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## **NICARAGUA: EYEWITNESS REPORT**

**Letter From Imprisoned Iranian Trotskyists**

*Discussion on Cuba*

**David Frankel and Larry Seigle:**

**The Revolutionary Character of the Castro Leadership**

# NEWS ANALYSIS

## Conference on Refugees a Setback to Imperialists

By Fred Feldman

The conference on refugees held in Geneva, Switzerland, July 20 and 21 was set up by the U.S., British, and French imperialists as a showcase for propaganda against the Vietnamese revolution. Their aim was to place the Vietnamese government on trial and to convict it of causing the suffering of the "boat people." At the same time, they hoped to portray themselves and their neocolonial allies as saviors of human rights in Indochina.

But it didn't work out that way. Instead, the Geneva conference exposed the inability of the imperialists to back up their charge that Vietnam is forcibly expelling massive numbers of people.

On the contrary, the bulk of evidence continues to support Hanoi's assertion that emigrants are leaving voluntarily. The main causes of the outflow are the social and economic overturn that culminated in southern Vietnam last year, the difficulties resulting from thirty years of imperialist war followed by a U.S. economic boycott, and military pressure in Laos, Kampuchea, and along Vietnam's border with China.

As the conference was getting underway, new evidence added weight to Hanoi's charges that U.S. imperialism has been encouraging the departure of "boat people" so as to use them in its propaganda war.

Reporting in the July 21 *Washington Post*, Ronald Koven noted the view of "U.N. sources" that "China and even the United States have done things that have incited refugee departures. In the case of the United States, the sources point to alleged broadcasts by the Voice of America telling potential refugees how to go about leaving the country."

And the July 21 *London Economist* commented that "the lure of the prosperous world outside Vietnam is a powerful one. Chinese and Vietnamese alike have been primed with pictures of large cars and sumptuous houses, sent by relatives who escaped in earlier waves, and seen in Saigon during its American period. Refugees give one near-unanimous answer to the question of where they would like to

settle: . . . America.

"The paradise concept makes the refugees' willingness to risk their lives at sea more understandable."

U.S. intelligence agencies used similar methods to organize the departure of more than a million Catholics from North Vietnam after the Geneva Agreements of 1954 recognized Viet Minh rule in that zone.

The conference on refugees also dealt a setback to imperialist efforts to convince world opinion that Vietnam is blocking the organization of an orderly and humane emigration. Vietnam's Foreign Minister Pham Hien opened the proceedings July 20 by appealing for the United States in particular to accept larger numbers of emigrants.

He also "suggested that airlifts and shipping services be set up to transport more of them from temporary camps in Southeast Asia to permanent asylum in Western countries," reported the July 21 *New York Times*.

In addition, the Geneva conference brought to light a yawning contradiction between the public and private stance of the imperialist powers on the "boat people." The imperialists, backed by Peking, have been encouraging massive emigration from Vietnam as a means of sullying the image of the Vietnamese revolution. They counted on Hanoi's efforts to block this emigration to multiply the damage and create severe internal disruption as well.

When Hanoi instead decided to allow hundreds of thousands to emigrate, the imperialists were caught in a trap of their own making. While shouting about Vietnamese expulsions, they were actually determined to use the Geneva conference to pressure Vietnam into imposing tight new restrictions on emigration.

In this way, the rulers of France, Great Britain, and the United States hope to fend off growing pressure—both at home and from their Southeast Asian semicolonies—to accept massive numbers of Asian immigrants.

Vietnamese representatives made a concession to this demand at the Geneva gathering. They promised U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim that Hanoi would try, for a "reasonable period" to stop "illegal" emigration.

Those who have been assigned to purvey the "expulsion" story all over the world were embarrassed by the conference outcome. The July 23 *New York Times* reported, "Asked if the world organization should be gratified when [Vietnam] under-

the lifting of the trade embargo on Viet- took to more effectively curb the rights of freedom of movement and residence . . . Mr. Waldheim said, 'We are in a dilemma.'"

U.S. propagandists portrayed as a concession the Vietnamese government's decision to allow U.S. officials to come to Vietnam to process would-be emigrants. But the concession in this case was *Washington's*, for Vietnam has been making similar offers for months.

And the U.S. press maintained silence about Hanoi's longstanding offer to airlift 10,000 emigrants a month to countries that will accept them—an offer that has no takers.

No sooner had the conference adjourned than the imperialists began trying to make up for lost ground by escalating charges against Vietnam. Hanoi's concession to the demand that it restrict emigration is now being used to launch a new wave of attacks.

With consummate cynicism, the *New York Times* editors said on June 26: ". . . strong words helped extract from the Vietnamese Government its present promises of meager charity; perhaps now it will be minimally humane. That means not making people desperate to escape, not harassing and killing them, and not keeping them in Vietnam if they want to leave safely."

And unsubstantiated charges that Vietnamese troops had massacred eighty-five "boat people" were spread around the world by the capitalist media.

Under intense military and economic pressure from imperialism and its allies in Peking, the Hanoi leaders may be putting out feelers to Washington offering a settlement of the struggle in Kampuchea, according to a report by Nayan Chanda in the July 6, 1979, *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

". . . Hanoi has informed Asean [Association of South East Asian Nations] diplomats," wrote Chanda, "that it is agreeable to an eventual 'neutralisation' of Kampuchea. According to sources familiar with Vietnamese thinking, Hanoi would be willing to withdraw its troops and set up a coalition government, even with Prince Norodom Sihanouk at its head, if certain conditions were met. Apart from the proof of US readiness to normalise [relations with Hanoi], sources said, the Vietnamese would like to be assured that no foreign power would attempt to bring back the Pol Pot/Ieng Sary group to Kampuchea or to station troops there. In other words, the Vietnamese would withdraw only when there was a guarantee that no foreign power would use Kampuchean territory to threaten Vietnam's security."

Chanda's report is evidently based on reports of discussions held in June during the Colombo meeting of "nonaligned" governments by Nguyen Co Thach, Vietnam's acting foreign minister.

"A gesture towards normalisation like

### Summer Schedule

This week's issue is the last before our summer break. We will resume our regular schedule with the issue dated September 3.

nam, [Nguyen Co Thach] said, would improve the atmosphere here and pave the way for a settlement of the Kampuchean problem."

Chanda reported that U.S. officials are offering no such gestures as yet: "A senior Western diplomat . . . who has access to Washington's thinking, said that any US accommodation with Hanoi at this stage will only 'help to convince the Hanoi leaders about the "correctness" of their policy of dominating Indochina. It will only encourage Hanoi expansionism, not restrain it.' The diplomat said that it is only by politically and diplomatically isolating Vietnam that one can expect the Vietnamese leadership to crack, and to think of changing its policy."

Terms such as "Hanoi expansionism" and "policy of dominating Indochina" are imperialist code for their fear that the Vietnamese revolution will inspire imitation elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

Chanda continued:

"The Western diplomat argued that by bringing international pressure on Vietnam over its 'expulsion of refugees' and 'occupation' of Kampuchea it could be isolated and made to rely exclusively on the Soviet Union." The Kremlin rulers, the imperialists hope, would then be in a position to urge Hanoi to make further concessions.

" . . . Moscow has to look at its global interests. . . . While the Soviets cannot be expected to put pressure on their valuable (and intransigent) ally Vietnam, one observer said, they might try to help put the Vietnamese in a more conciliatory frame of mind."

The meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers at the end of June followed the U.S. lead. These neocolonial servants of imperialism were described by Rodney Tasker in the July 13 *Far Eastern Economic Review* as "in the mood to pull off the kid gloves in their dealings with what they consider the cause of all their troubles: Vietnam."

While calling on Vietnam to withdraw its forces from Kampuchea, Tasker continued, they decided "to support Kampuchea's patriotic struggle, (that is, to back Pol Pot's forces, although they were not named). . . ."

"The ministers noted the explosive situation on the Thai-Kampuchean border. . . . and called on Vietnam to demonstrate its positive attitude towards Thailand and the other Asean states by withdrawing its forces from the Thai-Kampuchean border."

Such a move would enable the Thai dictatorship to step up its military probes in Kampuchea and establish new bases inside the country for Khmer Rouge forces backing ousted Premier Pol Pot.

But other considerations entered into ASEAN's call: ". . . an overriding worry was that if Vietnamese troops remained along Thailand's border this would have a detrimental effect on investment in the region." □

August 6, 1979

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# Statement of the Fourth International

## Release the Jailed Charter 77 Supporters in Czechoslovakia!

[The following statement was issued July 3 by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.]

\* \* \*

The arrest on May 29 of ten prominent signatories of Charter 77 is the latest and most aggressive move in the regime's drive to crush the civil-rights movement in that country. It is also the most sweeping act of repression seen in Czechoslovakia since the roundup of socialist oppositionists in 1971, and might lead rapidly to the harshest political trial since the 1950s.

By charging the ten civil-rights campaigners with subversion, the Stalinist bureaucracy merely acknowledges that the struggle for basic civil and democratic rights by working people in Czechoslovakia is subversive of bureaucratic power. The Czechoslovak regime has never accepted the existence of the Charter 77 movement and has used every means of harassment and intimidation short of mass arrests to try to weaken and destroy the movement.

The basic aims of Charter 77 are those of strengthening the role of working people in managing social and political life in that country; its methods have been those of openly spreading information and seeking to mobilize popular support for the demands of the Charter. These are the aims and methods used by the labor movements of Europe for more than one hundred years. Charter 77 deserves the unconditional and active solidarity of all socialists and working-class organizations. The Fourth International has, within its limited means, sought to give such support and mobilize labor movement opinion in the West behind Charter 77 since the movement's foundation in January 1977.

When Charter 77 was created, bourgeois circles in the West were happy to try to make use of it for the propaganda campaigns they were running at that time—during the run-up to the Helsinki Review Conference and before important elections involving possible electoral victories for the mass working-class parties in Western Europe. That was also a time of growing polemics between the major Communist parties and Moscow. In the changed circumstances of today, the Czechoslovak bureaucracy hopes that it can carry through the jailing of the main leaders of Charter 77 without attracting widespread condemnation from the labor movements of the West.

Domestically, the Husak regime enjoyed a brief period of social and political stability during the early and middle 1970s. Within a year of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the working class, which

had moved to the forefront of the popular struggle against the Soviet occupation, was deprived of political leadership and perspectives as a result of the capitulation of the Dubcek group. It was therefore forced to retreat from the political arena. The regime was then able to carry through a wholesale purge of the Communist Party and all other social and political institutions.

Aided by Moscow, the restored bureaucracy managed to achieve a temporary rise in living standards that lasted into the middle 1970s. But none of the fundamental problems of the Czechoslovak economy were touched by the new regime and these are now producing serious economic problems. A regime which has tried to win acceptance through its ability to offer an expanding range of consumer goods to the working class now faces the task of attacking working-class living standards. This is a dangerous course for a bureaucratic dictatorship totally lacking in political support among the Czechoslovak workers and it has made the regime all the more frightened of the existence of an organized, open, socialist opposition within the country.

The first signs of a new wave of open rejection of Stalinism has come from among working-class youth in the main Czech industrial cities. And during its two and a half years of activity it was above all in this section of the population that

the Charter 77 movement sank roots. The Charter movement and especially the Committee in Defense of Unjustly Persecuted Persons (VONS), of which all ten of the recently arrested Chartists were members, took up the defense of these young people in their struggle against police harassment and bureaucratic bullying.

The call must go out from the labor movements of the West for the immediate release of all the imprisoned Charter 77 supporters. The vanguard of the workers movement throughout Western Europe should ensure that the mass organizations of the working class—the SPs, CPs, and the trade unions—demand an end to the repression of Charter 77. Civil-liberties organizations and socialist lawyers organizations should establish official links with VONS, their counterpart for working people in Czechoslovakia. Unions should protest firings for political reasons and intervene officially to this effect, addressing themselves to the Czechoslovak unions. Labor movement funds should be established to give material assistance to the families of imprisoned civil-rights campaigners in Czechoslovakia.

For international working-class defense of Charter 77!

End the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia!

Down with the counterrevolutionary Husak regime—for workers power and socialist democracy in Czechoslovakia!

## Fourth International Demands Release of Jailed Trotskyists

[The following statement of protest was sent July 10 to Iranian Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan and to the Islamic Revolutionary Council by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.]

\* \* \*

The Fourth International, the World Party of Socialist Revolution, demands that you immediately release the fifteen members of the Hezb-e Kargarane Socialist (HKS—Socialist Workers Party) arrested without justification or charges in Ahwaz, as well as three members of the oil workers council, other workers, Arabs, members of the Fedayeen and Mujahadeen organizations, and other supporters of the Iranian revolution who have been similarly unjustifiably detained.

The members of the HKS are supporters of the Fourth International and as such have been long-time fighters against the shah and his imperialist backers. All of them joined in the February overthrow of

the Washington-backed monarch by the Iranian masses.

The Fourth International and its sections throughout the world worked for years to defend all victims of the shah's repression, and are in the forefront of defense of the Iranian revolution against imperialism. Iranian supporters of the Fourth International who were forced into exile like many others by the shah—some of whom are among those arrested in Ahwaz—were particularly active in this work. Others among the arrested HKS members were staunch participants in the movement against the shah inside Iran. Their only "crime" is their advocacy of socialism, their defense of the interests of the workers and peasants and of the rights of nationalities who have suffered so much under the shah's oppression.

These revolutionary and anti-imperialist fighters must be released forthwith and all threats and harassment against them stopped. □



## 'We Cannot Be Silenced or Intimidated by Imprisonment'

[The following letter, written in early July and signed by fourteen members of the Iranian Socialist Workers Party (HKS) imprisoned in Ahwaz, was published in the July 19 issue of the party's newspaper, *Kargar*. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

\* \* \*

More than a month ago, nine members of the HKS were arrested because of our socialist views. Eleven days ago, seven other HKS members were arrested for defending us.

Mr. Satarian, the Islamic revolutionary prosecutor who issued the warrant for our arrest, has not brought any formal charges against us. In the many discussions we have had with him and Mr. Khalkhali [the judge of the Islamic Revolutionary Tribunal], the following accusations have been raised against us:

"Plotting against the national interest."

"Inciting the workers."

"Organizing a fifth column."

"Inciting the Arabs."

They also accused us of being defenders and followers of Sheik Ezzedin Hosseini [the religious and national leader of the Kurds] and Ayatollah Al Shobeir Khaghani [the national and religious leader of the Arabs], who they said are agents of the shah and the CIA.

Do you remember the speeches that were given over TV by Sareti, the spokesman of the diabolic SAVAK, and the shah's press conferences and the sort of things they called those fighting against the regime? Mr. Satarian's accusations are reminiscent of the dirtiest slanders used in the propaganda operations of the toppled Pahlavi despotism, slanders that were used in the attempt to discredit revolutionary fighters.

Mr. Satarian, the Islamic revolutionary prosecutor in Ahwaz, is the agent of a government that represents the capitalists, who are a small minority in the country. His real job is to fabricate charges against those who want to fight in opposition to the interests of this minority. By arresting revolutionary socialists and trying to frame us up he wants to prove to the Iranian capitalists that he is not sparing any effort to defend their interests.

It is absolutely clear what our arrest and the charges raised against us mean. In order to help the capitalist employers hold the workers in slavery, any struggle or organization by the workers must be crushed. But it is only a few months since the victorious insurrection of the Iranian people. So, these servants of the capitalists have to do their job under the cover of claiming to be "defending the revolution" and "thwarting plots."

### U.S. Oil Worker Leader Protests Arrests

The continued imprisonment of three leaders of the Iranian oil workers council, who have been held in jail in Ahwaz since late May, was vigorously protested in a July 18 letter to Prime Minister Bazargan by Anthony Mazzocchi, vice-president of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW) in the United States.

The three oil workers leaders—Shobeir Ma'il, Nasr Hayati, and Javad Khatemi—were arrested along with hundreds of others while protesting government attacks on the rights of the Arab population in Iran's Khuzestan province.

Mazzocchi's letter to Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan stated that "I am deeply disturbed to learn that leaders of oil workers in Ahwaz were arrested by your government last month and are being held in Karoun prison without charges." He noted that "their imprisonment is a threat to the right of oil workers—and all workers in Iran—to organize.

"As an officer of an international union which represents more than 180,000 workers in the oil, chemical, and atomic industries in the United

States and Canada," Mazzocchi continued, "I solidarize with the arrested oil workers and demand their immediate release."

Mazzocchi's letter has special significance because last January he had sharply protested attacks by the shah's government on the oil workers strike against that regime.

In addition to the attacks on Arabs and oil workers, the Bazargan-Khomeini government has singled out the Iranian Socialist Workers Party (HKS) for persecution because of its unstinting defense of the Arab population in Khuzestan. Fifteen members of the HKS are still being held in prison without charges. Nine have now been held for two months.

Protests against the jailing of the socialists, oil workers, and other militants are still urgently needed. Telegrams calling for their release should be sent to Iranian embassies or to Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, Office of the Prime Minister, Tehran, Iran. Copies should be sent to the Tehran daily newspaper *Ayendegan*, Jomhuri Islami Avenue, Farzardin Square, Tehran, Iran.

What is the meaning of their charge that we were "inciting the Arabs"? In order to rule Iran, the capitalist minority needs a strong central government. It needs a government that can oppress the people and deny the Kurds, Arabs, and Baluchis their basic human rights.

With the overthrow of the shah, the Arab people got a chance to raise their demands. They rose to their feet to claim the rights they were deprived of for fifty years. So, now these servants of the capitalists have to turn their guns on the Arab people and their supporters and throw them in jail. They have to do this to eliminate the danger to capitalist rule. To justify this, they have to claim that the Arab militants are separatists and try to frame-up on charges of "incitement" those who defend the Arab people.

After the victory of the February revolution and the development of deep solidarity between the army and the people, between the soldiers and the workers and toilers, the Iranian army nowadays is not the best instrument for the property owners and the rich. In order to be a

reliable instrument for crushing the struggles of the people it has to be isolated from the rest of society. The old oppressive atmosphere has to be restored in the barracks. The fight for democracy in the army is frustrating this plan of the capitalists and the officers, and so it has to be stopped.

In addition to punishing the soldiers for "infractions of discipline," the authorities have to deny the rights of the parties that are fighting for democracy in the army. The activists of these parties have to be jailed and charged with "inciting the soldiers."

If the prosecutor and the government think that they can intimidate us by threatening us and jailing us, if they think that repression can keep us from telling the truth, they should be told that they are not going to be successful.

It is the revolutionary duty of the Socialist Workers Party to fight for the rights of the workers and the other oppressed and exploited sections of the masses, and we are not going to stop this for one minute. Just as the terror of the Pahlavi dictator-

ship could not silence us, neither will the prosecutor's charges against us, his jailing us and trying to frame us up, stop us from continuing our fight.

By arresting the three militant oil workers; many Arab fighters; the Mujahadeen leader Sa'adati; the Fedayeen leader Homad Sheibani; and by arresting us, sixteen members and leaders of the HKS, Bazargan's government has launched a sweeping attack on the rights of political parties. At a time when they are talking about electing an assembly of "experts" to rule on the constitution, the fact that socialists and other fighters are being imprisoned shows most clearly how empty the government's promises are.

We call on the government and the prosecutor to consider our demands immediately. We want our lawyers to be present when we are questioned. If there are definite charges, they should be reported in the mass media, and we should be given a public trial. The seven of us who are being held incommunicado should be allowed to have visitors.

Up until now they have kept us apart in prison. We demand that they put us all together. We demand that Fatima Fallahi, who is seriously ill, be hospitalized immediately. We have been jailed because of our political views. We demand that we be released immediately and unconditionally. We have gone on hunger strike twice to

press our demands, once for two days and the second time for six. Many public figures and organizations have called for our release. But so far we have gotten no positive response from the authorities to our demands.

We appeal to all individuals and organizations interested in democratic rights to do their utmost to help secure our release as well as that of the other political prisoners.

We would add that we are not allowed to read such publications as *Ayendegan* and *Tehran Mossavar* [independent liberal publications]. We demand that this censorship be ended. □

## Behind the Imperialists' Campaign of Lies on 'Boat People'

[The following appeared as an editorial in the July 18 issue of the French-language *Inprecor*. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

\* \* \*

For thirty years the imperialists waged a war of pitiless destruction against the Indochinese revolution. In 1975 they suffered a major setback. The liberation of Saigon in April 1975 marked a great historic defeat for U.S. imperialism.

