

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 29, July 22, 1978

Present: Blackstock, Britton, Clark, Dixon, Garza, Hawkins,  
D. Jenness, L. Jenness, Kramer, LaMont, Levine,  
Lovell, Morell, Petrin, Reid, Rodríguez, Seigle,  
Stone, Waters

Guests: Barnes, Lund, Prince

Chair: Seigle

AGENDA: 1. Current Stage of the Black Liberation Struggle  
and Our Tasks  
2. Women's Liberation Work Perspectives  
3. Wohlforth Correspondence  
4. Fall Circulation Campaign  
5. Party Geographic Expansion  
6. Party Theoretical Magazine

1. CURRENT STAGE OF THE BLACK LIBERATION STRUGGLE AND OUR TASKS  
(Harris, Hart, Musa, and Sedwick invited for this point.)

Dixon reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the general line of the report for  
presentation to the plenum.

Carried.

2. WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORK PERSPECTIVES  
(Gallo, Sedwick, and Wang invited for this point.)

Reid reported.

Discussion

Motion: To approve general line for presentation at  
Oberlin Women's Liberation Work Fraction meeting.

Carried.

3. WOHLFORTH CORRESPONDENCE  
(Frankel and Hansen invited for this point.)

Seigle reported on proposed reply to Wohlforth letter.  
(See attached.)

Discussion

(over)

Motion: To approve proposed letter to Wohlforth.

Against: Kramer, Levine (See attached statement.)

For: All others

Carried.

(Breitman, who could not be present at the meeting, requested he be recorded as voting in favor of the motion.)

#### 4. FALL CIRCULATION CAMPAIGN

(Baron and McArthur invited for this point.)

Blackstock reported.

#### Discussion

Motion: To conduct a fall drive to sell 100,000 copies of the Militant and Perspectiva Mundial between September 1 and December 15. Beginning with sales of the Militant printed September 21, each branch will be aiming to meet a weekly local sales quota for each publication. In addition to single issue sales, each introductory subscription will count for 10 toward the 100,000 goal.

Carried.

#### 5. PARTY GEOGRAPHIC EXPANSION

Britton reported on proposals for party expansion in the coming year on the Iron Range, in Gary, Indiana, and Birmingham, Alabama.

#### Discussion

Motion: To approve for inclusion in report to plenum on Assessment of First Stage of Party's Turn Into Industry.

Carried.

#### 6. THEORETICAL MAGAZINE

Waters reported on perspective of relaunching a party theoretical magazine within the coming year, as soon as financial and personnel needs can be met. The perspective would be for a quarterly magazine, edited out of the National Office.

#### Discussion

Motion: To approve.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.

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Political Committee:

Dear Comrades,

I wish to express my opposition, as a member of the National Committee, to the change in line on Africa recently voted upon by the majority of the Political Committee and expressed in David Frankel's Militant article "Behind Washington's Threats Against Africa & Cuba" ( July 7, 1978).

This new position of the Political Committee brings into question our principled position on the right to self determination as it applies to Africa. For this reason a National Committee discussion is now in order. If the National Committee does not reverse the Political Committee's position, then a National Convention decision will be needed.

This new position on Africa is clearly based on a theoretical position on the nature of Cuba today. This position, that Cuba is a workers state still lacking a hardened bureaucratic caste, has now been put forward in an authoritative fashion by Joseph Hansen in "The Dispute Over Cuba's Role in Africa" (June 26, 1978 Intercontinental Press). However, this position has yet to be discussed or voted upon by the Political Committee or any other party body. It is regrettable that the Political Committee has seen fit to change our line in Africa on the basis of a theoretical position--in dispute within the leadership--which has yet to be voted upon. Clearly a more proper position would be to discuss the fundamental question and then proceeded to secondary expressions of this fundamental question as related to Africa and elsewhere. This was the way in which Comrade Trotsky and Comrade Cannon sought to guide the discussion in 1940.

