cuba only by the probability that such action would spread the revolution instead of suppressing it, and the certainty that a U.S. attempt to occupy Cuba would be met by the Cuban people with resistance of the utmost ferocity. X U.S. policy toward Cuba therefore has attempted to strangle and distort the Cuban economy through a combination of military and diplomatic pressure with naked economic aggression.

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X whole section
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government. Subsequently the structure of the union movement was revised to eliminate the autonomy of individual unions, placing centralized control in the hands of a small bureaucratic group.

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11.) As the Cuban regime develops political structures these likewise tend to be bureaucratic and authoritarian. After April 17, under cover of phrases about the "socialist revolution," a single-party system has been developed through the amalgamation of all remaining political groups into the "Integrated Revolutionary Organization." The Stalinist apparatus of the former "Peoples Socialist Party" plays a major role in the ORI which was represented at the recent "National Production Congress" by the veteran Stalinist leader Carlos Rafael Rodriguez.

12.) Far from guaranteeing freedom of speech to all tendencies supporting the revolution, the Cuban government since April 17 has begun major repressions. Most important has been the suppression of the Trotskyist paper "Voz Proletaria" and the book "Permanent Revolution" by Leon Trotsky. Political censorship has been imposed on films, and the independent cultural publication "Lunes" forced out of existence. The arbitrary arrests and long detentions without charges of North American revolutionary socialists strikingly indicate the existence of a well developed secret police apparatus free from legal or democratic restraints.

[13.) 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. By minimizing the influence of the working class in the revolution, by limiting the appeal of the revolution to workers in other lands, by tending to give power to an uncontrolled bureaucracy, and by subjecting the future of Cuba to the counter-revolutionary diplomacy of the Kremlin, this process raises the danger of capitalist restoration in Cuba. However, this does not signify that in Cuba today the bureaucratic apparatus is as consolidated or dominant as in the countries of the Soviet Bloc. The democratic mass mobilization and participation in the revolution of the workers and peasants has been so powerful and far-reaching that at all levels significant resistance to the process of bureaucratization occurs.]

14.) The Cuban workers and peasants are today confronted with a twofold task: to defend their revolution from the attacks of the U.S. and native counter-revolutionaries, and to defeat and reverse the tendencies toward bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution. To confront this task they crucially need the establishment of workers democracy.

15.) Workers democracy, for us, signifies that all state and administrative officials are elected by and responsible to the working people of city and country through representative institutions of democratic rule. The best historical models for such institutions were the Soviets of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Workers Councils of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The Cuban workers and peasants can, no doubt, develop their own original variants of these forms. There is only one essential attribute without which any democratic form is but pretense and mockery: there must be full freedom of organization and expression for all political groups and tendencies that support the revolution, without any concession to the Stalinist monolithism of the one-party system.

16.) The full victory of every modern revolution, the Cuban revolution included, requires the emergence in a leading role of a mass revolutionary-Marxist party. The small Trotskyist groups, in Cuba and elsewhere, have a vital role as the nucleus of such parties. They can fill this role only if they continually preserve their political independence and ability to act, and if they avoid the peril of yielding to non-Marxist and non-proletarian leaderships their own ideological responsibilities and the historic mission of the working class.

17.) In its relation to the Cuban revolution the YSA, like every revolutionary group, has two principal tasks:

a.) To exert the utmost effort to defend the Cuban revolution not only against the military and other attacks of U.S. imperialism, but also against the political attacks of the social-democratic agents of imperialism.

b.) To struggle for the development and extension of the Cuban revolution and against the attempts of counter-revolutionary Stalinism to corrupt the revolution from within. We seek to further this development and extension both by supporting revolutionary actions of the existing leadership and by constructively criticizing, openly and frankly, the mistakes and inadequacies of that leadership. Both to develop the Cuban revolution and to extend it throughout the Hemisphere, we base ourselves on the imperative necessity for the establishment of workers democracy and the formation of the mass party of revolutionary Marxism.

--submitted by Shane Mage
to the YSA Convention
December 21, 1961.

Notes on the Cuban Discussion - Robertson

(Summary of remarks made in oral discussion)

(1) The spawning since 1943 of a whole series of anti-capitalist states in various of the more backward portions of the world has impaled the world Trotskyist movement on assorted dilemma horns. The theoretical impasse and political crisis for the movement arises through the apparent absence of either proletarian base or Bolshevik leadership to the revolutionary civil wars waged in Yugoslavia, China, Indo-China, or Cuba. An additional consideration involves the Cuban revolution whose victorious leadership was not Stalinist in its origins.

Trotskyists have reacted in four kinds of ways in measuring this twenty year development and in assigning plus and minus signs from the standpoint of the road to socialism.