The powerful effects of this victory for the workers and exploited masses of the entire world are far from being exhausted. This is why the imperialist governments and Washington first of all are stepping up their military, economic, diplomatic, and ideological moves against the Indochinese revolution.

It is in this context that the international capitalist press and the governments it represents have launched their vast counterrevolutionary propaganda offensive around what they call the "boat people."

There are now several hundred thousand refugees in Southeast Asia. The overwhelming majority of them are persons who chose to emigrate rather than devote themselves to the difficult tasks of building socialism.

This massive emigration, which has been permitted by the Vietnamese government, increased sharply after the nationalization of the economy was completed in the beginning of 1978. As has been reported by American journalists who have visited the refugee camps and who can hardly be suspected of being sympathetic to socialism, most of the emigrants are small property owners, shopkeepers, former functionaries of the puppet regime, former soldiers in the puppet army, doctors, and so forth.

These people lived off the crumbs that fell from the table of the U.S. military administration and the corrupt Saigon regime. After the liberation, they saw their

standard of living plummet to the level of the workers and poor masses. The overwhelming majority of the refugees are petty-bourgeois types hostile to socialism who want to get out of the country at any cost.

The outcry by the imperialist governments and the capitalist press about "bureaucratization" and "corruption" is not intended to help the Vietnamese masses solve these problems, which they alone can solve. What the imperialists are trying to do is to conceal their real objective—to weaken the Vietnamese workers state or destroy it if they can. The blackmail being carried out around economic aid, especially by the French government, shows this clearly.

The economic situation on the Indochinese peninsula is tragic. Decades will be needed to wipe out the effects of the most destructive war in history, which was waged for ten years by the U.S. imperialists. Fifty million Vietnamese are engaged in the work of reconstruction, and at the same time they have to maintain an excessively costly military defense against the imperialist threats. Poverty is still the daily lot of the Indochinese masses.

It is in this situation that hundreds of thousands of refugees have flooded into Southeast Asia. They now face inhuman conditions. Encouraged by their imperialist masters, the governments of Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia are refusing to accept them. With the blessing of the international capitalist press, these regimes are preparing to expel the refugees.

These governments are following Washington's policy. Last January, the U.S. authorities rejected a proposal from the Vietnamese government for an internationally organized operation to airlift these refugees to the countries of their choice. The cynical game of the imperialists is to let hundreds of thousands of refugees pile up in these camps so that they can accuse the Vietnamese government of causing this misery. In this way, the U.S. imperial-

ists hope to wipe out the memory of the genocide they carried on for years.

Instead of helping to rebuild what it destroyed, the U.S. government is redoubling its attacks against the Vietnamese masses and the Indochinese revolution. It has fixed an annual aid budget for the refugees that represents less than half the daily cost of the war in 1968-69.

For its part, the French government, the heir of the French colonialists who were driven out of Indochina after their defeat at Dienbienphu in 1954, is trumpeting about the need for "humanitarian concern." But it is only taking in a few thousand refugees. And at the same time, it is deporting immigrant workers back to the poverty of the countries they come from. For the French government as well the tragic situation of the refugees is only an opportunity for a vast counterrevolutionary propaganda campaign.

The need to assure decent living conditions for 300,000 refugees, which are being denied them by the imperialists' puppet governments in Southeast Asia, must not take precedence over the need to provide the economic aid that is essential for the population of the Indochinese peninsula as a whole.

The need to care for the refugees cannot take precedence over the need to end the aid to the Thai dictatorship, to the puppet "guerrillas" in Laos and Cambodia, and to all the regimes through which the imperialists maintain their military and economic foothold in Southeast Asia. It cannot take precedence over the need for international solidarity with the Indochinese revolution! □

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## Nicaragua Ten Days After the Revolution

By Fred Murphy

MANAGUA—Ten days after the collapse of the Somoza dictatorship Nicaraguans face gigantic tasks of rebuilding their country.

Shattered by eleven months of civil war, the Nicaraguan economy is in ruins. Entire factories have been destroyed. Telephone service is sporadic at best. Much of the housing in the poor neighborhoods of major cities was razed by Somoza's terror bombings. Food is scarce. Most stores and restaurants have yet to reopen.

Following the disintegration of Somoza's National Guard, small groups of individual guardsmen hid among the civilian population. These bands venture out at night to sow confusion and fear, carrying out sniper attacks on unarmed civilians or Sandinista patrols. For this reason, the provisional government has imposed a 7 p.m.-to-dawn curfew on the capital.

On July 25 the Costa Rican press reported that Sandinista military leader Edén Pastora had left Managua with 2,000 troops to deal with remaining pockets of National Guard resistance in the north.

Some anti-Somoza fighters were reportedly disarmed here in Managua when Sandinista units from the southern front entered the city July 20. The reaction against this was immediate and it was apparently halted. The provisional government is now calling on all persons with weapons to either give them up or to join units of the militia that is being formed under the command of the Sandinista general staff.

At present, all major means of communication are under the control of the provisional government. Radio Sandino calls continually for efforts to consolidate the victory against Somoza and "build a new Nicaragua."

Radio Sandino and the television channels also carry live broadcasts of all the major events, such as the mass held here yesterday by Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo for those who fell in battle against Somoza.

The only newspaper now appearing here is the daily *Barricada*, "official organ of the Sandinista National Liberation Front," which began publication July 25. *Barricada* is distributed free and is extremely popular. In Rivas, we joined a crowd of enthusiastic readers that mobbed a young Sandinista who had just arrived with a big bundle. All his papers disappeared within minutes.

The July 27 issue of *Barricada* carries the full text of Fidel Castro's speech at the July 26 celebration in Holguín, Cuba. Castro devoted his entire speech to the

Nicaraguan revolution, hailing it as an "extraordinary event" and urging an international campaign to aid in the rebuilding of Nicaragua. He called on the United States to fulfill its pledge to provide 300 tons of food aid a day.

A Cuban cargo plane with ninety tons of food and a team of sixty medical personnel arrived at the Augusto César Sandino Airport in Managua on July 25. The medical team, headed by Cuban Deputy Health Minister Pedro Azcué, was greeted by a large crowd shouting "Viva Cuba!"

The July 27 *Barricada* also carried an article headlined "To Organize Ourselves Is to Make the Revolution." Among other tasks this called on "all the working people . . . in every factory and plant . . . to meet immediately in assemblies to form Sandinista Workers Defense Committees (CDTS). . . ."

### 'We Will Not End Up Like Allende'

## A Day With the Sandinistas

By Fred Murphy

MANAGUA—Along with thousands of Nicaraguan refugees trying to return to their homes, I approached the Costa Rican frontier on July 27. My press pass helped me move rapidly through the three lines of automobiles and trucks, which at times are forced to wait a day or more to cross the border.

Once on the Nicaraguan side I was met by young Sandinista soldiers who, although informal, had the whole immigration process well organized. Everywhere one sees arms, all kinds of weapons—pistols, hunting rifles, automatic rifles, submachine guns, hand grenades.

The Sandinistas' uniforms are as varied as their weapons. U.S. paratrooper-type outfits taken from the proimperialist National Guard and civilian clothes are mingled among the predominant green fatigues. Black and red bandannas along with flags adorn the soldiers, their weapons, buildings, and almost every house among the poor.

After a two-hour wait to process my papers and an informal discussion with some Costa Ricans who recognized the *Militant*, I managed to catch a ride on top of 7,000 copies of the provisional government's program, being delivered in a small truck to Managua.

Every ten miles Sandinista posts

"All the tasks of defending the revolution and national reconstruction today are passing to our combative working class, in the organization, participation, and mobilization of the CDTS."

There is wide support for the economic measures so far taken by the new government. These included nationalization of all Nicaraguan-owned banks, and expropriation of all property owned by Somoza and those who fled with him.

What is on everyone's mind right now are the immediate and pressing tasks of organizing the distribution of food; restoring public services such as water, sewage, and electricity; and providing housing for those displaced by the war. Popular bodies, such as the Civil Defense Committees, are being set up on a block-by-block basis to deal with these needs. □

stopped us to check our papers. They were extremely friendly and polite. The effects of the recent civil war are everywhere. Homes and buildings with bullet holes. Burned-out trucks and other vehicles along the road. Even one smashed-up airplane lies alongside the highway.

The road itself still has various barricades, holes, and obstacles left over from the battles of almost two weeks ago.

After a flat tire and the gradual collapse of the engine, I abandoned my ride about seventy kilometers from Managua. With the help of Sandinista militia, I boarded a truck loaded with bananas for the rest of the ride into Managua.

I had hoped to make a 6 p.m. Sandinista news conference, but the problems of the immigration process, the breakdown of the first truck, and the slowness of the banana truck delayed me beyond the 7 p.m. curfew.

I entered Managua at 7:30 p.m. The streets were totally deserted. Only here and there could you see pockets of Sandinista troops. Our truck went straight for the central market, leaving me in a seemingly dark and desolate area. With suitcase in hand, I started walking along the middle of the road toward the Intercontinental Hotel, whose lights I could see a few kilometers away.

Most hotels here are closed, but since the

new government is housed at the Intercontinental. I thought that I could find out there where I could stay.

Suddenly I became aware of two Sandinista soldiers with their guns pointed at me, hidden in the grass along the road. I approached them to ask for directions.

Then the Sandinista asked me quietly and politely if I would mind standing over by a wall, because there was a report of rightist terrorists on this block who might kill me.

Since the fall of the Somoza dictatorship, there have been reports of rightist snipers attempting assassinations, especially against young Sandinista troops, but also against any worker whether in uniform or not.

One of the facts I was hoping to confirm was whether such snipers really existed. The two young Sandinistas carefully crossed the street and checked out a small building. I waited in disbelief that I was in real danger.

My disbelief was answered by a volley of automatic weapon fire apparently aimed at the two Sandinistas or at me. This made a substantial impression on me, convincing me that the Sandinista's concern for my safety was completely justified.

I was directed around the corner to a metal gate leading to a Sandinista command post. Several more Sandinistas appeared, then the commander of the station. They asked me to sit beside a car while four of them, one in civilian clothes, went to try to flush out the terrorist sniper.

I heard a few more shots but they seemed farther away. Soon the patrol came back and asked if I would mind sleeping on the floor at their headquarters, as that would be the safest thing. I agreed.

Thinking my accommodations would be quite spartan, I was surprised when we entered a beautiful mansion. I was in the home of the late Luis Somoza, now called Casa Ricardo Morales Avilés. I was placed in the living room. All lights were dim. Sandinista soldiers of all ages but mostly in their teens or early twenties were traveling back and forth as they carried out different assignments protecting the local neighborhood. Gunfire could be heard sporadically throughout the rest of the night.

After a while I was able to talk with several of the Sandinistas. They couldn't catch the terrorists. This is a continuous problem. One activist from the Proletarian Tendency of the Sandinistas spoke proudly of their belief in the working class as the vanguard in the Nicaraguan revolution. Another, a founding member of the Insurrectionalist Tendency, called *Terceristas* by the others, spoke of the recent unification of the Sandinistas.

Yes, they favored socialism, they told me, but it would take longer to achieve in Nicaragua than in Cuba. "We will not end up like Allende. Allende had the government but not the power. We have the power. The guns are in our hands."

Moved from the main house to another

building in the ex-Somoza mansion, I was given dinner by the ex-servants, now Sandinistas. While I was eating, a twelve-year-old girl was learning how to handle an American-made revolver.

The Sandinistas were of both sexes. Everywhere one sees armed women along with men—women of all ages. They seem

## Supported by All Major Unions

# General Strike Shuts Down Peru

By Aníbal Vargas

Workers in Peru staged a massive twenty-four-hour general strike on July 19 to protest a package of economic measures decreed by the military government of General Francisco Morales Bermúdez.

The strike was called by a general assembly of the General Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP) and supported by other independent unions such as the teachers', miners', and peasants' organizations. It was 70% effective in Lima and between 90% and 100% effective in other parts of the country.

The government's economic measures announced in early July included a 35% increase in the minimum wage. But at the same time, they included increases of up to 35% in the prices of necessities such as flour, bread, noodles, rice, sugar, and transportation. Inflation is now estimated to be running at 60% annually, and so the announced wage increase will do nothing to ease the difficult economic situation of the poor masses.

The July 19 strike occurred, moreover, while a teachers' strike that had already lasted more than a month was still going on. In this struggle by the teachers, more than 300 persons have been wounded and more than 1,000 arrested. It was launched to press demands for wage increases and for the reinstatement of the teachers fired because of their participation in a previous strike.

The key to the success of the July 19 action was the high degree of unity achieved by the workers. There was a real united front of the unions. A trade-union coordinating committee was formed to lead the struggle. It included the CGTP, as well as other unions not affiliated to this confederation, such as the teachers union, SUTEP.

A political coordinating committee was also set up. It included the Workers, Peasants, Students, and People's Front (FOCEP), the People's Democratic Union (UDP), as well as left parties not affiliated to any front.

The success of the July 19 action was an important step toward regaining the ground lost by the mass movement after the defeat of the general strike last January.

to make up about 25 to 30 percent of the patrols.

Our political discussion continued, until finally, exhausted from the trip and with yet much to learn about the Nicaraguan revolution, I slept my first night appropriately in the home of Somoza among Sandinistas. □

This time the military government took a different attitude toward the strike than it did in January. At that time there was severe repression, both general and selective, during and after the walkout. There was also repression this time, but not on the same scale.

The worst incident occurred in downtown Lima, where armed police attacked a demonstration in support of the strike. About 300 persons were arrested indiscriminately. Among those picked up were Enrique Fernández, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party (PST) and a deputy to the recently dissolved Constituent Assembly; Eduardo Castillo, a leader of the pro-Moscow CP and also a deputy to the Constituent Assembly; and Isidoro Gamarra, president of the CGTP and a leader of the Communist Party.

There were also at least four deaths at the hands of the police. In Lima, Johnny Peñarda, a youth of sixteen, was gunned down. Three persons were killed in Iquitos.

Walter Guerrero, a young member of the Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), was gravely wounded when police opened fire in Lima and it is feared that he may lose a leg. The PRT has begun a campaign to raise funds to cover his medical expenses. Contributions may be sent to the PRT, Jr. Moquegua 628, Of. 301, Lima, Peru. □

## Israel Nears Triple-Digit Inflation

Israel's economic situation is looking increasingly bleak. Official projections expect the annual inflation rate to hit 100% by the end of the year.

The country's foreign debt now stands at \$12.5 billion, the highest per capita figure in the world. This year the balance-of-payments deficit is projected to hit \$4.5 billion.

Massive opposition forced Prime Minister Begin's government to retreat from a plan to end price subsidies on staple foods, which would have led to price increases of as much as 150% on bread, cooking oil, and milk.

The Bank of Israel's governor, Arnon Gafny, warned that the country is heading toward "an economic catastrophe."



## For Cubans in United States—A New View of The Revolution

By Harry Ring

There are some 700,000 Cubans in the United States. A profound political development is now taking place among them.

It stems from a dialogue initiated by the Cuban government with representatives of the Cuban community abroad, principally in the United States, but also in Spain and Mexico.

That dialogue resulted in a Cuban decision to release political prisoners and permit them to emigrate.

Cuba also moved to facilitate the reunification of families divided by emigration.

And it opened its doors for Cubans abroad to visit their relatives, or simply to see their homeland.

Since January, some 12,000 Cubans a month from the United States and Puerto Rico have journeyed to Cuba.

Responsibility for this development, says Fidel Castro, rests with a group of young Cubans abroad, mainly from the United States. The group is organized as the Antonio Maceo Brigade, taking its name from the legendary leader of the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain.

In an interview, Armando García, one of the founding leaders of the Brigade, described how it came about, illuminating the story by describing his own political evolution.

García's family left Cuba in 1960, when he was eleven. They lived in Tampa, Florida, for a year and then moved to Puerto Rico, where he grew up.

His parents initially favored the overthrow of Batista. But as the revolution took a socialist direction, his father, a prosperous pharmacist, was affected economically. They left as opponents of the revolution.

As a youth, García said, he accepted his family's negative view of the revolution.

"I grew up accepting it as fact that the revolution was bad," he said. "It was my parents who were telling me this. And not only my family, but the media, school, all this."

Then, in 1969, he was drafted. Initially slated for Vietnam, he wound up in West Germany.

In the Army, for the first time, he experienced the racism which he had not directly encountered growing up in Puerto Rico.

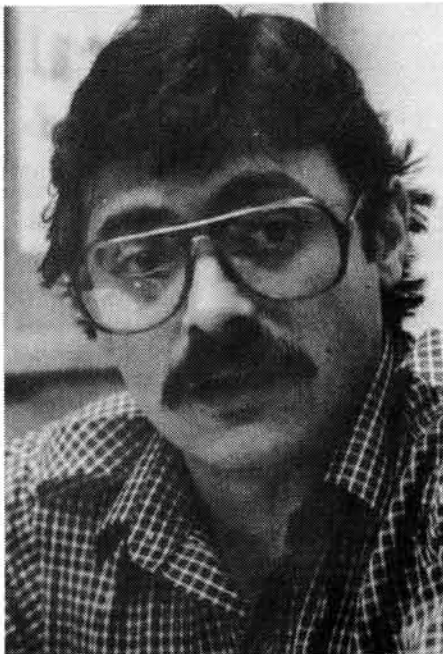
"That began to change my thinking," García said.

### Became Politically Involved in Army

"In the Army, I met many progressive people. I began to realize what was hap-

pening in Puerto Rico, what was happening in Vietnam. I began to do work against the war, against racism."

With that García also began to wrestle



Armando García Militant/Harry Ring

with what loomed as a big problem for him. What was his identity?

"I began thinking," he explained, "What am I? A Puerto Rican? An American? Am I a Cuban?"

For a long time, he added, he felt he was Puerto Rican. "In many ways, I'm still

Puerto Rican," he observed. "I grew up there.

"But I was escaping from the reality, I was escaping from having to accept that I was Cuban. Cuba was a 'communist' society—and that was bad.

"Finally," he continued, "when I began to see what was happening in Vietnam, I began questioning myself about what was happening in Cuba.

"And, by then, I accepted that Puerto Rico should be independent. But I had to get deeper into it. I had to think—well, independent, but what kind of a political system?"

"That," he said, "took me to Cuba. To analyze what was happening in Cuba.

"To accept the fact that I was Cuban."

He had finished his term in the army, returned to Puerto Rico, then went to San Francisco.

There, he met members of the Black Panther Party and some Chicano activists. They gave him reading material on Cuba.

"For the first time," he said, "I read Ché. One of them gave me the book, *Ché Guevara Speaks*. That was a turning point. From then on I really studied about Cuba and learned about my culture."

He returned to Puerto Rico, joined the Puerto Rican independence movement, and deepened his knowledge of Cuba.

He went to New York to help found a magazine, *Joven Cuba* [*Young Cuba*].

"Basically," he explained, "it was an attempt to bring young Cubans in the U.S. to see themselves as Latins, and to see themselves as Cubans. To encourage them to see their identity and to encourage them to fight together with other minorities. To

## The Maceo Brigade

Membership in the Antonio Maceo Brigade is open to members of the Cuban community abroad who left Cuba, on their parents' decision, before the age of eighteen, or were born here of Cuban parents.

Application for membership is based on agreement with the Brigade's efforts to win restoration of U.S. diplomatic and trade ties with Cuba and an end to the U.S. blockade.

No one who has been involved with

counterrevolutionary groups is eligible.

The Brigade currently has functioning groups in Miami, New York, New Jersey, Houston, Austin, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago.

The Brigade also has members in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Spain and Venezuela.

Information may be obtained by writing to the Antonio Maceo Brigade, Box 1125, Cathedral Station, New York, N.Y. 10025.

search for their roots and to search for the truth about what was happening in Cuba.”

Then he met others who were publishing *Areito*, a magazine on Cuba and Latin America with a generally more literary content.

#### Proposed Contingent to Cuba

It was the editors of *Areito* who proposed to the Cuban government that young members of the Cuban community abroad be permitted to visit the island.