It is first necessary to restate our basic position on Africa and self-determination. The present African nations are the result of the imperialist carve up of Africa. Because of this in almost every national state there exists oppressed nations. We are not partisans of any existing African state structure and apply the right of self determination in Africa quite independently of the various boundaries. We do not take sides in boundary disputes or even wars between the dependent Black African states. We defend all these states, despite their capitalist nature and leadership against imperialism. Our only exception is the white settler states of Southern Africa which are imperialist in their own right. We support unconditionally the struggle of the Black masses within these states against the states as well as defend the Black African nations from their encroachment.

Our overall goal in Africa is a United Socialist States of Africa or regions thereof, the boundaries of such states to be determined democratically by the people themselves.

Ethiopia fits within this framework with its own peculiarities. Modern Ethiopia (if that term can be used) is a capitalist state with many feudal hangovers created out of any old feudal empire with the cooperation of imperialism. It has been dominated for

centuries by an Aramaic Coptic Christian minority which has oppressed peoples of other religious and national characteristics. The recent army coup has not changed this as the officer corps represents simply another layer of this ruling minority.

Eritrea is an interesting example. While originally a feudal holding of the Coptic Christians, it was ruled since the late 19th Century by Italy. During World War II it was occupied and administered by Great Britain. After the war it was turned over to Haile Selassie, a submissive imperialist tool. At no time were the wishes of the Eritreans considered. A similar case could be made in relation to the Somalian peoples of the Ogaden.

Next we must consider the general policy of the Soviet Union and its allies in Africa. The USSR, proceeding on the basis of the theory of socialism in one country, has sought to counterbalance military pressure from imperialism, by encouraging semi-colonial bourgeois countries in Africa and elsewhere to take a degree of independence from the U.S. through acceptance of military and other aid. The results have been exceedingly temporary for the USSR. The best example of this is Egypt, which after years of relatively heavy reliance on the USSR, has switched back to the U.S. undermining the USSR's strategic position in the Middle East and the Northern African region (which explains the USSR's present active policy in much of the rest of Africa.)

Our position should be crystal clear. We maintain our principled unconditional defense of the USSR despite its maneuverings in Africa or elsewhere. However, we are not partisans of those maneuverings. To do so would undermine our support to the right of self determination, set back the socialist revolution in Africa and elsewhere, and in this way hurt the defense of the USSR. We defend the USSR with our principled class struggle methods of advancing the world revolution.

Angola illustrates very clearly our principled approach to these related problems of imperialism, Stalinism, self determination and the African socialist revolution. We did not, as did some within the Fourth International, support the MPLA from the beginning in its civil war against rival nationalist groups in Angola simply because Cuba and the USSR supported the MPLA. Yet, when South Africa, with U.S. support, sent troops into Angola AGAINST the MPLA we gave military support to the MPLA. Now we stand as opponents of the Neto capitalist government which maintains relations with imperialism and suppresses the workers movement within Angola. Yet, should imperialism attempt an invasion of Angola, we would again before Angola's unconditional defense.

The current situation in Ethiopia is an excellent example of the impossibility of developing a correct Marxist policy if one simply tails the machinations of the Kremlin. Ethiopia has been conducting an internal war against two oppressed nations --the Eritreans and the Somalis of the Ogaden--for a long period of time. Under Selassie this war was largely lost. The army coup was in part directed against this failing of Selassie. The current junta has attempted to step up that war. We have traditionally supported the Eritrean and Somalian freedom fighters.