- 1) Some, currently Swabek over China, come to convince themselves that the revolutions in question are clearly proletarian and with a Marxist-Leninist leadership to match. This position continually eliminates itself by the defection from the Trotskyist movement of its supporters and indeed is nothing but an overt writing off of authentic revolutionary working class struggle of which Trotskyism is nothing other than the consistent program in historic depth.
- 2) The SWP Majority and the European Pabloites have come, by and large and with certain formal pretense to the contrary notwithstanding, to view the revolutions as basically sound, but with any flaws present to be located in the leaderships which are insufficient, unconscious, or absent. (Once holders of this view find the leaderships to have become generally sufficient, conscious, and present, centrism becomes galloping revisionism rapidly leaving the arena of alleged Trotskyism.)
- 3) Those who hold the views expressed in these notes look upon the revolutions as fundamentally defective, limited, and, moreover, with leaderships to match.
- 4) Finally those who share the stand of the SLL as expressed in 'Trotskyism Betrayed' generate an approach that in large measure either denies that fundamentally revolution, solid or defective, has taken place at all and correspondingly that the leaderships are capitalist-bonapartist; or else as over China leave inexplicable the admitted fundamental transformation.

Several observations about this spread in approach are evident.

- a) The symmetry between our and Swabek's positions flows from our both seeing the revolutions and their leaderships as in consonance with one another.
- b) The basis for a common stand between ourselves and those such as the SLL exists at this juncture because the same programmatic points flow from each approach.
- c) The position of the French IC group and of comrade Mage is one of straddling the last two basic viewpoints--thus the amorphousness of 'phantom-like capitalist' or of 'transitional' states.

(2) More specifically, the position of the French IC'ists suffers from the central weakness that it views the Cuban revolution as analogous to the Spanish experience of the 1930's in which the Stalinist forces propped up the 'Loyalist Government'--an insubstantial capitalist regime--in the face of a raging proletarian revolution, and by repression and terror smashed that revolution. The analogy is not merely defective; it emphasizes exactly what is not in common between Spain and Cuba--a bona-fide workers' revolution!

Moreover the French comrades make sweeping denials of the significance or applicability of all elements in the Cuban situation which might be deemed to have led to a fundamental and decisive break from internal and world capitalism. But the depth and extent of the denials are too great. The Chinese revolution, a true analogue to the Cuban, falls under this ban as well. Thus the interpretation 'proves' too much; that is, it does not accurately reflect the true structure of reality.

The phrase 'structural assimilation' and the nebulous but 'magical' qualities attributed to it by some Trotskyists are irrelevant to the Cuban discussion. The phrase was a way for the Trotskyist movement to convince itself that, following the victory of the Soviet army in Eastern Europe, in certain cases the Kremlin was actually sufficiently unconciliatory to capitalism as to consolidate economic and state power in the wake of military conquest. What is presently under discussion is the creation of these states which came into existence essentially independent of any immediate or direct role of the Soviet Union.

(3) In the present discussion comrade Mage has stated that the best summary of his current views is set forth in his 'Draft Resolution on the Cuban Revolution', a three page YSA document printed in Young Socialist Forum, No. 15, Dec. 1961. This draft suffers two defects. The lesser of these is that several doubtful assertions or predictions of a topical character are made: E.G., assigning a rational, effective motive to the U.S. invasion attempt of April 17--the motive being the asserted desire of the U.S. to bring about complete subjugation of Cuba to the Kremlin as a stage in destroying it; E.G., stating that a 'U.S. attempt to occupy Cuba...would lead to a long war dwarfing the Algerian conflict.'

The more serious criticism of comrade Mage's contribution arises out of its very excellence at many points. As presented, the resolution only makes sense in the context of its viewing Cuba as a deformed workers state; but none-the-less, the characterization is withheld. With the passage of another year and a half, it is high time to grant it! For example, all of the shortcomings and weaknesses of the Cuban revolution as cited in the resolution and all of the measures and demands proposed to combat them are consistent only with the view of Cuba as a variety of deformed workers state. No suggestion is offered at any point in the draft resolution that capitalism still needed to be eliminated in Cuba! (Except that basic consideration common to the entire Soviet bloc that a bureaucratic ruling stratum is itself a reflection of the dominance of capitalist imperialism in the world.)