Many had tried to go with groups like the *Venceremos* Brigade, Garcia explained. But Cuban statutes did not permit those Cubans who left during the revolution to return.

“We thought that was a contradiction,” Garcia observed.

In 1977, the Cuban government responded favorably to the *Areito* proposal. The Antonio Maceo Brigade was established and fifty-five members went to Cuba that December.

This July, a second contingent went to Cuba. This time their ranks numbered some 230.

It was during the first visit that the Brigade met with Castro and other top Cuban leaders.

The *brigadistas* stressed a major point to the Cuban leadership—the importance of grasping the changes that were occurring in the Cuban community abroad. The need to comprehend that it was not the monolithic counterrevolutionary community that so many assumed.

They described the social stratification, the experiences in the United States, the racism, the continuing deep sense of being Cuban. All this, they argued, made it feasible and valuable for the Cuban government to reach out to the community abroad, to initiate a dialogue.

The Cuban leadership listened carefully, considered the issue, and agreed.

At a press conference, Fidel Castro invited representatives of the community abroad to come to Cuba for discussion. He stipulated only two conditions: No counterrevolutionaries could come and the government of the United States could not be involved in any way.

The dialogue was on.

Meanwhile, what about the Maceo Brigade's first visit to their homeland?

“For me,” Garcia said, “it was emotionally a deep experience. I had been through this identity crisis, and, finally, I was there. Finally I was accepted as a Cuban and finally I felt like a Cuban.”

#### Had an Idealized Picture

“Politically,” he added, “it taught me a lot. I had tended to idealize the revolution. I think a lot of people on the left in the United States idealize the Cuban revolution in many ways. They don't understand the historical background of an underdeveloped country, how difficult the problems are.

## ‘Maceitos’ at Cuban Camp

During its meetings with the leaders of the Cuban revolution, the Antonio Maceo Brigade proposed that in addition to the dialogue, Cuba develop additional ties with the Cuban community abroad. Among these were cultural and scientific exchanges, scholarships to Cuban universities, and the perspective of making it possible for those who wish to return to do so.

“I had a general idea of the problems,” he continued, “but I think I idealized it because I didn't understand clearly what Cuba had been through—the Bay of Pigs invasion, the missile crisis, the economic blockade, the continuous attacks of the counterrevolutionaries on the island.

“I didn't realize I would see kids in the tourist areas asking for cigarettes, or pens, things like that. I was so idealistic I thought everything was perfect.”

But, he emphasized, there is no hunger in Cuba. “You don't see people in the streets asking for money. When I was a kid, the number of beggars was incredible, anywhere you went in Havana.

“The other thing that was very impressive,” he continued, “was to see the elimination of slums. Where I had lived, three blocks from my home, was the biggest slum in Havana. I used to play ball with kids from that barrio.

“The first thing I did was go back there. And that slum was eliminated.”

Garcia and the other *brigadistas* were struck with many of the accomplishments of the revolution—particularly the education system.

For him, though, the most striking thing was speaking to young people. “I talked to people eighteen who were so mature politically,” he said, “so much more sophisticated than I was. I thought back to when I was eighteen and what I was doing then. And I saw these young people—wanting to study, wanting to be involved in sports, wanting to be involved in the society. And their feeling of internationalism.

“And it was impressive,” he added, “to talk to the children, eight, nine years old. How they act like kids but at the same time how serious they are, how disciplined. Not the discipline the media here talks about—regimentation, like little soldiers. That's not true. It's a discipline of respect for others. They've already learned to see the need for study, the need to be a productive part of society.”

What about the thousands of Cubans from the United States who have gone back to visit? What is their reaction?

“I've talked to several,” Garcia said. “Their opinions range. First of all they realize the stories of people dying of

hunger are not true. But coming from a consumer-oriented society, some of them complain about the rationing. How easy it is to get things here and not there.

Another proposal was that children in the Cuban community abroad be able to attend summer camp in Cuba.

This is now being done. Seventy *maceitos*, Cuban children from the U.S., aged nine to fourteen, are now spending a month at the José Martí international camp in Cuba. This will be a regular program in the ongoing dialogue.

“But many come back very impressed with what the revolution has accomplished—especially in education. They see their families and realize everyone's studying. All the young people—and some of the old people.

“They see people are eating, they're working, they're studying. It's not the hell they thought it was.”

Generally, he said, those who are better off financially are not as favorable.

“But those from more poor backgrounds see their families have job security, medical security. They come back more impressed.”

It's important to understand in this regard, Garcia stressed, that it's only the beginning of a process. You don't undo in six months the massive propaganda that the Cuban community has been subjected to for twenty years by the media and by the counterrevolutionaries.

But, Garcia said, the dialogue has already accomplished a great deal.

Besides what visitors are seeing in Cuba, he explained, a very important side of the new thinking is their experience here in the United States. Cubans, he said, are more and more tasting the reality of the “American dream.”

#### Recession a Turning Point

“Especially since 1974,” he said. “I think that recession was the turning point.

“I could tell from my family, for example.

“Since they came from Cuba, they had jobs. Good jobs, bad jobs. But they worked.

“In '74, my mother was without a job for the first time. She couldn't get a job at all.

“My uncle was in the street, getting unemployment. My aunt too.

“I saw a change in my family,” he said. “We'd argue about Cuba and the job security situation in this country.

“They always brought up the point that in this country you could get a job whenever you wanted to. Then that argument went down the drain.”

The result, he said, is that their minds



are not closed about Cuba as they had been.

"Of course," he added, "I think we made a contribution by helping to end the situation of no communication between the two communities."

Another big impact on the community here, he said, came with the Cuban decision to release the political prisoners—those jailed for counterrevolutionary activity.

"This was one of the issues that had

been exploited by the counterrevolutionary groups," García commented. "Not that they really cared about the prisoners. But it was a rallying point."

Also, he noted, the community realizes that the problem of the delays in the released prisoners getting here to join their families rests not with Cuba but with the U.S. government. "There's a lot of anger in the community about this," he said.

García feels that the development of the

dialogue will ultimately prove of benefit not only to the Cuban community here, but to American working people generally.

Despite material difficulties, he said, working people in Cuba are better off than they are here.

"The Cuban revolution," he said, "has geared the society toward the working class. If American working-class people could see what I saw in Cuba it would teach them—as it taught me—how it is possible to organize the society toward the working class." □

## Inflation, Unemployment Continue to Rise

# Oil Boom Sharpens Social Tensions in Mexico

By Manuel Aguilar Mora

[The following article was written before the federal elections held in Mexico on July 1. As expected, the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) gained an overwhelming majority of the 300 contested seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The Communist Party received some 5 percent of the votes; according to the provisions of President López Portillo's "political reform," the CP needed 1.5 percent to obtain permanent ballot status.]

\* \* \*

The July elections for the Chamber of Deputies in Mexico have a special importance. They are the first federal elections to take place under President López Portillo's "political reform," and they come at a time when the country is going through a full economic recovery as a result of intensive exploitation of the oil deposits discovered recently.

This gives the current election a different significance than preceding ones. For three years the objective has been to install a Chamber of Deputies composed exclusively of "official" parties—those recognized as legal by the government and its party, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party).

Now that the "political reform" is in force, the electoral strength of the Mexican left—illegal and clandestine for decades—will make itself felt. The legalization of the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party indicates this, as does the indirect legalization of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), the Mexican section of the Fourth International. The PRT has been recognized as a "political association," an intermediate status between absolute illegality and complete legality.

Mexico's political situation is becoming more and more contradictory. A broad-based economic boom is under way, and changes are taking place in the economic and social character of the country. The

"political reform" has coincided—especially since mid-1978—with a substantial economic recovery that López Portillo has managed to bring about by staking everything on petroleum.

Economic growth surpassed 6% in 1978 and will reach 7% this year. Everything



JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO

indicates that in 1980 the Mexican economy could experience a rather different tendency from the rest of the world, which will be in the midst of a generalized recession.

The situation has sparked growing interest among the imperialists, who are rushing to sign contracts and make investments. The government estimates that foreign investment will rise by around 70% this year and reach \$1.5 billion by 1982. The June 5, 1979, *Financial Times* reported that 260 investment projects are under

study in various foreign ministries.

Financially, the Mexican economy becomes more tied to the international system of imperialist capital with each new oil discovery. The "oil business" gives the Mexican government new attractive power for credit institutions, which are ready to offer their capital. *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX), the state oil company, is obtaining one opening after the other in the main European and U.S. credit markets.

The Japanese banks are also very active. Despite the high price of Mexican oil, Japan is prepared to provide important credits for improving the infrastructure of Mexico's Pacific ports—a prerequisite for oil export—in order to enjoy a secure source of supply.

The June 5 *Financial Times* noted: "Just as foreign bankers queue up to offer capital to a government whose already high international debt seems to grow still bigger after each new oil discovery, foreign investors who were once quite critical of the controls on investment in Mexico are now eager to accept the same conditions with far less reticence."

The foreign debt has been growing so fast that it is now estimated at \$35 billion. Combined with Brazil's \$40 billion debt, the two represent nearly 80% of the total foreign debt of Latin America.

The political consequences of this turn in Mexico's economic strategy are quite important. It has been clear since the 1950s that the Mexican government favors the growing absorption of foreign (imperialist) capital in order to develop the country's economy. It has thus practically abandoned the bourgeois-nationalist course of the Cárdenas epoch. But all presidents—even the most proimperialist, like Díaz Ordaz—have tacitly respected Cárdenas's dogma: "Mexican oil for the Mexicans."

In changing the nationalist course entirely (a change prepared by the "national-

ist" President Echeverría), President López Portillo will have to justify himself.

As in all petroleum-producing countries, the Mexican government and bourgeoisie are profiting from the worldwide changes taking place at the expense of imperialism. They are now able to appropriate a growing share of the surplus value that was once taken directly by the big imperialist companies. The fabulous profits from oil income widen the Mexican government's room for maneuver. Carter's visit to Mexico in February showed the whole world that López Portillo could have relations with the president of the United States that are different from earlier times when Mexican presidents were simply the servants of the imperialist center.

López Portillo established two axes for his oil policy—to get out of the precarious economic situation the country went through in 1976-77, and at the same time to reinforce his international position, with the United States above all.

A third element is now appearing on the national political scene—the government's policy toward the working masses. López Portillo thought the problem would be resolved with propaganda about the "alliance for production" upheld by the union leaders (*charros*) that control the majority of Mexico's workers organizations.

But the government's propaganda about the projects carried out with oil money and the new perspectives of economic recovery (and the enormous mass of profits realized by private enterprise shows that "good times" are returning for the capitalists!) has been so "effective" that workers have begun to mobilize for their demands.

López Portillo's not so tactful interven-

tion at the May Day parade of 1 million workers in Mexico City fell flat. The president declared that despite everything the wage ceiling of 13.5% would be maintained. The figures of a number of banks show that the annual inflation rate in Mexico has surpassed 20%, and the government itself considers 17% the most appropriate index for 1979 (as against the 13% goal set at the beginning of the year!).

Such inflation, the 1 million Mexicans who cross the northern border annually to seek work, the current 40% unemployment rate, the 1 million youth who enter the labor market each year, and so many other equally complicating phenomena that are accumulating—all this makes Mexico a country rich in contradictions and social tensions.

In face of this, it is evident that disagreements over what course to take would be felt sooner or later. In fact, the consequences have already begun. After the huge workers march in May, a "minor" political crisis occurred with the departure of three cabinet ministers, including Interior Minister Reyes Heróles. The most important political figure in the government after the president, Heróles was the architect of the "political reform," the plan for "liberalization" of the regime, which has gone too far to suit the taste of certain sectors of the PRI and the government itself.

Instead of "reforming" the all-powerful PRI, the party's new president retreated and added some of the most reactionary "establishment" politicians to the apparatus. In the Congress, internal rules designed to streamline the body's functioning were rejected. But more important is

the fact that the "political reform" was beginning to cause conflicts inside the official apparatus itself. The *charros*—the faction closest to the masses—complained of discontent among the workers and demanded more serious measures from the government to partially satisfy it.

The departure of the liberal minister thus represented, if not a turn in the "political reform," at least a clearer understanding on the part of the bourgeoisie that political conditions are becoming more and more difficult.

As a May 21 declaration of the PRT Political Bureau points out, the revolutionary sectors must reinforce themselves and prepare their organizations for the sudden changes to come, which are already indicated by recent events. In particular, it is necessary to prepare to intervene in the future mass movements against López Portillo's austerity policy, which despite certain gains has not really been able to smash the workers' resistance.

All this makes clear the important role the July elections will play. They presage the development of working-class independence and autonomy. A fundamental sector of this class will for the first time vote for an alternative to the PRI that has succeeded in gaining legalization.

Owing to the limits of the "political reform," only the reformist parties, including the Communist Party, will be able to share in these votes, since only they can present candidates.

Revolutionary militants must fight to accelerate and systematize this historic process toward autonomy and independence for the class that has already displayed its revolutionary potential. □

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# Unions in Spain Take Up Fight for Women's Rights

The discussion on discrimination against women in Spain started during an assembly of the then-illegal Workers Commissions in Madrid, when a proposal was made to establish an independent body of trade-union women to fight within the unions in defense of the particular demands of women workers. The proposal, which was put forward by the trade-union left wing, envisaged the separate election of women to leadership bodies in order to increase their very small numbers there.

It was around that time that the first large meetings of women took place in the Spanish state. These meetings marked the first time the workers movement was taken to task for remaining silent about the oppression of women—a workers movement that had just waged one of the most important battles against the dictatorship: the general strikes of January 1976.

The unions could not ignore the accusations of the women, and the proposal they made had a clear impact. Even before the leadership of the Workers Commissions took a position, the first meetings of women workers took place. Although those meetings were illegal, they drew scores of women in Madrid (150), Valencia, and Barcelona.

Workers thus began discussing the specific question of discrimination against women and what role the struggle against it should play in the context of the working class's overall interests and the class struggle as a whole. At the same time, a discussion began on whether or not the union should sanction the establishment of a body for organizing women and whether the union was capable of fulfilling its obligations toward the majority of the working class—women.

As the discussion began, so did the first practical experiences. In the two years prior to the first congress of the Workers Commissions, women's meetings took on increasing importance within the unions. All regions and nationalities, especially those that were most advanced, elaborated programs of specific demands relating to working women. The local congresses adopted all the significant demands (such as the right to abortion, divorce, and work), and set up the required internal structures. These were both linked to the union leadership and open to the participation of all women unionists who wanted to take part. That is how the Women's Secretariats were formed.

The first congress of the Workers Commissions recognized, in its program, "the existence of oppression and superexploitation of working women" and the need to immediately launch a struggle against women's oppression, a struggle recognized

as inseparably linked to the class struggle.

### What Are the Women's Secretariats?

The discussion and experiences preceding the congress have borne fruit. Today, male comrades are more conscious of the fact that only those women who have raised their voices, who have begun to organize the Women's Secretariats, and who have fought existing prejudices by defending their interests within the assemblies and the local congresses are capable of waging the necessary dual struggle—on the social plane, to win their demands; and within the union, to get it to take up women's demands as its own and to defend them before the entire working class.

That is why the Women's Secretariats were born with a clear feminist and militant character, as gatherings of women (none of them specifically excluded men, but in practice the nature of their work meant that they were composed of women, with the union's full backing).

By working with every body of the union, within the executive committees and the secretariats for different branches of industry (chemical, graphic arts, textile, and so on), the Women's Secretariats reflected the social impact of the women's movement among working women. A series of significant struggles by women for their rights won a particularly favorable hearing within the union and helped to broaden the goals of the Women's Secretariats.

To confront the most urgent problems of women workers, the Women's Secretariats began to outline a program. After the government called trade-union elections in January 1978, the secretariats launched their first campaign throughout the Spanish state.

This was their first opportunity to advance their program among women workers. It was the moment to fight against the old prejudices, to strive for the largest participation possible by women in the elections, and to present women as candidates in the workers unions, against the foreseeable use of the old patterns by the boss-controlled unions (especially those claiming to represent technicians and administrative workers).

The results of these first elections were a telling indicator. The argument that women workers were more under the thumb of the bosses vanished. The workers unions themselves achieved success in those sectors where women workers were a majority. And their loss among the technicians was not because of the women's votes, but because of those of the bosses and the scabs.

Nevertheless, the small representation of

women in the recently elected factory committees reveals their limited level of participation, their lesser involvement, in labor. Their representation is about half of that obtained during the last elections of the Francoist vertical unions. It is clear, therefore, that the workers and their unions still have a long road to travel.

The year 1979 opened with negotiations for the vast majority of the country's labor contracts. A number related to women in particular, such as the contracts in the chemical and textile industries. The Women's Secretariats, which were now much stronger, raised the demands of women workers:

- Abolition of discriminatory categories; equal qualifications for the same work.
- Abolition of discrimination in hiring and promotion; the right to lighter work during pregnancy; the maintenance of a certain percentage of women in the factories.

The secretariats combined these demands with demands for recognition of the right of the factory committees to remove bosses accused of sexual harassment and to oversee employment interviews.

### Women's Struggle and Class Struggle

The struggle is not easy. The economic crisis is worsening and the existence of two million unemployed affects all the contract negotiations. The bosses are aware of that, and they are taking a hard stand.

On the other hand, workers are beginning to understand and put forward the demands of women. But they do not consider them important or think that it is possible to wage successful struggles for them. Nevertheless, this marks a step forward. And an important step at that.

These demands have been included in the vast majority of union platforms for the contract negotiations. And in almost all assemblies, women have spoken for them.

As a result, some of the most reactionary and discriminatory aspects of the contracts have been eliminated. That was the case, for example, in the abolition of separate work categories for women (which had kept wages extremely low for almost all women in the chemical industry) and in the right of women in textiles to change jobs during pregnancy.

Despite the still very weak organization of the Women's Secretariats, the fight by women to participate in union activities and in defense of feminist demands has won the support of unions for an important series of struggles.

The most significant example of this has been in Andalusia, where the unemploy-

ment problem is so serious that it led to several explosions and confrontations. The government was forced to provide aid in the form of "community jobs." Funds for it were aimed at providing jobs for two or three days a week, but only for one member of a family, thus excluding women.

Despite severe poverty and hunger in some villages in Córdoba, two-week local general strikes were held to demand that community jobs also be given to women. As a result, now two persons in each family can benefit from the program.\*

Also important has been the struggle that has been developing in Valencia, with the support of the unions, to demand the rehiring of several women workers who

\*In some villages, the general strikes won the solidarity of men and employed women. In others, they led to clashes.

had been dismissed as "dishonest nuisances."

On another level, the participation of unions in the March 8 International Women's Day actions indicated a convergence between them and the feminist organizations around a series of common demands concerning women workers.

There was nevertheless some friction around these actions. Although the disputes involved secondary questions (where to hold the demonstration, the color of the banners, and so on), they reflected the fact that a growing minority of militant feminists are either skeptical of or reject the involvement of "mixed" organizations (unions and parties) in raising women's demands.

The friction also reflected some feminists' refusal to recognize that the workers movement was seriously trying to correct its historical and unjustifiable error of subordinating, if not ignoring, demands

aimed at improving the position of women and ending the discrimination against them.

These comrades seem to be applying a dubious method: If their demands are not taken up by other groups, that's bad. If they are taken up, that's even worse.

The participation of the union secretariats in the coordinating bodies of the women's movement has increased. The growth of this common activity has allowed working women to get together with other women who are also organized to struggle around their specific problems.

This collaboration and mutual reinforcement is a decisive step in strengthening the union-oriented wing of the women's movement, as opposed to those feminist organizations that put a priority on their own separate existence and positions. It also helps stress the need to organize women and address the entire mass movement and its organizations. □

## Working Women in Italy Begin to Fight for Their Rights

By Pina Sardella

From 1968 on, as in many other European countries, a radicalization developed among women in Italy under the impact of the wave of worker and student struggles.

For the first time, women joined in mobilizations, took part in political organizations, and entered the trade unions. Along with this, they became conscious of their special problems as women and created the first women's groups and collectives.

As a result of this radicalization, which occurred in a changed political climate in which the relationship of forces shifted in favor of the working class and the Italian workers won the most extensive rights for labor in capitalist Europe, a series of gains were made in establishing the legal equality of women in society.