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The Kremlin has traditionally given at least some military aid to the rebels because of the strong commitment of Ethiopia to the U.S. After the coup, the Kremlin reassessed its policy and decided to extend aid to Ethiopia against the rebels. This was not a matter of principle but of the narrowest political self-interest. Following the victory of the MPLA in Angola, Cuban troops were shifted, with Soviet support, to the Ethiopian front. There they have been used in a drive against the Somalis in the Ogaden, which in turn received aid including troops from Somalia. This joint Ethiopian-Cuban-Soviet campaign has proved successful. In the interim Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, has been occupied and an offensive is being planned against Eritrea. At this moment Ethiopia is hoping to use its victory in the Ogaden together with its Soviet and Cuban support, to force a negotiated settlement on the Eritreans. Should that fail, we can expect a new military offensive against Eritrea and we can expect Cuban troops will play a crucial role in that reactionary effort.

Now the Political Committee wishes to interpret these events differently so that the party is put in the position of tailing the shifts in line of the Kremlin as reflected through its ally, Cuba. Frankel states: "...it was necessary to support Ethiopia against the Somali invasion."

We must ask Frankel several questions not really answered in his lengthy Militant piece. Was there actually a Somalian invasion? That is did Somalia occupy a territory against the will of the people who live there--the Somalis who share a common religion, language and culture with those of Somali? Frankel offers no evidence that the people native to Ogaden opposed the influx of Somalian troops. The facts suggest that the Somali troops were invited there and welcomed by the indigenous population. The invasion in our opinion was only an "invasion" if one accepts as sacrosanct the national borders of Ethiopia. However this--the position of Castro and the Kremlin, is not a Marxist position.

Our second question is: can we really equate the Ogaden events with Angola at the time of the South African intervention as Castro and the Kremlin seek to do and as Frankel echoes? We think not. South Africa is a white settler imperialist nation. Somalia is a backward semi-colonial capitalist nation which receives aid at one moment from the workers states and at another from imperialism. Even Frankel claims that present military aid to Somalia from the West has been insubstantial, that no American or other imperialist troops took part in the Somali action.

Our third question is: even if there actually was a Somalian invasion, if what was taking place was simply a war over territory between Ethiopia and Somalia, on what Marxist basis would we support Ethiopia in that war? Traditionally we do not take sides in wars between semi-colonial capitalist states.

Next we must deal with the question of Eritrea. The Political Committee claims to still stand for the self-determination of Eritrea even though it has abandoned the self-determination of the Somalis of Ogaden. However, the two questions cannot be separated in reality. The Soviet Union and Cuba have chosen to support the Mengistu capitalist government. By so doing they aid it against the Eritreans as well as the Somalis. The EPLF, the more radical of the two Eritrean nationalist groups, claims there are 4,000 Cuban troops in Asmara, the occupied capital of Eritrea.

They also claim that Cuban soldiers and engineers are building new air-fields in preparation for an Eritrean campaign and that Cuban troops together with Ethiopian troops are amassing at the border.

Castro has already developed a political rationale for an offensive against Ethiopia and Hansen has obligingly reprinted this rationale without editorial comment: "...objectively, this movement which began as a just revolutionary movement became transformed into an instrument for the reaction and imperialism to liquidate, or help to liquidate, the Ethiopian revolution. That's the way we see the problem." (IP June, 19, 1978). We cannot accept this rationalization. We do not withdraw our defense of the right of self determination of a people simply on the basis of what government may or may not for whatever reason offer aid to the leadership of oppressed peoples.

Clearly this "tilt" in line, as the PC calls it, is an attempt to find some evidence in world politics of a revolutionary role for the Castro government. Such a role in Africa can only be found by distorting the facts there and abandoning our principles in relation to the right of self determination.

So far supporters of this position have produced no evidence of any independence in the line of Castro as distinct from the line of the Kremlin. In fact the entire African operation is an example of the closest collaboration of Castro with the Kremlin. It would not have been possible for Cuba to deploy so many troops there if it had not been for receiving substantial military and economic aid in return from the USSR. Are Hansen and the PC suggesting that counter-revolutionary Stalinism is in the business of subsidizing revolutionary endeavors?