(4) There is no need among partisans of the deformed workers state interpretation to be excessively modest in upholding the position. There is sometimes encountered a feeling that this view is perhaps the best around--but the best of a bad lot! Essentially this deprecation arises from the circumstance that the theory explains events deeply repugnant to genuine Trotskyists--non-proletarian leaderships and bases in mass struggles--and some of the feeling rubs off. But the dissatisfaction and the ambiguities are lodged in the realities of the interval since the Second World War, not in a now adequate theoretical interpretation and guide to action. The theory has the necessary values of a simplicity to the extent reality will allow, predictability (thus in knowing how the movement should intervene in colonial situations so as to break up the peasant-based

military formations by a polarization process through working class activity and in direct opposition to, e.g., section 13. of the SWP Majority's 'For the Early Reunification of the Fourth International'.), and as a sharp tool for historical analysis, e.g., as in recongizing the decisive points in the chronology of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, i.e., focusing on the pivot point at the end of the year 1923 over who ruled, for what aims, and by what method.

(5) The fullest and best available document analyzing the Cuban revolution as having led to a deformed workers state is Wohlforth's 21 page draft of July 1961: 'Cuba and the Deformed Workers States'.

This document is divided into six sections:

1. Their Method and Ours pg.1
2. The Evolution of Cuba pg.2
3. Workers States and Deformed Workers States pg.4
4. The State in Transition pg.6
5. The Role of the Working Class pg.10
6. The Political Revolution pg.17

Of the material covered in these sections, there are two points about which some reservations should be made. Section 4, the State in Transition, has throughout a rather superficial quality. By page 9, Wohlforth was reduced to taking refuge in some dubious 'dialectics' to slide over difficulties in his explanations. These difficulties arose out of not paying sufficient attention to the prior history and nature of the newly victorious states which has won in geographically separated dual power situations, i.e., civil war.

In section 6, the Political Revolution in Cuba, the call is made 'for us to advocate a political revolution in Cuba.' Yet it is asserted to be one which could be consummated without organizing 'an armed insurrection'; thus hope is seen for the possibility of a 'non-violent political revolution'. Particularly for Cuba this tactical outlook gets matters twisted. The reasons for this approach seem to be taken in large measure from dubious formal definitions contrasting Cuba with pre-1933 Soviet Union.

These criticisms should not be allowed to obscure the general correctness and clarity of the document in systematically presenting the deformed workers state interpretation of contemporary Cuba.

(6) Both the delineation of a more considered approach to the political revolution in Cuba and a useful summary for these notes as a whole is found in the letter of 24 Feb. '63 from J. Robertson to B. Martin, which formally proposed opening a Tendency-wide Cuban discussion in preparation for the party convention:

'As you probably know, I hold that Cuba is a 'deformed workers state', more precisely expressed by me as a 'workers state of the second kind', or to put it empirically, as a 'state resulting from the same kind of revolutionary process as won in Yugoslavia and China.' Further, I think that the program of political revolution for Cuba ought to be given a transitional formulation

(e.g., 'Make the Gov't Ministers Responsible to and Removable by Workers' and Peasants' Democratic Organizations'). Not only has the Cuban regime issued out of a revolution like China and Yugo. (and unlike Stalin's Russia which was created in a political counter-revolution), but in addition in Cuba the lack of a prior formed bureaucratic party and system of rule, i.e., full-blown Stalinist practice, left an initial 'openness' to the undeniable rule from above. 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 were doing in their press up to the time it was closed down.'

(7) Therefore I stand for the adoption by the Revolution Tendency of the general line of the viewpoint developed in 'Cuba and the Deformed Workers States'.

James Robertson

30 April 1963

postscript: In the light of an oral summary of viewpoint presented to the NYC-RT last night by comrade Mage, two additional observations in connection with his views are presented.

(3.1) The entire structure of Mage's theoretical viewpoint flows from his initial assertion which is treated as axiomatic that: any kind of workers state must originate in a workers revolution.

Hence a) the class nature of the state issuing out of the Cuban revolution is not determined by indigenous events--likewise for China, Yugoslavia, Indo-China--since manifestly the working class was not essentially involved in the domestic revolutionary processes.

And b) 'structural assimilation' is the way in which these states have had transmitted to them the workers state quality of the only workers revolution still extant, the Russian October of forty-five years ago.

And c) the proof of 'structural assimilation' as the decisive link in the change in the class character of these new regimes is that they have become in every way in essence identical with the Soviet Union, hence must have been 'structurally assimilated'.

As an aside d) it is suggested that there are capitalist states (Burma, Egypt, etc.) which have pretty much the same formal economic structure as the emergent anti-capitalist regimes, but which lack the vital sharing in the Russian 'original good' and so cannot transcend state-capitalism.

Sad to say, this example of pure scholasticism is the central core of Comrade Mage's theoretical insight. A critical way of putting its substance is to suggest that in his view 'the class character of a state is determined by its foreign policy'!

(3.2) Comrade Mage's YSA 'Draft Resolution on the Cuban Revolution' is insufficient as even a summary statement of his full position since it is limited to more immediate political and programmatic purposes and lacks a basic analytical and theoretical treatment.

JR, 5-1-63