Beginning in 1971, laws were passed on the following questions:

- The rights of working mothers.
- The right to divorce.
- The rights of women in the family (abolishing the status of the husband as family head).
- The right to abortion. (This right, however, has been severely restricted. It is not extended to minors. Doctors have the right to refuse to perform abortions on grounds of conscience; because of the powerful influence of the Catholic church many of them do so.)
- Equality of men and women on the job. Among other things, this involves the right of fathers as well as mothers to time off from work to care for children. Pension benefits can revert to either spouse; in this

way, past discrimination was compensated for.

These rights, which have been won on paper, form the starting point for a new series of struggles that are radicalizing women in the workplaces especially and in the unions.

It is no accident that in recent years the unions have had to concern themselves with the gains, problems, and rights of working women. Women are winning a role in the unions, and they are forcing the leaderships to defend their rights.

But the important thing, and what should be stressed, is that the struggles of women have a dynamic that inevitably leads to conflict with the capitalist organization of work. This is opening up deepgoing contradictions with respect to the strategy that the Italian union movement adopted when it approved the resolution presented at the EUR assembly\* in 1978.

A few recent examples are sufficient to show how, starting from the struggle for partial and specific demands, women have become conscious, taken their concerns into the unions, and brought into question the political line of the leaderships.

At Mondadori, one of the biggest Italian publishing houses, a group of women have begun to meet. They are demanding a headquarters where they can invite women workers to discuss the problems of women on the job. Some of the things taken up have been problems of health, the double

\*This assembly (named after the EUR Palace in Rome where it was held) marked the trade-union leaderships' turn toward accepting the government's policy of austerity.

load women bear as workers and housewives, discrimination against women in promotions, and the marginal role accorded women in political life and in the unions.

Some requests have been made to the union leadership. For example, women have asked that specialized medical service be provided for consultation on health problems.

Once such rights have been won, women on the job—who remain isolated and are often viewed with suspicion by male workers—still face the more general problems related to the organization of work and to those factors that result in fact in discrimination against women, especially mothers, despite the equality law.

This rise in consciousness on the part of women led those at Mondadori to work with the factory council. This in turn led to the drawing up of a comprehensive document that raises a series of demands that are recommended for consideration in contract negotiations and for discussion by the union as a whole.

Based on their special problems as women, the Mondadori workers call for the following things in their document: increasing rather than decreasing the number of job classifications where quotas for women must be observed; the right to exercise supervision over the turnover of workers; no part-time work; and reduction of the workweek in order to deal with the problem of unemployment among women.

In the FLM (the metalworkers union), a national coordinating committee of women union delegates has existed for some years.



Although this body has not challenged the strategy of the union leadership, it has taken up some problems of women on the job and has called for the enforcement of the laws guaranteeing women's rights.

In the debate over the formulation of demands for the 1978 contract negotiations, the FLM women's coordinating committee came out against the proposal for part-time jobs made by the union bureaucracy. It exposed the attack on women workers concealed in the leadership's proposal for union regulated part-time work. The women won an initial victory, getting this proposal removed from the union's list of demands.

But the women in the FLM did not stop at this. They raised a hue and cry about the double load of work borne by women and the discrimination they suffer at all levels, the conditions that lead women to ask for part-time jobs, and all of the negative consequences this has for acquiring skills as well as for political and trade-union activity.

The FLM women denounced the Pandolfi Plan, which calls for sharp cuts in government spending and hence for cut-backs in public services. Women in particular feel the need for maintaining, expanding, and improving these services.

On the basis of its complaints about these problems, the coordinating committee of women in the FLM saw reducing the workweek for all as the best solution and the one that would best unify all workers and provide protection against mounting unemployment.

Getting the equality law enforced has required struggles, which have been hard fought in some areas. This has been the case in particular for unemployed youth. Law 285 requires that waiting lists for jobs be established, which employers must observe. At first, the bosses tried to reject women applicants, claiming that the available jobs were "not suitable for them." Hard struggles conducted by the unions forced the employers to stop discriminating against women in this area.

Moreover, there has recently been an important development in a major auto factory in Milan. Some women on the waiting list at the Alfa plant were hired and sent to the blast furnaces. At other plants, the introduction of night shifts has led to struggles not only by the women but by all workers against bad working conditions and late working hours.

These examples indicate that in the unions and elsewhere women have been becoming more conscious in recent years. This process begins with the special problems of women but quickly comes up against the overall organization of work, the unions' strategy, and political questions.

Women are most sensitive to the problems of health care, the organization of work, and social services. But solving these problems now requires settling ac-



Women's contingent in Rome steelworkers march June 22.

Rinascita

counts with the union leaders' pro-austerity policy and the government's Pandolfi Plan. Accepting the rules of capitalism leaves no alternative. It means accepting sacrifices by the workers, unemployment, and reduction of the standard of living. Women are the first to be hit by all this and the first who have to pay the price.

Meeting the demands of the women, however, requires a policy of investment in social services and increased public spending to assure that such services are adequate. It requires reduction of the workweek and better working conditions for all.

Thus, the struggle of women leads onto the political level. By the same token, if the unions as a whole fail to take up these questions, the struggle of women will be left in a blind alley. In Italy today the entire workers movement must take up the demands and the concerns that have been generated by the radicalization of women. They must be part of an overall political struggle against the government's line of austerity and against the union leadership's policy of calling for sacrifices by the workers.

Italian women are not yet in a position to take on such a political offensive. Their role in the unions is still too marginal. There are also objective problems—women bear almost all the responsibility for maintaining the home and caring for the children. Another problem involves getting the labor movement to provide the necessary means for stable women's organizations in the unions.

There have been some important experiments, such as the All-Trades Assembly of Women in Turin. In this body for some years women have taken up such key

questions as abortion rights, working conditions, and child-care centers, and have succeeded in taking these issues into the unions and waging struggles around them.

But in the most recent period, the All-Trades Assembly of Women, along with all the women's groups and collectives, has been going through a rather grave crisis. This is the result both of errors made in the past when the bourgeois Radical Party dominated the movement and of the marginal position of the women's collectives in the unions.

The capitalist crisis has also certainly helped to aggravate this breakdown of the women's movement. It has already inflicted the worst suffering on women. Weariness with political activism and the distrust of politics have had a profound impact on those strata of women who had radicalized for the first time and created the movement. Today, these women cannot be easily drawn back into a united struggle—at least, not right away.

But there is a whole new stratum of radicalized working women, as the examples above indicate—a stratum of women proletarians. These women radicalized for the first time on the question of abortion at the very same time that the Radical leadership abandoned this struggle on the basis of the absurd argument that "there should be no laws about women's bodies."

The workers movement cannot fail to pay attention to this new layer of women. The potential exists for waging an overall political struggle against the capitalist crisis and for achieving a solution that is in the interests of the working class. And it is in the context of such a solution that the demands of the women can be met. □

# DISCUSSION ON CUBA

## The Revolutionary Character of the Castro Leadership

By David Frankel and Larry Seigle

### I. What the Discussion Is About

Are Fidel Castro and the other men and women who led the struggle against the Batista dictatorship, who led the Cuban working class in the process of establishing a workers state, and who have led the defense of that revolution against imperialism for the last twenty years, centrists?

Alan Jones answers this question "yes" in his discussion article, "The Character of the Cuban Leadership" in the July 2 *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.

Comrade Jones's article raises issues that are at the heart of the discussion now beginning within the world Trotskyist movement on what *political line* we should follow in relation to the Cuban revolution and its leadership. Comrade Jones's contribution has advanced the discussion by clarifying some points and helping to put in sharper focus the differences that exist on others.

He correctly stresses broad areas of agreement that serve as the framework for discussing the points in dispute.

Most importantly, Comrade Jones agrees that the Fourth International must "reject the slogan of political revolution in Cuba" (p. 671, col. 1). He states that calling for a political revolution could only be supported by proof of "the existence of a caste with *material interests* separate from and opposed to those of the working class" (p. 671, col. 1, emphasis in original).

And he concludes forcefully,

There is no *serious* evidence, aside from the mouthings of sectarians, that such a hardened caste exists in Cuba in any way qualitatively comparable to the USSR, China, and so forth. The regime, far from ruling by terror, by all analyses enjoys mass popular support. . . . [P. 670, col. 2.]

The rejection of any call for political revolution registers important progress in the discussion. Prior to the present debate, a number of comrades in the Fourth International were beginning to slip into a stance in favor of calling for a political

revolution. If the discussion we are having on Cuba accomplishes nothing else, it will be worthwhile if it convinces comrades to pull back from casually adopting such a stance—a position that would amount to political suicide for any revolutionary internationalist organization.

Comrade Jones also agrees that it is possible for "authentically revolutionary" leaders and currents that are not Trotskyists to arise. When that happens the Fourth International must recognize them as fellow revolutionists, defend them and reach out to them, and try to draw them closer to our program and our banner. He adds, correctly, that recognizing and acting on this reality in no way "leads to the liquidation of the Fourth International or the struggle for the specifically Trotskyist program" (p. 666, col. 2). To the contrary it is an irreplaceable part of building the revolutionary workers international.

Further, Comrade Jones agrees,

Contrary to the views of various idiotic sects, one cannot judge the government of a workers state by utterly utopian, abstract norms according to which any deviation from "ideal line" determined by some individual immediately transforms those who wander into "counterrevolutionaries." [P. 667, col. 1.]

Finally, Comrade Jones states his agreement with the point made by Jack Barnes, in his speech on the twentieth anniversary of the Cuban revolution, that:

It was inevitable, given the relationship of forces, that the Cubans would be forced to pay a political price [for Soviet economic and military aid]. Some price would have to have been paid by the best and most conscious revolutionary leadership. [*Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, February 19, 1979, p. 156, col. 2.]

However, Comrade Jones considers the Castro leadership to be centrist, not revolutionary. As he states it:

There is within the workers movement not

merely revolution and counterrevolution but also *centrism*. Or, put in the analogies of the Russian revolution, there exist not merely the situation of 1917-1923 with the existence of a revolutionary leadership, and that of a post-1933 where the call for a political revolution was needed, but also that of 1923-33—i.e., a period of transition in which the leadership of the Soviet state was not revolutionary but where the slogan of political revolution was still not the correct one.

This is the situation faced today in respect to Cuba. [P. 671, col. 2.]

In order to bring into sharp focus the debate over whether Castroism is a centrist current, we have to make a distinction between two stages in the history of the Cuban revolution and the Castro leadership.

The first question we must deal with is whether or not the Castro current was centrist from the time it emerged in the mid-1950s. A petty-bourgeois grouping with a radical bourgeois-democratic program, it was the dominant and decisive component of the July 26 Movement.

The second question is what has happened since the establishment of the Cuban workers state. The Castroist leadership has been the dominant and decisive component of the government and the party in Cuba for twenty years. In answering the question of whether Castroism is centrist *today* we must, as Comrade Jones correctly explains, turn to the analogy of the Soviet Union from 1923 to 1933. A centrist current that holds governmental power in a workers state is clearly a very specific kind of centrism. Here the precise question we must ask is whether Castroism is a form of *bureaucratic centrism*, the term Trotsky used to define the Stalinist leadership during the period it was consolidating its power, basing itself on the privileged bureaucracy.

By making this distinction between two periods in the development of the Castroist current, we can clarify the issues under discussion, and narrow in on the differences that exist.

### II. Was Leadership of July 26 Movement Centrist or Revolutionary?

When the Cuban revolution occurred, it was seen as a breakthrough by the world Trotskyist movement as a whole. For the first time since the Russian revolution of 1917, a non-Stalinist leadership had come to power and led the working class in the establishment of a workers state.

The Cuban revolution signalled the opening of the socialist revolution in the

Western hemisphere. It also represented a powerful blow against the stranglehold of Stalinism on the international workers movement.

In the world political resolution adopted by the 1961 party convention, the Socialist Workers Party pointed to the far-reaching significance of the Cuban revolution for the struggle against Stalinism:

A completely new force must now be taken into account—the Cuban revolution and its leadership. Havana wields immense independent influence throughout Latin America. . . .

The Cuban revolution gave every Communist party in the world, and above all the Cuban Communist party [the Popular Socialist Party], something to ponder. A handful of determined revolutionaries demonstrated that the masses can be mobilized and power won without Mos-



cow's approval. They demonstrated it without the help and even against the opposition of a strong Communist party. The bypassing of the Communist party opened up a new vista throughout the world on the possibilities of overcoming the obstacle of Stalinism in constructing revolutionary parties. [Published in the *International Socialist Review*, Summer 1961, p. 97.]

Revolutionary minded youth throughout Latin America were inspired by the Cuban revolution and they sought to bypass the Stalinized Communist parties as Castro and his comrades had done.

In assessing the Cuban leaders at the time, Joseph Hansen wrote in "The Theory of the Cuban Revolution" that Castro and the team around him "have convincingly demonstrated that they really meant it when they said they were prepared to carry the revolution through to its necessary conclusion no matter where it took them" (*Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution* [New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978], p. 203).

Hansen concluded, "Up to now the Cuban leaders have appeared as great revolutionists of action" (*Ibid.*, p. 204).

This was also the view of Ernest Mandel. In his pamphlet *Marxism Vs. Utraleftism* (Paris: The Fourth International, 1967), Mandel wrote that "in no revolution of the twentieth century was the agrarian problem solved as radically, as completely and as quickly as in the Cuban revolution under the leadership of Fidel Castro" (p. 31).

Answering sectarian opponents of the Cuban leadership, Mandel talked of "... Fidel Castro, marching at the head of all the toiling masses of his country, mobilising them continually, crushing the bourgeois state machine through class action, arming the workers and peasants and expropriating the bourgeoisie and breaking the grip of world imperialism..." (p. 41).

Mandel hailed "... Castro and the Fidelista current, who fought, not without success, for a socialist revolution in Cuba and who, against the Soviet bureaucracy and its Cuban agents, have maintained their orientation towards a socialist revolution in the rest of Latin America!" (p. 49).

Agreement on what line to take toward the Cuban revolution and a common assessment of its leadership was a key point in the process leading to the reunification of the Fourth International in 1963. "The Dynamics of World Revolution Today," one of the documents approved by the Reunification Congress, described the importance of the Cuban revolution, saying:

The victory in Cuba marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of the world revolution; for, aside from the Soviet Union, this is the first workers state established outside the bounds of the Stalinist apparatus. [*Fourth International*, October-December 1963, pp. 11-12.]

Another document adopted at the 1963 Reunification Congress, "The Interna-



Cuban National Institute of Agrarian Reform

### Cuban farmer receives land title under Agrarian Reform.

tional Situation and Our Tasks," said of the Cuban revolution:

It marks also the arrival in power, for the first time since October 1917, of a revolutionary leadership which, in relation to objective necessity and its own conscious understanding, has systematically sought the international extension of the socialist revolution, at least throughout Latin America. [*Ibid.*, p. 36.]

Nowhere in the documents of the Fourth International in this period or in articles by its leaders, is the Castro team referred to as centrist. At least through the fifth year of the Cuban revolution, the world movement as a whole agreed that the Fidelistas were a revolutionary current.

The recognition of the revolutionary character of the July 26 Movement leadership was essential to understanding the Cuban revolution and adopting a line of action aimed at deepening it, defending it, and extending its impact.

#### Origins of the July 26 Movement

Why did the Fourth International consider the Castro current to be revolutionary? We can answer this by taking a brief look at some of the decisive turning points in its history and evolution.

The July 26 Movement began as a petty-bourgeois formation with a radical democratic, anti-imperialist, and nationalist program. It was organized in opposition to the Stalinists and the bourgeois liberal opponents of Batista.

In December 1955, Fidel Castro wrote of these bankrupt forces:

The political business of opposition is fully discredited and decadent. First they demanded a neutral government and immediate general elections. Then they stopped at demanding only general elections in 1956. They are no longer talking about a particular year. They will end by taking off their last fig leaf and accepting any arrangement with the dictator. [Robert Tabor, *M-26: The Biography of a Revolution* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1961), p. 50.]

Stubbornly refusing to compromise with either the dictatorship or the bourgeois opposition, Castro declared, "The names of those who impede the task of liberating their country should be recorded in the same place of infamy and shame as the names of those who oppress it" (*Ibid.*, p. 51).

Breaking publicly with the bourgeois Ortodoxo Party in March 1956, Castro said the July 26 Movement would be a movement "without sugar barons, without stock-market speculators, without magnates of industry and commerce, without lawyers for big interests, without provincial *caciques* [political bosses], without small-time politicians of any kind."

Instead, Castro insisted, the July 26 Movement would be "the revolutionary movement of the humble, the hope of redemption of the Cuban working class, the hope of land for the peasants who live like pariahs in the country that their grandfathers liberated, the hope of bread for the hungry and justice for the forgotten" (*Ibid.*, pp. 50-51).

All this, as the Castro leadership team was to prove, was not merely revolutionary rhetoric of the centrist variety.

The program of the July 26 Movement included a thoroughgoing land reform, abolition of the dictatorship, elimination of corruption, lower rents, improvement of housing, and increased employment through public works.

Castro and his comrades sought to achieve this program by revolutionary means, mobilizing the Cuban toilers independently of both the impotent bourgeois opposition and the treacherous Stalinist and other petty-bourgeois reformists who subordinated themselves to imperialism and the Cuban bourgeoisie.

The intransigence and iron-willed determination of this revolutionary leadership was graphically demonstrated by the struggle they waged in the Sierra Maestra Mountains and in towns and cities across Cuba. At each turning point, when less revolutionary leaders would have capitulated outright to bourgeois and imperialist pressure, or at least vacillated, the Castro team stood firm.

### Denouncing the 'Miami Pact'

In late 1957, when the Rebel Army forces in the Sierra Maestra were making gains and the more far-sighted bourgeois figures could see the beginning of the end for Batista, a "Pact of Unity" was made public in Miami. It was signed by a number of Cuban bourgeois opposition groups and, purportedly, by the July 26 Movement.

In fact, however, this pact of unity with bourgeois forces, on their terms, was completely at odds with the revolutionary perspective of the Fidelistas. When the Castro leadership in the Sierras learned that representatives of the July 26 Movement in the United States had gone along with this sell-out, they did not hesitate to publicly, and in the strongest language, repudiate the "Miami Pact."

In explaining the position of the central leadership of the July 26 Movement, Fidel Castro reaffirmed their unbending revolutionary determination to carry the struggle through to its conclusion. A review of the position of the July 26 Movement at this critical juncture in the Cuban revolution is particularly timely because of the lessons it offers to those in Nicaragua today who want to take the Cuban road.

In a public letter to the organizations who had signed the "Pact of Unity" Castro declared:

No matter how desperate our situation may be, or how many thousand soldiers are sent against us by the Dictatorship in its present design to annihilate us . . . we will never accept the sacrifice of certain principles that are cardinal to our understanding of the Cuban Revolution. [The text of this declaration is published, in a translation by the author, in Mario Llerena, *The Unsuspected Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 257-70.]

First, Castro denounced the Miami Pact for its failure to include "the express declaration that foreign intervention of

any kind in the internal affairs of Cuba is rejected [which] shows a very lukewarm kind of patriotism and unparalleled cowardice."

Are we, Fidel asked, "so mediocre that we do not know how to say a word on this matter? How, then, can we call ourselves revolutionaries. . . ?"

Second, he denounced the pact for omitting a declaration rejecting any type of military junta—no matter how patriotic, democratic, or even "revolutionary"—to replace Batista. Fidel knew that some of the bourgeois forces were looking for ways to hang on to at least shreds of Batistaism without Batista. He denounced the "false illusion that Cuba's problem can be solved simply by the Dictator's absence."

"Let me tell you then that we are making it perfectly clear that, should a Military Junta take Batista's place, the 26 of July Movement will resolutely continue fighting its war of liberation."

Third, he denounced the provision, contained in the Miami Pact, that after the overthrow of Batista, the armed revolutionary forces should be merged with the "regular armed forces of the Republic." Fidel reminded the leaders of the bourgeois opposition that the July 26 Movement "is the only organization having organized and disciplined militias throughout the country, as well as an army in the field. . . ."

He declared flatly and unequivocally: "The 26 of July Movement demands for itself the function of maintaining law and order and of reorganizing the armed forces of the Republic."