I wish to take particular exception to a line of argumentation which appears in Hansen's recent writings which borders on slander. Unable to produce any positive evidence of a difference between Cuba and the USSR over African policy, Hansen suggests that those who hold that Cuba and the Kremlin act in concert in Africa are repeating a State Department view. This is a line of reasoning more at home in the Stalinist movement than in ours. Our movement opposes the trials and persecution of the Soviet Dissidents. Carter and the State Department also oppose these trials for their own reasons. Does this mean that our defense of Soviet dissidents is a State Department point of view?

This is not the place to discuss the nature of Cuba today. I have made my views clear on that question in my document of last year--Cuba is a deformed workers state. Recent events in Africa do not in themselves prove this theory to be correct. But they certainly do not prove the opposite. The recent events in Africa represent additional verification, if any were needed, of the character of Cuba as a deformed workers state. Those holding this view are able not only to correctly explain these events, but more importantly, to advance the world socialist revolution through taking a correct position on the right of nations to self determination while defending semi-colonial countries and the workers states against imperialism.

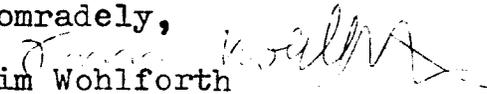
Clearly those who continue to cling to a 17 year old formula which bares no relationship to reality in Cuba or in the world, no longer are able to sustain a correct revolutionary line in Africa. I suggest

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they abandon this theory in the upcoming discussions on the nature of Cuba.

Please distribute this letter to my fellow NC members at the time of the upcoming NC plenum. Hopefully a discussion on Africa can take place at that time to change this wrong line of the PC. In any event NC members are now acquainted by way of the press with the line of the PC and have a right to read a different line from an NC member. I would also like this letter distributed along with the rest of my material on Cuba at the upcoming expanded PC meeting.

Comradely,

  
Tim Wohlforth

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
July 22, 1978

Tim Wohlforth  
San Francisco

Dear Comrade Wohlforth,

We received your letter yesterday opposing the position adopted by the Political Committee on the Ethiopia-Somalia war and objecting to a number of the political positions expressed in the article by Dave Frankel in the July 7 issue of the Militant, and Joe Hansen's article in the June 26 issue of Inter-continental Press/Inprecor.

As recorded in the minutes of the June 2 PC, there was unanimous agreement in the committee on our "basic evaluation of Angolan events, role of Cuban troops against South African invasion, importance of Ethiopian revolution, upsurge in Southern Africa, and offensive of American imperialism in Africa and against Cuba."

By majority vote, the PC also decided to alter the evaluation of the Ethiopia-Somalia war and thus the role of Cuban troops in it that had been expressed in the Militant.

The Political Committee has asked Joe Hansen and Dave Frankel to write a separate reply to the views you express about the position adopted by the PC.

In this letter we would like to outline the thinking of the committee on some other points you raise, and to respond to your specific requests.

1. It is not the case that the party's position on Cuba "has yet to be discussed or voted upon by the Political Committee or any other party body." Our line was adopted by the delegates to the 1961 SWP convention. It has never been changed by any party body, and remains the position of the party.

2. It is not true that our evaluation of the Ethiopia-Somalia war "is clearly based on a theoretical position on the nature of Cuba today." The nature of the Cuban state or government was not advanced by anyone in the discussion as a reason for one or another tactical position on the war in the Ogaden.

3. Contrary to the assertion in your letter, the PC did not decide, and neither Frankel's nor Hansen's articles contained, any change in the party's position of support to the principle of self-determination--in Africa or anywhere else.

The position taken by the PC on the Ethiopia-Somalia war does not bring "into question our principled position on the right to self-determination as it applies to Africa." If any member of the PC thought the alteration of our position on the war (a tactical

question) constituted a reversal of the party's support to self-determination in Africa (a question of principle), they would have proposed an immediate discussion on this fundamental revision of our program.

4. You state that "we have traditionally supported the Eritrean and Somalian freedom fighters," and imply that we have now abandoned that position. Frankel's article explicitly reaffirmed unconditional support for the struggles of the Somali and the Eritrean peoples for self-determination.

5. Taking the position of urging a victory for Ethiopia in the war with Somalia in no way dictated a position of opposition to the independence struggle of the Eritreans. To the contrary, the party's position remains one of supporting the Eritrean struggle for independence against the Dergue and its allies. This has been forcefully reiterated in our press numerous times.

6. It is incorrect to base our analysis on the assumption that "the white settler states of Southern Africa...are imperialist in their own right." Up to now the party has not taken the position that Rhodesia has developed into an imperialist power.

7. You say that "now we stand as opponents of the Neto capitalist government" in Angola. This is, of course, true; but we have always been opposed politically to the bourgeois Neto government (and before it the postcolonial coalition government). The fact that we urged military support for the government of Angola against the U.S.-backed invasion by South Africa did not change our stance of political opposition toward the government.

8. The Political Committee has not proposed to "equate the Ogaden events with Angola at the time of the South African intervention...." Among other differences, South Africa, an imperialist power, invaded Angola. Somalia is not an imperialist power. Frankel's article states this explicitly.

9. You state that the EPLF is "the more radical of the two Eritrean nationalist groups...." The differences in program and action of the two major nationalist formations in Eritrea have never been so substantial as to induce the party to favor one over the other, or to regard statements from one as more reliable than statements from the other.

10. We reject your assertion that "we do not take sides in boundary disputes or even wars between the dependent Black African states." Revolutionary Marxists can follow no method other than to examine each case in its concrete reality and judge it on its merits. No blanket prescriptions can substitute for this approach.

11. Finally, the Political Committee rejects the position that any one of the three possible points of view of our party on the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict--support to Ethiopia, support to Somalia, or a position of neutrality on the war (none of which has anything to do with political confidence in either bourgeois regime)--involves

tail-ending either the Kremlin or the State Department. What is involved is different judgments about what tactical stance would best advance the interests of the African masses.

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With regard to the specific requests that you make:

First, that we change the proposed plenum agenda. The PC has already voted unanimously on the agenda it will recommend to the plenum. This vote took place following the two meetings at which we had extensive discussion on the Ethiopia-Somalia war and made our decision.

We reject your proposal to change our agenda recommendations to the plenum.

We understand that your work schedule will prevent you from attending the plenum. We will therefore place your letter in the plenum kits so that any NC member who wants to can propose substituting a report and discussion on Africa for one or more of the points already scheduled.

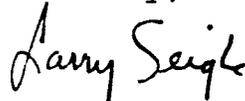
Second, concerning your request on the distribution of your material:

The nature of the Cuban revolution will be discussed at the expanded PC meeting following the Active Workers and Socialist Educational Conference, to which NC members have been invited. Following this, in the fall, the PC will initiate a discussion on our current assessment of the Cuban revolution.

As you requested in your discussion with Jack, we have already circulated copies of the WSL book containing your 1964 document on structural assimilation. However, it wasn't until we saw the book, copies of which Jack brought back with him from the United Secretariat meeting, that we realized that the book includes nothing to indicate that you subsequently changed your position.

Therefore, so comrades involved in the PC meeting after Oberlin can follow the changes in your position, we have decided to distribute to the NC members your document of April 11, 1977, on "The Postwar Social Overturns and Marxist Theory."

Comradely,



Larry Seigle  
for the Political Committee

## Where Comrade Wohlforth Goes Wrong

By Dave Frankel and Joseph Hansen

Comrade Tim Wohlforth, in a letter dated July 14, charges that the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party has adopted a new position that "brings into question our principled position on the right to self-determination as it applies to Africa."

According to Comrade Wohlforth, the Political Committee "has abandoned the self-determination of the Somalis of Ogaden."