Finally, Fidel denounced all the compromisers and halfhearted opponents of the dictatorship:

Our victories are there, and nothing can cause them to be forgotten. Our men, firmer than ever, are prepared to fight till the last drop of blood. Defeat is for those who have denied to us all assistance; for those who, having given us their word at the beginning, then left us alone; . . . for those who, having the arms, hid them away like cowards at the hour of action. They are the ones who are wrong—not we.

One thing we can assert with all certainty: had we seen other Cubans fighting for freedom, persecuted and about to be exterminated; had we seen them resist day after day without giving up or weakening in their attempt, we would not have hesitated one minute in going to their help and dying with them if necessary. For we are Cubans, and Cubans do not remain impassive when others are fighting for liberty—even if it is in a different American country. Do the Dominicans gather on some islet with the intent of liberating their country? For each Dominican, ten Cubans assemble. Do Somoza's henchmen invade Costa Rica? There go the Cubans to fight. . . .

Fidel concluded by warning:

. . . let nobody try to conduct from Miami a revolution that is being carried out in every town and hamlet throughout the island, with fighting, agitation, sabotage, strikes, and the thousand other ways of revolutionary action that are

included in the strategy of the July 26 Movement.

By denouncing the "Miami Pact" the Castroists reaffirmed their revolutionary course and rejected the road of conciliation.

### After January 1, 1959

This same revolutionary character marked the Castroist leadership in power after the overthrow of Batista.

Yankee imperialism and its Cuban protégés were trying to block the social advances promised by the July 26 Movement and demanded by the Cuban masses. The Castroists began to base themselves more and more on mass mobilizations of the workers and poor peasants. As Castro put it in his speech on the twentieth anniversary of the revolution, "Before January [1959], a vanguard was the main protagonist in events; since that January, the main protagonist has been the people."

This process of relying increasingly on the mobilization of the workers and peasants, and being drawn to the left by them, began even before the Rebel Army reached Havana, when ruling class figures tried to form a "responsible" government to replace Batista, who had fled to the Dominican Republic. Here's how it looked to *New York Times* correspondent R. Hart Phillips, whose book *Cuba: Island of Paradox* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky), appeared in 1960:

Fidel Castro declared that his insurgents would remain on a "war footing" and would not accept the designation of Dr. Carlos Piedra as President. . . .

The people responded to the call from Fidel Castro for a general strike. Commerce and industry had not opened on New Year's Day of course and restaurants, hotels, cafés and other establishments which usually operate on holidays closed their doors. International and domestic plane service was suspended at the José Martí International Airport. Vessels arriving in Havana were unable to dock due to the fact no port workers were working. Some 2,000 American tourists were caught. [P. 399.]

Fidel Castro and his rebels arrived in Havana on January 8, 1959. Never in the history of Cuba has anyone received such a welcome. The ovation was of such magnitude that it was a little frightening. The majority of Havana's one million inhabitants must have turned out. [P. 404.]

Phillips went into some detail to document her fear that Castro was selling out—to the working masses.

Many of the reforms of Castro, such as the promise of honesty in administration, the suppression of illegal gambling, the campaign against prostitution, narcotics traffic and other vices, have been applauded by the public. . . . However, when Castro then stated that all land which the government considers as not being efficiently cultivated would also be seized, and that a limit would be placed on the amount of land any individual or company could own, cane planters, tobacco plantation owners, and cattle ranchers expressed their concern.

The reduction of rents by 30% to 50% is consi-





Nationalized U.S.-owned electric company. Sign says: "This building is the property of and is occupied by workers who are ready to give their lives for national sovereignty. We support nationalization!"

dered just by the tenants but unreasonable by the owners of property. . . .

The owners of vacant lots in all towns have been ordered to sell them to anyone who wants to build a home. . . . But the statement by Fidel Castro that no land in the island is worth more than four dollars per *vara* (33" x 33"—the old Spanish measurement) caused not only the wealthy but the middle class to regard their investments with concern. . . .

Dr. Fidel Castro has promised the workers they will receive higher wages and that living costs will be reduced. This has resulted in a wave of labor demands in every industry. . . .

The imposition by the revolutionary government of currency controls and restrictions of imports—for the first time in the history of Cuba—has further disturbed and handicapped commerce and industry. [P. 411-13.]

Phillips felt it necessary to sternly remind Castro that his measures against the wealthy few were taking on "an ominous overtone. Many of these people inherited their properties or obtained them by their own hard work and frugality" (P. 413).

On the foreign policy front, Phillips complained,

The constant whipping up by Fidel Castro of an extreme nationalistic spirit is regarded by many Cubans as ill advised in an island which depends on exports for its economic life and must import the greater part of its food. "Economic independence" has been a catchword of politicians in Cuba since the dawn of the Republic, but the majority of Cubans realize that it is an impossible dream, since Cuba is inevitably tied economically to the United States—its best customer and largest supplier. [P. 413.]

But what distinguished the July 26 Movement from every previous radical petty-bourgeois formation and demagogic

politician was that the Fidelistas *meant what they said*. Once in power, they set out to implement their program and to mobilize the masses of Cuban people in support of the measures they took.

Having learned the lessons of the 1954 CIA-organized coup against the Arbenz regime in Guatemala, the rebel leaders moved immediately to disband the Batista army and police. They put some of the most notorious police torturers on public trial, and executed some 600 of them with revolutionary justice—although most of these butchers, rapists, torturers, and hangmen had escaped to Miami. The public trials were used to educate and mobilize the working people.

The cutting edge of the revolution in the early months was the radical agrarian reform law promulgated on May 17, 1959. Holdings beyond 1,000 acres were expropriated and distributed among the 700,000 landless peasants and agricultural workers, with priority given to any tenants, sharecroppers, or squatters living on the land in question. All cane-growing land belonging to the giant sugar mills was seized, along with all land owned by non-Cubans.

To carry through the land reform, the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) was established. Soon INRA and the Rebel Army, backed by the workers and poor peasants, were acting more and more as a "dual power" to the moderate figures in the bourgeois coalition government.

When the imperialists and their Cuban helpers began to escalate their campaign

of threats, pressure, and pleas for "moderation," the coalition government began breaking apart and fissures appeared within the July 26 Movement. Rather than retreating or even slowing down, the Castro leadership moved further and further to the left, relying more and more on massive revolutionary mobilizations in the cities, as well as the countryside. In turn, the Castro team itself was further transformed as it increasingly reflected and responded to the deepening radicalization of the toiling masses of Cuba. The working class, supported by the poor peasantry, entered directly into the political process, initiating factory "interventions," putting their stamp of approval on, and consolidating, the revolutionary measures taken.

Meanwhile, in Washington, a campaign was launched in Congress and in the capitalist press to cut the quota for Cuban sugar allowed to enter the United States. In January 1960, President Eisenhower announced that he would seek authority to reduce the quota. Havana responded by denouncing this as blackmail and announcing that Cuba would sell sugar elsewhere in the world market.

The next month the Soviet Union agreed to purchase Cuban sugar. The Cuban government began to prepare a law to expropriate the sugar mills. Fidel announced: "As they cut our sugar quota pound by pound, we will seize their mills one by one." Hand-painted posters went up in the windows of houses throughout the island: "Sin cuota, pero sin bota." (Without the quota, but without the boot.)

Washington stepped up the financing and arming of counterrevolutionaries. Planes from Florida began bombing cane-fields and setting them afire. On August 6, 1960, addressing the first Latin American Youth Congress meeting in Havana, Castro announced the nationalization of all the American-owned sugar mills, oil refineries, and the power and telephone companies.

This was followed by further expropriations, including of the holdings of the Cuban capitalists. Castro put it: "We will nationalize them down to the nails in their shoes."

No hesitating. No vacillating. No half-hearted measures. As the pressure built up, and the revolutionary process deepened, the Castro leadership responded by turning toward the workers and exploited peasants and leading them in revolutionary combat.

And they didn't knuckle under to U.S. imperialism either. As Castro recalled when he addressed the United Nations in September 1960:

Notes from the State Department rained on Cuba. They never asked us about our problems, not even out of a desire to express condolence or commiseration, or because of the hand that they had in causing the problems. They never asked us how many died of starvation in our country, how many were suffering from tuberculosis, how many were unemployed. . . . They demanded

three things: speedy, efficient, and just payment. Do you understand that language? Speedy, efficient, and just payment? That means, "Pay right now, in dollars, and whatever we ask for our lands." [Taber, p. 320.]

Notes weren't the only thing that rained down on Cuba. Backed by the CIA, Florida-based counterrevolutionaries began a steady campaign of armed attacks, including the use of incendiary bombs against the cane fields.

Threats from Wall Street, economic sabotage, and armed attacks failed to stop Castro. Instead, the Fidelistas created and armed a mass popular militia. Finally, in August-October 1960, they led the workers in the expropriation of the capitalists and the transformation of Cuba into the first workers state in the Western Hemisphere.

Watching this evolution, the Fourth International as a whole came to the conclusion that we were dealing not only with revolutionists, but with a grouping that by relying on the working class, mobilizing the masses, and going on to establish a workers state had in the process themselves been transformed into proletarian revolutionists, although not Trotskyists.

To our knowledge, no one in the Fourth International at the time proposed that this grouping of great revolutionaries of action should be labelled "centrists." The term was too incompatible with everything that the leaders of the July 26 Movement were showing in practice.

Furthermore, labelling the leadership of the Cuban revolution "centrist," however the term may have been qualified by adjectives, would have been an obstacle to carrying out the line of action adopted by the Fourth International. This line, which was agreed on by both public factions of the international that existed at the time, included turning toward the Cuban revolution and its leadership; seeking ways to collaborate with them as fellow revolutionaries; and taking advantage of the anti-Stalinist character and course of the revolution to win a new hearing for revolutionary Marxism in Cuba and among all those throughout Latin America and around the world who were positively influenced by that revolution.

This approach was summed up by James P. Cannon, a leader of the SWP and one of the founding leaders of the Fourth International. In May 1961, in a letter to the Political Committee of the SWP, Cannon wrote:

The only *revolutionary* policy for [the Fourth International in regard to] Cuba is to *recognize* the revolution there, as it is and as it is developing as a *socialist* revolution—and to *identify* ourselves with it, and to act as a part of it, not as scholastic wiseacres standing outside the living movement. [Cannon's emphasis.]

In another letter along the same lines (other parts of which are quoted by Jones) Cannon went on to develop this point:

Fortunately, the problem now under discussion is not academic. It centers, at the moment, on Cuba and the Cuban Revolution and the leaders of this revolution. In exceptional circumstances, these people have changed Cuba and changed



IWW's Big Bill Haywood

themselves. They have carried through a genuine socialist revolution, and armed the working population, and defended the revolution successfully against an imperialist-backed invasion. And now they openly proclaim themselves socialist. . . .

In my opinion, that's pretty good for a start—and I am talking here about the leaders as well as the masses who support them. If such people are not considered as rightful participants in a discussion, and possible collaborators in a new party and a new international—where will we find better candidates?

Trotsky, in the middle Thirties initiated extensive discussion and collaboration with left-centrists who only talked about the revolution, and even that not very convincingly. The Cuban revolutionists have done more than talk, and they are not the only ones on trial from now on. We are also on trial. What would our talk about revolution be worth if we couldn't recognize a revolution when we see it?

If the Fourth International had not reached out to the Castroists and sought to collaborate with them as fellow revolutionists, the international would have been bankrupt, a lifeless sect.

#### Lessons From the Comintern

By following Jim Cannon's advice to approach the Castroists as fellow revolutionaries, not as either centrists or opponents of some other stripe, the Fourth International was applying the lessons learned from Lenin and Trotsky. After 1917, even though they held state power in the Soviet Union, the Bolsheviks recognized there were revolutionary currents in numerous countries who would not be immediately won to Leninism. They sought to win them to the side of the Russian Revolution and the revolutionary international.

In considering how well the name tag "centrist" fits the Castro current, it is

instructive to take a look at the kinds of forces Lenin and Trotsky considered revolutionists, not centrists, and why.

One example was the Industrial Workers of the World, the "Wobblies." The IWW was neither Marxist nor Leninist—politically it represented anarcho-syndicalism of a sectarian variety. In relation to the needs of the working class, its political weaknesses were greater than those of Castroism.

It was certainly not capable of leading the working class forward to either mass industrial unionism or construction of a revolutionary Marxist party—to say nothing of making a socialist revolution in the United States. The IWW had no program for advancing the socialist revolution internationally.

Within the United States, although the IWW proclaimed and popularized the idea of uniting the working class into one big industrial union, its sectarianism made it incapable of advancing this idea in practice. At the IWW's second convention in 1906, the Western Federation of Miners, the only strongly organized union affiliated with the IWW, was driven out of the organization because its leaders weren't revolutionaries.

This same confusion between the tasks of a political party and the role of a trade union, which prevented the Wobblies from consolidating an effective trade-union organization, also turned the IWW into an obstacle to the building of a revolutionary socialist party in the United States.

The IWW had a bad case of anarcho-syndicalist ultraleftism. It opposed running in elections on principle. In many cases it adopted a policy of "silent defense"—that is, of refusing to speak in the capitalist courts. Castro's famous "History Will Absolve Me" courtroom speech compares rather favorably to that.

And unlike the Fidelistas, the IWW proved incapable of learning the lessons of experience. The majority of its leading cadres did not come over to the Communist Party after the Russian Revolution.

Nevertheless, the Communist International, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, recognized that the IWW was an organization of revolutionary class-struggle fighters. The IWW was specified in the Communist International's first manifesto as one of the organizations invited to join.

In his opening address to the Second Congress of the Communist International, which was attended by delegates of the IWW, Zinoviev declared his solidarity with "the workers who are in the ranks of the Communists or the ranks of the IWW or other revolutionary organizations following the same path as the Communist International" (*The Second Congress of the Communist International* [London: New Park Publications, 1977], vol. 1, p. 6).

The Bolsheviks recognized the IWW for what it was—an organization of revolu-



tionary fighters with an incorrect program. The Wobblies were revolutionists of action. They were for uncompromising struggle against the capitalist class and its cops, courts, political parties, parliaments, wars, and exploitation.

The Comintern took the same attitude to the British Shop Stewards movement, which was also represented at the Second Congress of the Communist International, and to syndicalist currents in other countries.

#### Malcolm X: Revolutionary or Centrist?

Another, more contemporary, example is also relevant: Malcolm X.

Like the Castroists, Malcolm X did not come out of the workers movement. He was a revolutionary nationalist, fighting for the rights of the oppressed Black population in the United States. He was an uncompromising opponent of racism, of the imperialist government, and of the two capitalist parties in the United States.

He was greeted by the Socialist Workers Party as a fellow revolutionist. In fact, the SWP recognized him as one of the greatest revolutionary mass leaders produced by the American working class. We sought to collaborate with him and to influence his thinking within that framework. In the words of SWP leader George Breitman, Malcolm "was a revolutionary—increasingly anti-capitalist and pro-socialist as well as anti-imperialist. These labels fitted, even though he did not apply them to himself" (George Breitman, *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary* [New York: Merit Publishers, 1967], p. 27.)

Malcolm X was not a Trotskyist. Some of his political mistakes were similar to those of the Castroists. Like the Fidelistas, Malcolm was not clear about the need to distinguish between giving support to bourgeois regimes in the semicolonial countries in their conflicts with imperialism, and expressing political confidence in, or giving a political endorsement to, such regimes.

For example, this is how Malcolm described the "highlights" of his trip to Africa in 1965:

During that trip I had audiences with President Nasser of Egypt, President Nyerere of Tanzania, President Jomo Kenyatta (who was then Prime Minister) of Kenya, Prime Minister Milton Obote of Uganda, President Azikiwe of Nigeria, President Nkrumah of Ghana, and President Sekou Toure of Guinea. . . . I was impressed by their analysis of the problem, and many of the suggestions they gave went a long way toward broadening my own outlook. [Interview in *Young Socialist*, March-April 1965, p. 3.]

Like Castro, Malcolm did not see the socialist revolution in the United States as a realistic perspective. As George Breitman put it, Malcolm was "not yet a Marxist. He saw the white workers only as they were (politically immature, lacking in independence, blinded by prejudice), and not as

they might or would become under different conditions" (Breitman, p. 51).

Breitman also points out that Malcolm was a devout Muslim until his death. But all this didn't stop the SWP and the Fourth International from recognizing Malcolm as an uncompromising fighter and revolutionary politician.

In fact, we were in a better position to work out our line in regard to this promising development in the mid-1960s because of what we had learned from events and from the discussion in the SWP and in the international several years earlier on the question of the Cuban revolution and its leadership. We were more receptive, and responded more quickly, to Malcolm's evolution than we would have been if we had not experienced and learned from the Cuban events.

It is also worth noting that sectarian opponents of the Cuban revolution, especially Gerry Healy in Britain and his miniatures inside the Socialist Workers Party in the United States, were as virulently anti-Malcolm as they were anti-Castro—and for the same reasons.

As with the Castroists, we could not have followed a correct line toward Malcolm if we had considered him to be a centrist. This is not a question of terminology but of political stance and intervention by revolutionary politicians. How different the real political line of Breitman's book would be if he had decided to call it: *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Centrist!*

The parallels between Malcolm X and the central leadership team of the July 26

Movement can be extended further. Both the Castroists and Malcolm X began as revolutionary nationalist fighters. They did not begin as socialists or conscious partisans of the working class. Their political origins were not in the organized workers movement, but in the struggles of an oppressed nation. Because of their uncompromising commitment to improving the lives of their people, they evolved into prosocialist and anticapitalist fighters. The Castroists became proletarian revolutionists, basing themselves on the toiling masses and mobilizing them to overthrow capitalism. Malcolm was gunned down by the forces of reaction precisely because he too was moving in that direction.

The development of revolutionary currents that did not begin as part of the workers movement was the subject of some discussion at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1921. In the colonial world especially, where the proletariat itself was small and the workers movement weak, the Bolsheviks were convinced that they would see the emergence and development of such revolutionary and anti-imperialist forces.

In his report from the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions delivered to the Second Congress, Lenin explained that the commission had decided to "speak of the national-revolutionary movement rather than of the 'bourgeois-democratic' movement" in the colonial world (Lenin, *Collected Works* [Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1966], vol. 31, p. 241).

Giving the reasons for this change in



Malcolm X addressing a June 1963 rally in Harlem. A "centrist" or one of greatest revolutionary mass leaders produced by the American working class?

terminology, Lenin explained:

... if we speak of the bourgeois-democratic movement, we shall be obliterating all distinctions between the reformist and the revolutionary movements. Yet that distinction has been very clearly revealed of late in the backward and colonial countries, since the imperialist bourgeoisie is doing everything in its power to implant a reformist movement among the oppressed nations too. [Ibid., p. 242.]

The "Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question," which were adopted at that Congress, put special emphasis on the importance of orienting toward these revolutionary forces.

1. One of the most important questions that faces the Second Congress of the Communist International is to establish exactly the mutual relations between the Communist International and the revolutionary movement in the politically oppressed countries dominated by their own capitalist system, like India and China. . . .

4. . . . The Communist International must enter into much closer connection with the revolutionary forces that are at present participating in the overthrow of imperialism in the politically and economically oppressed countries. [Second Congress, pp. 115-16.]

The reporter on the "Supplementary Theses," M.N. Roy, gave an example of the kind of revolutionary forces the theses were referring to:

In recent years there has been a new movement among the exploited masses in India that has spread very quickly and expressed itself in mighty strike waves. . . . One can say of this mass movement that it is at all events revolutionary, although no-one would say that the workers and peasants who form this movement are also clearly class-conscious. [Ibid., p. 120.]

Doesn't the July 26 Movement fit into this category of movements of oppressed nations and nationalities that are "at all events revolutionary" despite the fact that they are not under the leadership of revolutionary Marxists?

Aside from the decisive fact that the Castroists displayed none of the concrete characteristics of centrism enumerated by Trotsky—such as vacillation, conciliation, revolutionary rhetoric and reformist deeds, halfheartedness, or cowardice—they were not, in the beginning, even part of the workers movement or its periphery.

Schematically, we often view the workers movement as represented by a semi-circle, with the camp of reformism (Stalinist and Social Democratic) at one end, and the camp of revolutionary Marxism at the other. The centrists are somewhere in between—left centrists closer to the revolutionary pole and right centrists closer to reformism. Moreover, these groupings are invariably in motion—either away from reformism and toward revolutionary Marxism or in the opposite direction.

But "national revolutionary" or "revolutionary liberation" movements (to use the language of the Second Congress) don't fit into this two-dimensional schema. The July 26 Movement did not become part of

the proletarian movement until after the downfall of Batista, when it led the Cuban masses in the establishment of a workers and farmers government and the construction of a workers state and transformed itself in the process. It did not start from the camp of reformism, pass through a centrist stage, and arrive at revolutionary positions. It followed a different trajectory altogether.

The Fourth International was correct in recognizing the Castroists as a revolutionary leadership, despite their mistakes and inadequacies. In doing so, we followed the same political approach as that taken by Lenin and Trotsky in dealing with revolutionary non-Marxist currents in the workers movement, such as the IWW, and with revolutionary currents in the colonial world arising outside the workers movement.

For the Fourth International, a correct approach to such revolutionary groupings is a matter of life and death.

In general, our forces represent a tiny vanguard. In no country have we succeeded in building a mass party, or even a small revolutionary party of a few tens of thousands. Nowhere have we won hegemony within the vanguard of the working class. In many countries, no organized forces identified with the Fourth International exist at all.

At the same time, the decay of world capitalism is pushing new forces onto the road of revolution. We see this process beginning among the young workers inside the imperialist countries. The process is especially apparent in the colonial and semicolonial countries.

New leaderships are thrown up by these struggles. We must be able to recognize revolutionary currents when they arise, or we will never win them to Marxism

#### Kautsky, Luxemburg, and Trotsky

Because centrist formations lack an independent social foundation, they react sharply to the pressure of the workers at one time and of the capitalists at another. This is the source of their vacillation, hesitation, halfheartedness, inability to act decisively, and reliance on radical-sounding talk but timidity when it comes to action.

Lenin first used the term "centrism" to describe Karl Kautsky after Kautsky—despite his reputation as an upholder of orthodox Marxism—failed a decisive test. He capitulated to the imperialist ruling class in his own country in World War I. Later, Kautsky refused to defend the Russian revolution—while mouthing Marxist-sounding "criticisms."

Kautsky's centrism consisted of his refusal to act as a revolutionary, his failure to identify with a real revolution when it occurred. As Lenin put it, Kautsky's centrism was "a blend of loyalty to Marxism in word and subordination to opportunism

in deed" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 28, p. 230).

Centrism was a term used to describe those forces in the workers movement that refused to come over to the side of the October revolution, whatever their radical verbiage or "orthodox" Marxist stance. But Lenin and Trotsky did not use it as an epithet against revolutionaries merely because they weren't Leninists.

As Comrade Jones correctly points out,



ROSA LUXEMBURG: A revolutionist, but not a Leninist.

neither Lenin nor Trotsky ever approached Luxemburg as a centrist, or "labelled" her as such. Luxemburg opposed the building of a Leninist-type party. She opposed the right of oppressed nations to separate and form their own state. She opposed some of the revolutionary measures the Bolsheviks took in the aftermath of the October revolution.

But when the decisive test of the victorious Bolshevik revolution drew a line of blood through the workers movement on an international scale, Luxemburg was on the side of the Bolsheviks. In her pamphlet, *The Russian Revolution*, she wrote:

Only a party which knows how to lead, that is, to advance things, wins support in stormy times. The determination with which, at the decisive moment, Lenin and his comrades offered the only solution which could advance things ("all power in the hands of the proletariat and peasantry"), transformed them almost overnight from a persecuted, slandered, outlawed minority whose leader had to hide like Marat in cellars, into the absolute master of the situation. . . .

Whatever a party could offer of courage, revolutionary farsightedness and consistency in a historic hour, Lenin, Trotsky and the other comrades have given in good measure. All the revolutionary honor and capacity which western social democracy lacked were represented by the Bolsheviks. Their October uprising was not only the actual salvation of the Russian Revolution; it was also the salvation of the honor of international socialism. [Rosa Luxemburg Speaks (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp. 374-75.]

In 1932, Trotsky wrote:

... some of Rosa Luxemburg's political mistakes may be with sufficient theoretical justification characterized as left centrist. One could go



still further and say that the majority of divergences between Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin represented a stronger or weaker leaning toward centrism. But only the idiots and ignoramuses and charlatans of the Comintern bureaucracy are capable of placing Luxemburgism, as an historical tendency, in the category of centrism. It goes without saying that the present "leaders" of the Comintern, from Stalin down, politically, theoretically, and morally do not come up to the knees of the great woman and revolutionist. [Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), p. 211.]

In fact, one might even point out that Trotsky himself, before 1917, was not a Leninist, that he hesitated and vacillated between Bolshevism and Menshevism. This point has been made before—by Trotsky himself. In an article entitled "Our Differences," written in November 1924, Trotsky reviewed his own political evolution. Trotsky explained that, in the years before 1917, he

... held an attitude toward Menshevism that differed fundamentally from Lenin's. I thought it was necessary to fight for the unification of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks within a single party. Lenin thought it necessary to deepen the split with the Mensheviks in order to cleanse the party of the main sources of bourgeois influence upon the proletariat. . . .

... my "conciliationism" led me at many sharp turns in the road into hostile clashes with Bolshevism. Lenin's struggle against Menshevism was inevitably supplemented by a struggle against "conciliationism," which was often given the name "Trotskyism."

... It would never even enter my head now, long after the fact, to dispute the correctness in principle and the colossal historical farsightedness of Lenin's critique of Russian "conciliationism," which in its essential features was akin to the international current of centrism. [Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition, 1923-25* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), p. 263.]

But only the most schematic of formalists could entertain the thought of labeling Trotsky before 1917 as a centrist. Trotsky was an unbending revolutionist, though not yet a Leninist. Trotsky recalled:

I came to Bolshevism by a long and complicated road. Along this road I had no interests other than those of the revolution and the proletariat. I fought against Leninism when I thought that it was wrongly dividing the working class. When I realized my mistake as a result of experience, I came over to Leninism. . . .

... In May 1917 I returned from America and placed myself at the disposal of the Bolshevik Party. . . . If I came to Leninism later than many other comrades, nevertheless I came soon enough to take part as one of Lenin's closest co-workers in the July days, the October Revolution, the civil war, and the other work of the Soviet years. [Ibid., p. 267.]

Trotsky and Luxemburg, the revolutionists, were driven by the Russian revolution toward Bolshevism. Kautsky was driven by the same events away from Bolshe-

vism. That is the difference.

### Centrism an Obstacle to Revolution

The closer centrists—including left centrists—get to an actual revolution, the more they reveal their role as an obstacle to the proletariat. In 1939, Trotsky wrote:

Left centrism, especially under revolutionary conditions, is always ready to adopt in words the program of the socialist revolution. . . . But the fatal malady of centrism is not being capable of drawing courageous tactical and organizational conclusions from its general conceptions. [Leon Trotsky, *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), p. 343.]

"A centrist party is carried away by events and is drowned in them," Trotsky wrote (Ibid., p. 277).

From this point of view, the Castroists were just the *opposite* of centrists. They rejected the label of Marxism—or even socialism—while boldly moving ahead with revolutionary policies. They certainly weren't drowned by the Cuban revolution.

An example of a left-centrist group tested in a revolution was the Spanish POUM, which was formed in 1935 by a fusion of Trotskyists with a group that had broken from the Spanish Communist Party over the ultraleft policies of the "third period."

In one of his last articles, "The Class, the Party, and the Leadership," Trotsky said: "To the left of all the other parties in Spain stood the POUM. . . . But it was precisely this party that played a fatal role in the development of the Spanish revolution." Trotsky added that "a centrist party invariably acts as a brake upon the revolution, must each time smash its own head, and may bring about the collapse of the revolution" (Ibid., p. 363).

Was the Castroist current a brake on the Cuban revolution, an obstacle to the estab-



Centrist POUM played a "fatal role in the development of the Spanish revolution."

lishment of the workers state? On the contrary, the Castro leadership repeatedly called the masses into the streets, and mobilized them against imperialism and the Cuban capitalist class.

Trotsky, in a 1935 letter on the question of centrism, said:

You have observed very well that the people from the SAP [a German centrist party] . . . made quite radical speeches in which they advanced our principles quite passably, in order all the better to snap their fingers at these same principles when the time for the adoption of decisions came around. You remark very aptly that this is indeed classical centrism itself. [Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1934-45 (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), p. 201.]

Speaking of the British Independent Labour Party, Trotsky refers to the "vacillating elements, the so-called centrists" (Writings, 1935-36, p. 134). He points out the "countless vacillations to the right and to the left" of the Spanish "Left Communists" (*The Spanish Revolution*, p. 207).

Again, writing in 1937, he says, "The POUM's official position is shot through with ambivalence. It cannot be otherwise: ambivalence is the heart of centrism" (*The Spanish Revolution*, p. 260).

In the same article Trotsky characterizes the course of Andrés Nin, the POUM leader, as one that "permits him to avoid drawing practical conclusions from his radical arguments and to continue the policy of centrist vacillation" (Ibid., p. 261).

Later Trotsky writes of the POUM and "its halfway measures, its indecisiveness and evasiveness, in short . . . its centrism . . ." (Ibid., p. 318).

Susceptibility to opposing class pressures also results in the unstable and shortlived character of centrist groupings. They are invariably torn apart by big social crises, since at those times the conflicting pressures reach their most acute point.

In the United States, the Trotskyists fused with the centrist group around A.J. Muste in 1934, and within two years the Musteites had shattered. Some went over to the Stalinists, some dropped out of politics, and some came over to Trotskyism. Muste himself went back to the church.

Another example was the leftward-moving centrist tendency in the Socialist Party that participated in the formation of the American Socialist Workers Party in 1938. That centrist grouping began moving to the right again as imperialist pressure increased with the approach of World War II. In less than two years those who were not won to Trotskyism had left the SWP with Max Shachtman and James Burnham.

During the 1930s there were big centrist formations in Germany, Belgium, Britain, and Spain. They had far greater material resources and many more members than the Trotskyists, but none of them survived

World War II in any meaningful form.

Compare this record to that of the Castroists. Although the July 26 Movement certainly did split as the Cuban revolution deepened, the central core of leaders who fought with Castro in the Sierra Maestra has remained remarkably stable for nearly twenty-five years.

Of course, it is correct to argue that a

group can lack one or another of the "classical" attributes of centrism and still be centrist. But these characteristics should not be lightly tossed aside. They have been defined by decades of revolutionary experience. They are not secondary or peripheral features but, as Trotsky explained, the "very heart of centrism." They are the *concrete* manifestations of

centrism in the heat of the class struggle.

And in the case of Castroism, *not a single one* of these characteristics fits. On the contrary, the Fidelistas charted an uncompromising course. They never hesitated or vacillated, and when they encountered unforeseen obstacles, they led the workers and peasants in marching right over them.

### III. Is the Castro Leadership Today Bureaucratic Centrist?

Comrade Jones states: "It is not necessary here to enter into the discussion of whether the Castro leadership was always centrist in character" (p. 671, footnote 40). However, he doesn't explain why he thinks it is "not necessary" to deal with this question. Surely he would agree that in order to understand a complex phenomenon like Castroism it is necessary to look at its origin and development. And the fact that the Castroists led a socialist revolution ought at least to be taken into account.

Comrade Jones states: "The character of the Cuban leadership *cannot* be derived from the fact that it overthrew capitalism in a particular country . . ." (p. 668, col. 2). We don't dispute this point. Theoretically, there is no reason to rule out the possibility that, under certain extreme historical conditions, a centrist grouping could take power. We have already seen this with Stalinist formations. But this is totally beside the point. We have made, we think, a convincing case that the Castroists were a revolutionary, not a centrist, grouping when they led the Cuban workers and peasants to power. It is not a question of theoretical possibilities, but of historical facts.

The Fourth International's characterization of the Castro team as revolutionary was not an exercise in scholasticism. It was a political assessment integrally related to the tone and character of our *intervention*. It indicated an approach, a stance, by revolutionary politicians. It educated an entire generation of Trotskyist leaders. To be "agnostic" about this history, which was an important conquest for our movement, is not the mark of a serious proletarian revolutionist.

But let's put this question aside for the time being and, with Comrade Jones, examine the situation in Cuba today.

It is, of course, possible to hold the view that, in spite of the revolutionary character of the July 26 Movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s, once the Castroists were in power, at the head of the Cuban workers state with a growing state bureaucracy, a process of degeneration took place. This position is held by some in the Fourth International today.

As Comrade Jones correctly points out there is an example of the degeneration of a revolutionary leadership of a workers state: the Soviet Union. He rejects the idea that a bureaucratic *caste* exists in Cuba

today—a crystallized social formation that has institutionalized its privileges and consolidated its power to the point where a political revolution is needed to advance the interests of the working class. As a result, Comrade Jones narrows the analogy with the Soviet Union to the decade between 1923 and 1933—"a period of transition in which the leadership of the Soviet state was not revolutionary but where the slogan of political revolution was still not the correct one" (p. 671, col. 2).

We agree this is the only correct historical analogy to pursue in determining whether the Castro leadership is centrist today.

But, if we are to follow Trotsky's method, we must be concrete. The centrism of the Stalin faction in the period 1923-33 was a specific kind of centrism, what Trotsky called "bureaucratic centrism."

The emerging bureaucracy that was consolidating itself into a hardened caste in the Soviet workers state was centrist in the sense that it balanced between the pressure of the working class on one side and imperialism on the other, directing its blows against the workers while defending its social base, in its own way, against attempts at capitalist restoration.

It was also centrist in the political sense. Contrary to Comrade Jones, Stalin's center in those years was not "the leadership of the Soviet state." It was the dominant wing of the leadership. The Stalin faction balanced between the at times large left and right wings of the CP. Stalin's first target was the revolutionary left wing of the Bolshevik Party. But in time he was also compelled to suppress the right Bolsheviks. Stalin gained the allegiance of individual leaders from both right and left, and eventually murdered those who would not go along.

The revolutionary current was decisively defeated and exiled. Thus, it turned out that the bureaucratic centrist period was a stage in the degeneration of the Soviet Communist Party, giving way to Stalinist Bonapartism.

Trotsky explained, "As the bureaucracy becomes more independent, as more and more power is concentrated in the hands of a single person, the more does *bureaucratic centrism* turn into Bonapartism" ("The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism," in *Writings, 1934-35*, p. 180).

Stalinist Bonapartism still balances between the proletariat and world imperial-

ism, but the balancing act no longer results in the kind of zigzags that were evident during the period in which it was consolidating its power.

Trotsky said in 1937:

The interests of the Bonapartist bureaucracy can no longer be reconciled with centrist hesitation and vacillating. In search of reconciliation with the bourgeoisie, the Stalinist clique is capable of entering into alliance only with the most conservative groupings among the international labor aristocracy. This has acted to fix definitively the counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism on the international arena. [*The Spanish Revolution*, p. 311.]

#### What Are Its Social Roots?

Bureaucratic centrism is rooted in an emerging privileged bureaucracy, and represents the increasingly distinct interests of that bureaucracy. This distinguishes it from other kinds of centrism, which do not have an independent social foundation.

Trotsky developed this point in the section of "What Next?" subtitled "Centrism 'In General' and Centrism of the Stalinist Bureaucracy." Written in 1932, it sheds important light on the relationship between bureaucratic centrism and the rising bureaucratic caste. In it, Trotsky insists on basing the analysis of bureaucratic centrism on the material interests of the bureaucracy. He insisted that bureaucratic centrism could only be understood by asking: "What historical necessities does it meet? What are its social roots?" (*Struggle Against Fascism*, p. 209). Trotsky wrote:

Speaking formally and descriptively, centrism is composed of all those trends within the proletariat and on its periphery which are distributed between reformism and Marxism, and which most often represent various stages of evolution from reformism to Marxism—and vice versa. Both Marxism and reformism have a solid social support underlying them. Marxism expresses the historical interests of the proletariat. Reformism speaks for the privileged position of proletarian bureaucracy and aristocracy within the capitalist state. Centrism, as we have known it in the past, did not have and could not have an independent social foundation. . . .

Centrism within the workers' movement plays in a certain sense the same role as does petty-bourgeois ideology of all types in relation to bourgeois society as a whole. Centrism reflects the processes of the evolution of the proletariat, its political growth as well as its revolutionary setbacks conjoint with the pressure of all other classes of society upon the proletariat. No wonder that the palette of centrism is distinguished by such iridescence! From this it follows,



however, not that one must give up trying to comprehend centrism but simply that one must discover the true nature of a given variety of centrism by means of a concrete and historical analysis in every individual instance.

The ruling faction of the Comintern does not represent centrism "in general" but a quite definite historical form, which has its social roots, rather recent but powerful. First of all, the matter concerns the *Soviet bureaucracy*. In the writings of the Stalinist theoreticians this social stratum does not exist at all. We are only told of "Leninism," of disembodied leadership, of the ideological tradition, of the spirit of Bolshevism, of the imponderable "general line"; but we never hear a word about the functionary, breathing and living, in flesh and bone, who manipulates the general line like a fireman his hose.

In the meantime this same functionary bears the least resemblance to an incorporeal spirit. He eats and guzzles and procreates and grows himself a respectable potbelly. He lays down the law with a sonorous voice, handpicks from below people faithful to him, remains faithful to his superiors, prohibits others from criticizing himself, and sees in all this the gist of the general line. Of such functionaries there are a few million. A few million! Their number is greater than the number of industrial workers in the period of the October Revolution. The majority of these functionaries never participated in the class struggle, which is bound up with sacrifices, self-denials, and dangers. These people in their overwhelming mass began their political lives already in the category of a ruling layer. They are backed by the state power. It assures them their livelihood and raises them considerably above the surrounding masses. They know nothing of the dangers of unemployment, if they are gifted with the capacity to stand at attention. The grossest errors are forgiven them so long as they are ready to fulfill the role of the sacrificial scapegoat at the required moment, and thus remove the responsibility from the shoulders of their nearest superiors. Well, then, has this ruling stratum of many millions any social weight and political influence in the life of a country? Yes or no? [Ibid., pp. 210-13.]

This social foundation gave bureaucratic centrism quite different characteristics from other kinds of centrism.

Whereas in capitalist countries, the centrist groupings are most often temporary or transitional in character, reflecting the evolution of certain workers' strata to the right or to the left, under the conditions of the Soviet republic centrism is equipped with a much more solid and organized base in the shape of a multimillioned bureaucracy. [Ibid., p. 215.]

Such was the material foundation of bureaucratic centrism in the Soviet Union. And such was Trotsky's insistence on rooting his analysis of the Stalinist bureaucratic centrists in material reality, in looking at its social roots.

Unfortunately, Comrades Jones—who himself has written, as he reminds us in a footnote to his article, on "the decisive role of materialist criteria in judging the class character of a force"—does not follow Trotsky's method in applying the concept of centrism to the Cuban leadership today.

To be consistent with Trotsky's approach, Comrade Jones would have to argue that the Castroist leadership bases

itself on a developing privileged bureaucratic caste. He would have to show that—while it has not yet crystalized into a consistently counterrevolutionary caste that cannot be reformed but must be overthrown by political revolution—its policies represent the historical interests of this social layer and not those of the Cuban working class. Only then could the designation centrist, or to be precise, bureaucratic centrist, be applied to the Castro leadership today.

However, Comrade Jones makes no such case. To the contrary, in emphasizing the "mass popular support" for the regime, he seems to imply just the opposite: that the Cuban working class and poor peasantry remain the social base today of the Fidelista current.

### Does the 1923-33 Analogy Hold?

Let's zero in on the analogy between Cuba today and the Soviet Union in the years after 1923. In important respects the comparison is meaningful.

In Cuba, a tremendous revolutionary upsurge began in 1959. Mobilizations of the masses of workers and peasants swept capitalism aside, inaugurated a workers state, and defeated the imperialists' attempts—culminating in the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961 and the missile crisis in October 1962—to reverse the revolutionary victory.

But as the Cubans began to confront the problems of administering the economy, in the face of acute shortages and scarcity and under the pressure of the economic blockade imposed by imperialism, major problems of bureaucratism, based on material privilege, began to confront them.

As in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, a relatively large state bureaucracy grew up and exists in Cuba today. Many of its members enjoy certain material advantages and a significant number are inclined toward routinism and political conservatism.

As in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, divisions exist in the party and in the government in Cuba today. There is a right wing that fights for domestic and international policies that protect and strengthen the special privileges of sections of this bureaucracy. There is a left wing that bases itself on and fights to advance the historic interests of the toiling masses. And there is a centrist layer that wavers between them.

But while the analogy holds in many respects there is one crucial difference between Cuba today and the Soviet Union in the period we are talking about. *In the Soviet Union after 1923 the center, that is, the Stalin faction, was dominant. It defeated the revolutionary wing, absorbed the bulk of the right wing, and consolidated the bureaucracy's preeminence and power.*

*In Cuba, the left, the Castroist leadership, remains to this day the dominant*

*and decisive wing, preserving to itself the key policy decisions on domestic and foreign policy.*

That does not mean the Stalinist right wing has been smashed. In fact, it commands considerable power and exercises control over important aspects of state and party administration. Its influence is broadly felt in the political life of the country. This can be seen, for instance, in the Communist Party of Cuba, which is not identical with the Castroist leadership. The CPC incorporates, in its membership as well as its leadership, the revolutionary left wing, the right wing, and centrist forces. Organizationally, it does not function as a Leninist party. Polemics and organized debates between different tendencies are not presented to the entire membership of the party. For these reasons, we cannot consider the CPC as a party to be revolutionary in the sense that the Castroist current is.\*

*But in Cuba today, the right wing is not in the saddle.* It does not openly challenge the Castroist left wing, which enjoys to this day tremendous authority with the masses.

The right wing is compelled to go along with major policy decisions. These include such moves as the liberalization of internal cultural policies and the refusal to buy into détente, which would mean abandoning Cuba's revolutionary foreign policy, toning down Cuba's active support for the Puerto Rican independence struggle, and giving up the bold and aggressive use of internationalist forces to aid the anti-imperialist struggle in Africa in a way not paralleled by a workers state since the days when the Soviet Red Army was led by Lenin and Trotsky.

Is this conflict between the Castroist wing and the Stalinist right wing something new? The answer is no. In 1962 the Castroists and the Stalinists clashed sharply and the conflict burst into public. The dangers posed by privilege and bureaucracy were explained at the time by Fidel Castro himself, who not only threw the full weight of his prestige into the fight against bureaucratism, but mobilized the Castroist current for this fight and opened it up to any young revolutionary, no matter what political background she or he came from.

In a speech given in March 1962, Castro declared:

"No privileges should be forthcoming! War against privilege! War against all manifestations of weakness, against all self-seeking!" ("The Revolution Must Be a School of Unfettered Thought," in *Selected Speeches of Fidel Castro*, Education for Socialists [New York: Socialist Workers Party, 1979], p. 45).

\*Just as it is not accurate to equate the Castro current with the CPC, it is incorrect to equate the Castro leadership with every grouping in Latin America that considers itself Castroist. Some of these undoubtedly are centrist.

Shortly after that speech, the Castroists pulled the rug out from under Anibal Escalante and his chums, old-time Stalinist hacks who were building for themselves a bureaucratic machine in the newly formed ORI, the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (forerunner of today's Communist Party).

In a television speech to the entire country, Castro revealed what had been going on:

In every province the general secretary of the [Stalinist] PSP was made general secretary of the ORI; . . . in every municipality, the general secretary of the PSP was made general secretary of the ORI; in every nucleus, the general secretary—the member of the PSP—was made general secretary of the nucleus. Is that what you would call integration? Compañero Anibal Escalante is responsible for that policy. ["Against Bureaucracy and Sectarianism," in *Ibid.*, p. 68.]

With particular disgust, Castro recalled a recent visit to a factory. He found that the party cell there included the director, the director's secretary, and the director's brother-in-law.

We went there to exchange a few opinions with the members of the nucleus and out came the head of personnel, in a work center like that one, which is filled with workers dressed in sweat shirts and overalls smeared with grease, a head of personnel wearing a "cute" shirt with loud colors and a pair of white pants. And he was a member of the nucleus! What the blazes! They were completely separated from the masses. [*Ibid.*, p. 70.]

This confrontation with the problem and pressures from a privileged bureaucracy has been a constant fact of political life in Cuba. In March 1967, the newspaper *Granma*, in an editorial entitled "The Struggle Against Bureaucratism: A Decisive Task," said:

As long as the state exists as an institution and as long as organization, administration and policy are not all fully of a communist nature, the danger will continue to exist that a special stratum of citizens will form in the heart of the bureaucratic apparatus . . . which can convert bureaucratic posts into comfortable, stagnant or privileged positions.

In this conflict between the Castroist left wing and the Stalinist right wing, we have never been, and must not be neutral—or defeatist. The outcome of this prolonged battle for the soul of the Cuban revolution will have major ramifications for the world revolution. The stakes are high. Our strategic orientation today must be the same as it has always been: to support and strengthen the Castro wing against the Stalinists. We identify with and back the revolutionary wing against the counterrevolutionary forces and pressures and the centrist vacillators. It is only within this framework that we can effectively explain the differences we have with the Castro current and fight to win Cuban revolutionists to the program of the Fourth International.

As Jim Cannon stressed, *if we are to influence them*, we have to recognize the revolutionary leadership in Cuba and identify with it, in order "to act as a part of it, not as scholastic wisecracks standing outside the living movement."

#### What Is Happening in Cuba Today?

Is this assessment of the different currents in the Cuban leadership, and their relative weight, accurate? Let us examine what is actually going on in Cuba today and compare it to the course of events in the Soviet Union from 1923 to 1933. If the left wing were not still dominant in Cuba, if bureaucratic centrists—in whatever combination of vacillators and Stalinists—were in command, we would expect to see some parallels in the key areas. Instead, what we find are glaring contrasts.

First, let's recall what was happening in the Soviet Union during the years when the bureaucracy was consolidating its hold, when the bureaucratic-centrist wing, not the revolutionary wing, dominated major policy decisions and administration domestically and internationally.

A fierce, open faction fight was raging in the ranks of the party and state apparatus. Beginning in 1927, thousands of revolutionists were systematically imprisoned, exiled, and—in the case of Joffe, for example—driven to suicide. The country was run by a police regime that cultivated an atmosphere of fear. Even though a few courageous public protests occurred, "The party mass is terrorized," Trotsky wrote in July 1928. (*The Third International After*



POET HEBERTO PADILLA: His arrest in 1971 rightly drew wide criticism. There have been no further such incidents.

*Lenin* [New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970], p. 303.)

Rigorous censorship was increasingly imposed. The history of the Bolshevik Party and of the Russian revolution was systematically falsified.

Material privileges for the bureaucracy were expanding and being institutionalized by the ruling group. Special stores and rationing privileges were being established for state and party functionaries, along with access to special housing, schools, vacation resorts, and so on.

The gains made by the oppressed nationalities and women were being reversed. As early as 1922, Lenin was attacking Stalin for his bureaucratic chauvinism toward the oppressed nations of the Soviet Republic. There was an open revival of anti-Semitism as early as the mid-1920s. To justify the retreat from the Bolsheviks' goal of socializing the responsibilities of the family, the household drudgery of women was being glorified.

In the field of culture, the regime had already embarked on the road that led to the Stalinist straitjacket of socialist realism and the "party line" in art.

By the late 1920s, the dominant faction had initiated the forced collectivization of agriculture, which in the next few years would lead to the death of millions. This was a savage blow to the alliance between the workers and the poor peasants that the Soviet state was built on. It took decades for agriculture to recover.

How does this compare to what's happening today in Cuba, twenty years after the overthrow of Batista, seventeen years after Castro's 1962 appeal for "war" against privilege and bureaucracy?

Oppressed nationalities and women are generally among the first to feel the blows of reaction, but there is no evidence that these specially oppressed sectors are losing ground in Cuba. Even bourgeois observers are forced to admit this.

Joe Nicholson Jr., a reporter who spent six weeks in Cuba in 1973, said in his book, *Inside Cuba* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1974):

The Revolution's success in upgrading women's status has been phenomenal. Fifteen years ago, who would have believed ingrained social customs could be changed so rapidly any place in Latin America? No other Latin country has attempted it. . . . The Cuban government continues to combat pockets of resistance to the woman's new role—resistance that persists among some women as well as men. [p. 99.]

Nicholson says,

I had made a point during my first several weeks in Cuba to interview dozens of blacks because I had been incredulous about the Revolution's claim to have eliminated all racial discrimination. The blacks were virtually unanimous in saying racial discrimination was a thing of the past. [p. 107.]

Although Nicholson was highly critical of the treatment of homosexuals, he noted



that rather than getting more repressive, the atmosphere was improving.

An indication of the general climate in Cuba was the publication in 1978 of a book called *Contra Viento y Marea*. The book is composed of interviews with fifty young Cubans in the United States who describe how they came to identify with and support the revolution. Criticisms and questions on the treatment of women and gays are included, and some passages are obviously written with the 1971 arrest and persecution of the poet Heberto Padilla in mind.

Casa de las Americas, one of the most important Cuban publishing houses, not only printed, circulated, and promoted the book in Cuba, but also gave it a special prize!

Although the disgraceful Padilla affair was widely publicized at the time, and rightfully drew wide criticism—including from the Trotskyist movement—we should note that there have been no repetitions. A survey of the cultural scene in Cuba by Peter Winn—a professor at Columbia and Yale—was published in the June 10 *New York Times Book Review*. After interviewing dozens of Cuban poets and writers, including friends of Padilla, Winn's main conclusion was to stress the variety and vitality of literary art in Cuba today. A Cuban publishing house has just published a book of Padilla's translations of English poets.

"Indeed," *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent James Goodsell reported January 31, "there is much more freedom of expression these days in Havana than at anytime in this reporter's memory of the 20 years that Dr. Castro has been in power."

There is no indication that special stores, accessible only to Cuban bureaucrats, have been established. This is a striking contrast to the Soviet Union in the late 1920s.

And what about the political prisoners? Are there growing numbers imprisoned for their political ideas? In a bold political move, the Castro leadership has in the last year released virtually every political prisoner on the island. Even Amnesty International has conceded that there were no "prisoners of conscience" in Cuba. Political prisoners were all people convicted for counterrevolutionary acts. Nonetheless, the Cuban government has taken an action that has effectively rammed Carter's human-rights hypocrisy right down his throat.

What a contrast to the decade of retreat, reaction, and growing repression in the Soviet Union between 1923 and 1933, when the "Gulag Archipelago" was being constructed!

In contrast to the offensive of the ruling Stalinist faction against the revolutionary generation of 1917, in contrast to the reign of terror against the Left Opposition, including the expulsion of Trotsky in 1928,



No compulsion is used to get Cuban farmers to join cooperative and collective farms. Alliance of Cuban workers and peasants remains firm.

those who led the socialist revolution are not being driven out of power, as they must be if a political counterrevolution is to eventually triumph. Fidel Castro could accurately state in his speech on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the victory over Batista:

Our Revolution has always been characterized by its unbending steadfastness, its loyalty to principles and its deeply humane spirit. It has never devoured any of its sons and daughters, because there has been no cult of the personality, no gods thirsting for blood. [*Selected Speeches of Fidel Castro*, pp. 133-34.]

An extremely important indication of social relations is the question of the alliance between the proletariat and the poor peasantry, on which the workers state is based. In the Soviet Union, this alliance was severely weakened by Stalin's forced collectivizations. Nothing of this type has occurred in Cuba. Nothing. The alliance is as firm as ever, if not firmer. Agriculture is one of the key policy areas which the Castro wing keeps closely under its control.

An article in the June 1 *Christian Science Monitor* described how the Cubans encourage collectivization—"small farmers living outside the city who agreed to lease their land to the state, leave their thatched cabins, and join collective farms were given refrigerators and color televisions when they moved into furnished apartments or duplexes."

#### 'Socialism in one country?'

One of the very first signs of the defeat of the revolutionary wing of the Bolshevik

Party and the domination of foreign policy by the bureaucratic centrists was the retreat from revolutionary internationalism. Stalin formulated his theory of "socialism in one country" in 1924.

Have we seen any such retreat by the Castroist current in Cuba?

Peter Osnos, the foreign editor of the *Washington Post* and its former Moscow correspondent, described the view he got of Cuban foreign policy during a recent trip to Cuba in a March 11 article. Osnos said:

Perhaps the most significant difference between Cuba and its Soviet bloc allies that I sensed is ideological zeal—the impulse that assures popular support for shipping thousands of troops off to Africa (Havana teen-agers wear T-shirts with pictures of Angola's Agostinho Neto) and tolerance of serious shortages in consumer goods.

Cubans are proud that they are able to send doctors and teachers, as well as soldiers, to Angola and Ethiopia—even if that means, as it does, sacrifices in their own development. There is a messianic quality to this, underwritten by Castro's exhortations. . . .

Cuba is by no means democratic in the sense that we regard the term. Yet there is an almost palpable atmosphere of public participation in matters great and small. . . .

Take the mobilizing of support for Vietnam against China. In his speech and other statement, Castro skillfully blended Hanoi's victory over the United States with his own long defiance of *Yanquis* and the new *Yanqui* courtship of China into an argument that made the interests of Cuba and distant Vietnam seem parallel. . . .

"We have shed our blood in Angola and Ethiopia," a banner at the Havana rally said.

"We are prepared to do so in Vietnam." The record shows that on this score, Cubans mean what they say.

If Cuba today were in the midst of spreading reaction, experiencing the process of the consolidation of the dominant political hold of a privileged bureaucratic social layer within the state and party apparatus, wouldn't we see a widespread increase in social tension, tightening repression, growing intolerance of cultural freedom, purges and expulsions in the party—especially on the left—a turning inward, loss of faith in the possibility of extension of the revolution, depoliticization of the working class, qualitative widening of the gap between the privileged layers and the rest of the population, an increase in antagonism between Blacks and whites, forced retreat for women, increased oppression of youth—and more?

But we see no such thing. And Comrade Jones makes no attempt to provide evidence of any such developments.

#### Maybe It's a Left Turn

It might be argued that although things are not moving to the right in Cuba—there may even be a loosening up domestically and a reversal of some of the negative developments that occurred earlier around the time of the Padilla persecution—and although Cuba's foreign policy, especially in its confrontation with imperialism in Africa, may even be closer to a revolutionary line than in the past, nonetheless these trends are totally consistent with the domination of a centrist bureaucracy. After all, as Trotsky explained, bureaucratic centrism was marked by zigzags, including left turns.

Might not the current phase of the Castroist leadership be a left turn comparable to the "left turn" Stalin began in 1928?

This argument overlooks the fact that the ultraleft course of the so-called "Third Period" was in no way a move toward proletarian internationalism. It was a move *away* from it. It wasn't any "better" than the opportunist period of 1924-27, nor was it preferable to the Popular Front line that replaced it by 1935.

"Third Period" ultraleftism was marked by an insanely sectarian and adventurist line for the CPs abroad, including a policy of splitting the union movement and building "red" trade unions; characterizing workers in the Social Democratic parties as "social fascists" with whom no united front was possible, thus paving the way for the victory of Hitler; and physically attacking other currents in the workers movement. In the Soviet Union itself it was marked by the terror of the forced collectivization of agriculture and an escalation of the police-state methods of the Stalin faction.

The "Third Period" did *not* include a greater cultural diversity, increased political debate in the Soviet working class,

heightened international consciousness, or anything like it. In fact, the "Third Period," like other sharp policy reversals, appeared inconsistent and irrational. Each was actually a necessary part of the consolidation of the monolithic power of the Stalinist bureaucracy. As Trotsky explained in *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970):

From the point of view of socialist forms of society, the policy of the bureaucracy is striking in its contradictions and inconsistencies. But the same policy appears very consistent from the standpoint of strengthening the power of the new commanding stratum.

The state support of the kulak (1923-28) contained a mortal danger for the socialist future. But then, with the help of the petty bourgeoisie the bureaucracy succeeded in binding the proletarian vanguard hand and foot, and suppressing the Bolshevik Opposition. This "mistake" from the point of view of socialism was a pure gain from the point of view of the bureaucracy. When the kulak began directly to threaten the bureaucracy itself, it turned its weapons against the kulak. The panic of aggression against the kulak, spreading also to the middle peasant, was no less costly to the economy than a foreign invasion. But the bureaucracy had defended its positions. [p. 273.]

## IV. Cuba's Policy in Africa

Comrade Jones bases his case for the bureaucratic-centrist character of the Castro leadership on its political positions internationally. In fact, he argues that this is the only valid criterion:

*The class struggle by its nature is international. Therefore the criteria for determining the character of a current are also international. . . . in relation to the question of the Cuban leadership, the fact that a current can take power on a national terrain does not make it revolutionary on a world scale and, like all characterizations, the nature of the Cuban leadership cannot be determined solely from its orientation on the terrain of Cuba itself but only from its positions on the most fundamental issues of world politics.* [Emphasis in original, pp. 667-68.]

Perhaps this confused idea is why Comrade Jones makes no attempt to examine what is happening in Cuba today. He disregards the fact that foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy, not vice versa.

More importantly, however, he seems to be arguing that only those with a consistently revolutionary line on all fundamental questions of world politics can be considered revolutionaries. Such a definition would effectively negate his earlier agreement that there are revolutionary currents that are not Leninist.

Certainly no one but the Fourth International even comes close to a consistently revolutionary line on all questions of the international class struggle. And if that is the criterion, there are no revolutionaries outside the Fourth International.

We prefer Jim Cannon's approach. Those who *lead* the workers of their own country to "take power on a national

This was the roots and character of the left and right turns of the bureaucratic centrists—it is not of the Castro leadership.

Is there anything at all about the social foundation, policies, or evolution of the Castro current that points in the direction that the Soviet bureaucratic centrists were moving between 1923 and 1933? We see no such thing.

The problems and deformations of bureaucratic developments exist. But the revolutionary wing that led the Cuban workers to power remains dominant in the key areas of foreign and domestic policy. And that remains decisive for us in assessing our attitude to the Cuban leadership today.

There is the possibility of degeneration of these revolutionaries, especially if the extension of the socialist revolution is held off, imperialism is strengthened, and if Leninists are not capable over time of acting in such a way to gain the confidence of and influence the Cuban revolutionaries. But that possibility is not the fact today.

terrain"—there is no other way to take power—should be recognized as revolutionaries, even if their program might be inadequate, and they fall short of Leninism in practice.

But let's examine Comrade Jones's case against the Castro leadership's policies internationally.

He argues that the role of Cuba in Angola and Ethiopia does not provide evidence of the revolutionary character of the Castro leadership. To the contrary, he states, it demonstrates that the Cuban "policy is *not* to overthrow capitalism and establish workers states but to build and sustain left-bourgeois regimes that will, objectively, finally collide with and oppose the working class and the construction of workers states" (p. 670, col. 1).

Referring to the key role of Cuban forces in driving back the South African invasion of Angola, Comrade Jones says, "We totally support and hail that military intervention . . ." (p. 669, col. 2).

But he states,

Once the military victory was achieved, however, the Cubans took no steps whatever—quite the reverse—to encourage the overthrow of capitalism in Angola. And this is no academic point when, with the prestige of their intervention and their great military weight, there is no doubt that a Cuban call for the overthrow of bourgeois rule in Angola would have had every chance of succeeding. [Ibid.]

Comrade Jones is correct in criticizing Castro's political endorsement of the Neto regime in Angola. As they have done in other cases, the Castro leadership fails to note any contradiction between those anti-imperialist policies and social programs



that all revolutionists would support, and the anti-working class character of the bourgeois regime in Angola. But Comrade Jones's idea of what the Cubans could—and should—do to help advance the class struggle in Angola must be more carefully considered.

By driving back the South African invasion of Angola the Cubans brought decisive aid to the toiling masses of Angola. They helped establish a framework in which the workers movement can develop on more advantageous terms than if it had to contend with an imperialist-imposed regime. Moreover, the Cubans helped to move forward the liberation struggle throughout southern Africa by stopping the South African imperialists. The defeat of the imperialist army in Angola was one of the inspirations for the Soweto uprisings.

But Jones seems to hold the mistaken view that the South African imperialist threat is no longer a pressing concern for Angola. This does not square with the facts.

The June 1979 issue of *Southern Africa* magazine reported:

... throughout this spring South African forces have been particularly active along the Namibian border. . . . Through the first half of March alone, the Angolan Defense Ministry reported 70 South African flights over Angolan air space, 13 regions bombed, 132 tons of bombs dropped, 12 dead, and 30 injured. . . .

And since then the South African raids have not abated. "The war with South Africa never ended," said Defense Minister Iko Carreira recently.

Working closely with the South African military is the formerly anti-imperialist National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi claimed in a June 18 interview in *Time* magazine that the "intention of the Cubans is to control the border with Namibia so that they can help SWAPO [the South West Africa People's Organisation—the liberation movement fighting South African control of Namibia]."

Savimbi bragged, "Today they [the Cubans] fear to come into this area. We control most of the south."

Although Savimbi's claims are doubtless inflated, UNITA actions, combined with continuing South African and Rhodesian raids, represent a continuing threat to the Angolan workers and peasants.

From this point of view, the continued Cuban military role in Angola is progressive and the Trotskyist movement should support it wholeheartedly. Furthermore, the Cuban forces in Angola are also aiding the liberation struggles in Zimbabwe and Namibia, giving training and other assistance to fighters from those countries.

Along with military aid against imperialism, the Cubans have sent teachers, doctors, agricultural experts, technicians, construction workers, and others to help the workers and peasants of Angola over-



South African troops on maneuvers near the Angolan border.

come the legacy of colonialism and the destruction left behind by the South African invasion.

*Wouldn't any revolutionary government do exactly the same thing?*

Would it be a more revolutionary policy to refuse material aid to a beleaguered former colony such as Angola because the workers and peasants had not yet conquered power? By extending this aid, are the Cubans taking responsibility for the policies of the Neto government? Should they cut off that aid? Is that what the Fourth International should be advocating?

By their unselfish help to Angola and other countries that are trying to overcome the legacy of colonialism and continuing imperialist domination, the Cubans are strengthening the anti-imperialist forces. Even with Cuba's own extremely limited material resources, their revolutionary aid has made a decided difference in countries like Angola and Ethiopia.

But this aid is more than material solidarity, it is bold political action. The Cubans *give* their aid, they don't sell it to be repaid at interest, or to be paid for with political concessions. This constitutes a clear, though implicit, contrast to the "aid" given by countries with vastly more extensive resources. Isn't it in striking contrast to the policy followed by the Kremlin—a policy the Cubans are familiar with from bitter personal experience? Isn't it in striking contrast to the policy followed by the imperialist countries, who talk of "human rights" while they continue to pillage and rape the colonial and semicolonial world?

We are, as we have seen, in agreement with Comrade Jones that the Cubans are wrong in so far as they lend their *political* endorsement to the Neto regime, which is

the class enemy of the Angolan workers and peasants. The Cuban leaders do not make the necessary distinction between the policy the Cuban government follows toward Angola's government (maintaining relations and extending material aid) and the policy that ought to be followed by the Cuban Communist Party (explaining to the Angolan workers and peasants that only by taking the Cuban road and overthrowing capitalism can they guarantee the defeat of imperialism and the advance of their own revolution).

However, we are in complete *disagreement* with the policy Comrade Jones seems to be recommending to the Cubans.

He states that "with the prestige of their intervention and their great military weight, there is no doubt that a Cuban call for the overthrow of bourgeois rule in Angola would have had every chance of succeeding" (p. 669, col. 2).

Should the Cuban forces in Angola try to organize and lead the overthrow of the Neto regime? This seems to be what Comrade Jones is suggesting. Such a policy, or anything approaching it, would be an unmitigated, ultraleft adventure. Who would the Cubans replace Neto with? It is the Angolan workers and peasants who must overthrow capitalism in Angola—not the Cubans. Were the Cubans, with "their great military weight," to try to substitute for that force, it would be a total disaster. For the Fourth International to call on them to do so would be wild adventurism that could only isolate the Trotskyist movement from any serious working class forces in Angola as well as in Cuba.

#### Cuba and Eritrea

Although Comrade Jones argues that a "particularly clear case" of Castro's centrism is Cuba's policy in Angola, he

spends more time on the question of Eritrea. He highly recommends Comrade Richard Carver's analysis of events in Eritrea and bases his own account on an article by Carver entitled "Eritrea—the Guilty and the Silent" (reprinted in *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, July 2, p. 671).

Before turning to Carver's article, let's look at the key paragraph in Comrade Jones's indictment of the Cuban policy in Eritrea. He says:

The role played by the Cubans here has been to fall in behind the war waged by the Mengistu leadership of the Dergue. Far from having "sharply differentiated themselves from the all-out support offered by the Kremlin to the Dergue's war," the Cubans are in fact a key cornerstone of that war effort. [P. 669, col. 1.]

Comrade Jones goes on in the same paragraph to list several reasons why he thinks the Cubans have fallen in behind the Dergue's war in Eritrea, and why they "are in fact a key cornerstone of that war effort."

He argues first, "Without the Cuban military training, weapons, and support work, the Ethiopian forces would be totally unable to undertake their offensive."

Cuban military aid to Ethiopia began in a substantial way in December 1977. By March 1978, these Cuban forces had helped defeat the imperialist-backed invasion of the Somalian army. That invasion was aimed at weakening and rolling back the Ethiopian revolution, which was driven forward by one of the deepest and most far-reaching mass mobilizations ever in Black Africa. Without "Cuban military training, weapons, and support work," it is possible that the imperialist-backed forces would have been successful in replacing the Dergue with a pro-imperialist regime. This would have helped neither the Ethiopian workers and peasants, the Eritrean workers and peasants, nor the Somalian workers and peasants.

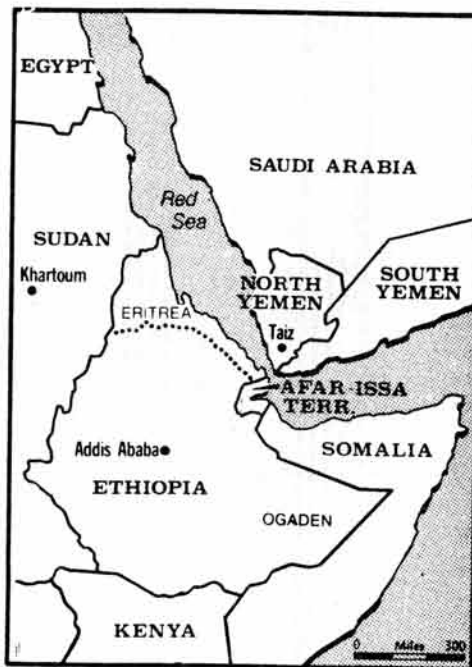
The fact that the Cubans helped Ethiopia beat back an imperialist-inspired attack is to their credit. And in Ethiopia, as in Angola, the imperialist threat is a continuing one.

Reading Comrade Jones's article, one would never know that a vast social revolution had occurred in Ethiopia in the last five years, a development imperialism is not favorably disposed toward. Nor would one have any idea why Cuban troops were sent to Ethiopia in the first place.

Does he agree that the Cubans played a progressive role in helping to drive back the Somalian army?

Does he agree that the character and scope of the Ethiopian revolution must be the starting point for understanding the class forces in motion throughout the region? Does he agree that imperialist pressure against the Ethiopian revolution is continuing and that the Cubans are right to support Ethiopia against these imperialist-inspired threats?

If he does agree with these points, then



Comrade Jones cannot logically complain about "military training, weapons, and support work" provided by Cuba to the Ethiopian armed forces. If he does not agree, he should say so explicitly and explain his reasons.

In any case, the Cubans have repeatedly stated that their internationalist aid to Ethiopia is designed to counter such imperialist attacks and is not directed against the Eritrean national liberation forces.

Speaking at the University of Chicago December 2, 1978, Raul Roa-Kouri, Cuba's permanent representative to the United Nations, declared that the Eritrean question was "separate from the Ogaden completely," and that Cuban military personnel "have not and will not" participate in the conflict.

Does Comrade Jones propose that the Cubans should have withheld their military aid in the war against the Somalian invasion on the grounds that, because of that aid, the Dergue might have been able to shift more supplies and troops to the Eritrean battlefields? Does Comrade Jones think that, as some have argued, the Cubans are complicit in the slaughter of Eritreans because they defended, arms in hand, the Ethiopian revolution against the invasion by the Siad Barre regime? *If they followed such sectarian reasoning, the Cubans would be compelled to stand aside from every struggle against imperialism not under the leadership of revolutionary-Marxist forces.* Fortunately, they do not follow such an ultraleft abstentionist policy.

However, Comrade Jones does not rest his whole case on this guilt-by-association indictment. He also seeks to produce "the smoking gun." But this is a total frameup. He states:

Furthermore, although even if they were nowhere near the front line Cuban agreement

would still be indispensable for the war, reports indicate that Cuban units and advisers are directly participating in the fighting—in particular in the specialized forces such as the air force and artillery. [P. 669, col. 1.]

Two points should be taken up here. First is Comrade Jones's claim that Cuban agreement is indispensable for the Dergue to carry out its war in Eritrea.

What is the basis for such a claim? The Dergue was fighting in Eritrea before any Cubans were in Ethiopia at all. It does not follow orders from Havana.

#### A Question of Fact

Second is the question of fact. Comrade Jones says nothing about the specific "reports" he is relying on. In a footnote, he recommends the article by Richard Carver for further documentation.

In his entire article, Comrade Carver offers only *two* specific sources for the charge that Cuban troops took part in the Ethiopian military campaign against the Eritrean liberation struggle.

Carver's first source is statements by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front: "EPLF communiques repeatedly point to Soviet and Cuban officering as the explanation" for Ethiopian gains in the war.

What Carver neglects to mention is that statements from other Eritrean liberation sources have contradicted the charges levelled against Cuba by the EPLF spokespeople. The Eritrean Liberation Front, the other main group in Eritrea, has frequently *denied* that Cubans were involved in the fighting against them.

Even the statements by EPLF representatives have been inconsistent. At times they have claimed Cuban involvement in the fighting, at times said nothing about Cubans, and at times admitted that there was *no evidence* of a direct Cuban role.

One of the few journalists to have actually been in Eritrea and toured the battle areas with the EPLF is Dan Connell, a Reuters correspondent whom Carver cites. He is a supporter of the EPLF and also writes for the U.S. radical weekly, the *Guardian*. In a major series on the Eritrean war in that paper, Connell pointedly did not charge that the Cubans were involved in the war there.

The wisdom of uncritically accepting "facts" reported by the EPLF in the war may be judged by Carver's report that "the EPLF also says Soviet warships have been bombarding the coastline and landing troops and supplies." Really? A Soviet naval bombardment in the Red Sea? And no one said anything but the EPLF? Washington did not even make a diplomatic protest over this first Soviet naval bombardment of an African country? This is a patent absurdity.

Carver's second source is refugee accounts. He says:

Many refugees report the presence of Cuban troops operating the Ethiopian artillery and



flying their MIG-19s, 21s, and 23s. One of them told Dan Connell of Reuters:

"We saw white men with the Ethiopians. Most of them were Cubans. . . . I saw them firing. The Ethiopian militia was in front, and the whites were behind them firing the big weapons which were on heavy trucks."

How this eyewitness was able to tell that "the whites" behind the Ethiopian militia were Cuban is unclear. Did this witness overhear them speaking Spanish? Were they carrying pictures of Ché Guevara? Smoking Havana cigars?

Were Afro-Cubans excluded and only "white" Cubans included?

Even Carver has to concede that such "reports are not definitive proof." But they are not corroborated by even a single bit of solid evidence. The fact is that no such evidence exists. No captured Cubans. No photographs, no bodies, no nothing.

Yet even all this does not prevent Comrade Jones from basing his factual case entirely on these "reports." It is nothing but a rotten frame-up.

Even the U.S. State Department had to admit on November 30, 1978—after the most recent massive Ethiopian military offensive against the Eritrean liberation forces had already begun—that it had no evidence the Cubans were involved in the Eritrean fighting.

The Cubans themselves have, as previously noted, repeatedly denied any military involvement in Eritrea. Their general policy has been to openly take credit for such interventions where they are real—in Angola, in the Ogaden, and elsewhere.

Lacking any substantial evidence that the Cubans are lying about their policy in regards to Eritrea, we have no reason to support the accusations against them. It is more likely that the charges are false. The wisdom of this approach is indicated by the fact that in late 1977 the White House approved a covert CIA program to dis-



Vrij Nederland

Eritrean fighter guards captured Ethiopian troops. There is no evidence that Cubans have been involved in Eritrean fighting.

credit the Cubans on the question of Eritrea. It had the direct blessing of Carter and of his Special Coordinating Committee, a cabinet-level body headed by National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski that oversees clandestine operations.

Citing "well-placed sources," *New York Times* correspondent Seymour Hersh revealed three of these programs in a report in the June 1, 1978, edition. Two of the operations involved sending clandestine radio and other communications gear to the Egyptian and Sudanese governments.

"In addition," Hersh continued, "the C.I.A. organized an *anti-Cuban propaganda operation* during intensified fighting between Ethiopia and insurgents in Eritrea. . . ." (emphasis added.)

Could that be one of the sources of the strangely persistent reports in the bourgeois press of Cuban military involvement against the Eritreans? Everything points in that direction.

#### Cuba and the Dergue

Comrade Jones's final argument on Eritrea is that since the Cubans lend political credence to the Dergue in general, therefore they must take responsibility for its policy in Eritrea. As he puts it, "on the key question of political support to the major policies of the Ethiopian regime, the Cuban press is full of constant declarations of the revolutionary character of the leadership of Mengistu and the Dergue" (p. 669, col. 1).

Pointing to the fact that the Cuban leadership opposes the right of Eritrea to declare its independence from Ethiopia, Comrade Jones says, "Once the secession of Eritrea is rejected, then in fact the kind of ferocious counterrevolutionary war that is taking place was inevitable" (p. 669 col. 1).

In other words, no matter what the Cubans actually say and do in relation to the Eritrean struggle, so long as they refuse to support secession, they bear moral and political responsibility for the genocidal war. This makes no sense, logically or politically.

The Cuban line on Eritrea is dead

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wrong. They do not support the right of the Eritrean people to establish their own independent state. The Fourth International has repeatedly pointed out why this stance endangers not only the Ethiopian revolution but poses an obstacle to the defense and advancement of the Cuban revolution too. However, nothing is gained by painting the Cuban line as *worse* than it actually is, or insisting that their line is the same as the Dergue's or Brezhnev's, which it is not.

The inescapable fact is that whatever the errors of their line, the *political* attitude of the Cubans toward the struggle in Eritrea has *differed* sharply from that of both Moscow and the Dergue. In contrast to their role in fighting off the Somali invasion, the Cubans have consistently avoided falling in behind the Dergue's reactionary drive in Eritrea. They have repeatedly insisted that a political solution to the conflict is in order, not a military one.

Cuban Vice-president Carlos Rafael Rodríguez summarized this stand late in 1978 when he said, "We helped the Eritreans in their fight for self-determination from the time of Haile Selassie onward. We feel there has to be some political solution to the Eritrean problem and there have to be talks between Eritreans and the central government."

Raul Roa-Kouri, in the speech cited above, stated that "the solution is not separation, but a non-military, political solution respecting Eritrean nationality and autonomy within the larger Ethiopian revolutionary state." Referring to the Eritreans, he claimed that "elements of the national liberation movement support the Cuban position."

While *Pravda* effusively hailed the Dergue's military advances in Eritrea, *Granma*, the newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party said *not a single word about them*.

What is involved here is not a penny-ante difference. A shooting war is going on. Both Moscow and the Dergue put heavy pressure on the Cubans to back the war. The Cubans have refused.

#### A 'Convergence' with Moscow?

The Cuban workers state, led by the Castro current that continues to be based on the workers and peasants of that country, has a consistently anti-imperialist foreign policy. The Soviet workers state is led by a regime that is based on the privileged bureaucratic caste of the USSR and is the enemy of the Soviet workers and peasants. It does not have an anti-imperialist foreign policy. To the contrary, unlike Havana, Moscow subordinates everything to seeking accommodation with and protection from, imperialism. The difference is as simple as that.

Does the policy of the Castro leadership at times converge with the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy? Yes, at times it does.

Both Havana and Moscow favored Ethiopia in its war with Somalia. They both supported Angola in its war with South Africa. And there are other examples. But this convergence of interests doesn't prove that Cuba's line is the same as that of the Kremlin.

After all, doesn't our line at times converge with the interests of Moscow? Didn't we also support Angola against the South African imperialist invasion?

Didn't we have a "convergence" with Moscow in Vietnam, where we both backed the Vietnamese side in the war against American imperialism? And don't we also have a "convergence" with Moscow in defending the Soviet Union itself against imperialism—albeit with different methods? Does the fact that we defend the Soviet Union against imperialism make us closet-Stalinists ourselves?

No, the "convergence" doesn't prove anything except that the Soviet bureau-

## V. What Is at Stake?

When serious disputes erupt on questions of terminology, political factors are always involved. These don't always reflect fundamental differences, but they invariably are rooted in disagreements over how to approach and intervene in political developments.

That is what is involved in the discussion over whether we should now, after nearly two decades, abandon our recognition of the Castro leadership as revolutionary, though not Leninist, and decide to label it "centrist."

If we were to adopt the approach proposed by Comrade Jones we would call the Castroists "bureaucratic centrists." It would be possible, of course, to add some adjectives to qualify this label. We might call them "left bureaucratic centrists." It might even be suggested that Castroism is bureaucratic centrism *sui generis*. But nothing fundamental would be changed by such refinements.

By adopting this terminology we would be invoking the historical parallel of the defeat of the revolutionary wing of the Bolshevik Party by the bureaucratic centrists and their domination of the policies of the Soviet workers state in the period from 1923 to 1933. We would be saying that the role of the Castroist leadership today is equivalent politically to the role played by the Stalin faction, at least in the 1920s.

What would this mean politically? We would have to adopt a stance parallel to the approach of the Left Opposition in the 1920s. We would abandon our policy of consistently seeking to strengthen the Castroist wing against the Stalinists in Cuba, and within that framework present our Leninist program. That would no longer be our axis.

Instead, the axis of our analysis, our

cracy remains the ruling caste in a workers state at constant war with imperialism, despite the Kremlin's futile efforts to seek permanent accommodation through détente.

Because the Cubans do not have a Leninist program, they make mistakes—sometimes bad ones. But it would be a suicidal error for the Fourth International to miss the internationalist, anti-imperialist, revolutionary *axis* of Cuba's foreign policy.

As Castro said in his speech on the twentieth anniversary of the revolution,

Of course we won't bow our heads—in this hemisphere, in Africa or anywhere else in the world.

The United States insists on maintaining its criminal blockade as an instrument for exerting pressure on and expressing its demands with regard to Cuba, but Cuba can't be pressured or intimidated or bribed or bought. Cuba isn't China or Egypt. [*Selected Speeches*, p. 132.]

writing and speaking, our intervention would be one of trying to expose the betrayals of the revolution by Castro and his bureaucratic faction as they zig-zag along. And even when we support a concrete action they take, we would warn insistently that the general line along which the ruling Castroist wing is advancing constitutes a deadly threat to the Cuban revolution and to the interests of the toilers in Cuba and around the world. We would follow this policy inside of Cuba as well as internationally.

Would such a line attract forces to the banner of the Fourth International in Cuba? We believe it would—but *what kind of forces*? They would be *sectarian opponents* of the revolution, not proletarian fighters.

Such a step would set the entire Fourth International on a sectarian course that would head toward destroying our revolutionary fiber. It would place us in opposition to the one revolutionary leadership in power in the world, whatever its deficiencies, mistakes, and wrong policies. It would prevent us from *affecting* the course of events in Cuba in the most positive way, as part of the revolutionary current in opposition to the Stalinist right wing. It would reverse the course our world movement has always followed in approaching the Castroists, Malcolm X, and other revolutionary forces outside the Fourth International.

Worst of all, if we couldn't recognize a revolutionary leadership when we saw one we would be incapable of *practicing*—as opposed to merely talking about—the art of revolutionary politics. If not corrected, this step would lead us toward the "scholastic wiseacres" and sterile sectarians that Jim Cannon warned against.

July 26, 1979