This is a serious charge. If the central leadership of the party has abandoned the principle of self-determination in the case of the Somalis of the Ogaden, and is bringing "into question our principled position on the right to self-determination as it applies to Africa"--not an unimportant part of the world--then what does this imply?

At the very least, it casts doubt on the revolutionary caliber of leaders who would so casually toss aside basic programmatic principles.

As proof of his charges, Comrade Wohlforth points to two bits of evidence: a vote in the Political Committee on June 2, and an article by Dave Frankel in the July 7 Militant. (Also reprinted in Intercontinental Press/Inprecor and Perspectiva Mundial.)

But the vote in the Political Committee was not, as Comrade Wohlforth claims, in favor of a "change in line on Africa." The vote was on a rather narrow question--the stand of the party on the specific issue of the Ethiopia-Somalia war, in which Cuban troops were involved.

This specific issue was taken up in the Militant article as part of an overall survey of the class struggle in Africa over the past several years, and the role played by Cuban troops in these events.

The analysis made in the article leads to a conclusion completely opposite to the one drawn by Comrade Wohlforth. Far from calling into question the party's adherence to the right to self-determination, the article reaffirms this position. Thus, Frankel pointed to "the need for unconditional support to the right of the Somali people to self-determination. Insofar as the Somali people rebel against national oppression--whether carried out by Selassie or by the Dergue--their struggle must be supported by revolutionists." (See Intercontinental Press/Inprecor, July 24, p. 899.)

Comrade Wohlforth has come up with a conclusion that has nothing to do with the premises established in the actual article. He accomplishes this first of all by leaving out of consideration the Ethiopian revolution-- which he dismisses as a "military coup"--and the relevance of this revolution to the struggle of the Somali masses against national oppression. This is a rather substantial oversight, especially in view of the fact that the Ethiopian revolution, as Frankel's article attempted to explain, was by far the most important development in the class struggle in the Horn of Africa in the last decade--if not longer.

As the draft resolution on the world political situation submitted for the consideration of the next world congress points out:

"The gains made by the Ethiopian revolution up to now are substantial. They include: (a) A far-reaching agrarian reform. (b) A drive to eliminate all vestiges of slavery and feudalism. (c) A series of nationalizations, including banking and credit, public utilities, natural resources, and some industry. (d) The separation of church and state. (e) The spread of primary education as part of an initial drive against illiteracy."

In examining problems involving the national question-- and indeed any aspect of revolutionary politics--the dialectical method demands that we take into account all the available facts of the actual situation. To disregard such an important element in the class struggle as a revolution leads inevitably to disastrous political judgments.

Viewed from the standpoint of self-determination, the essential question that faced us in the Ethiopian-Somalian war was: How can revolutionary Marxists best defend and advance this principle in the given situation?

There are three possible alternatives:

1. Support the military attack carried out by the Siad Barre regime.
2. Support the Ethiopian revolution against this assault.
3. Abstain.

Comrade Wohlforth's position is ambiguous. Some sentences in his letter seem to identify the military thrust of the Siad Barre regime with the struggle of the Somalis for self-determination. Thus, Wohlforth argues: "We have traditionally supported the Eritrean and Somalian freedom fighters." He follows this up with the statement

that Cuban troops "have been used in a drive against the Somalis in the Ogaden, which in turn received aid including troops from Somalia."

From this line of argument, and from the fact that he offered no objection previously when articles in the Militant implied that we favored the victory of Somalia in the war with Ethiopia, one might conclude that Wohlforth favors the first alternative--that of defending Siad Barre's military operation.

But this raises certain questions which were dealt with in Frankel's Militant article. Why did Washington encourage Siad Barre and consider intervening in his behalf? Would such an intervention have aided the struggle for national liberation by the Somali people?

Siad Barre himself naturally tried to give the impression that his army was intervening to give aid to an ongoing struggle being carried out by the people of the Ogaden. Later he carefully explained that he had no intention of moving against Kenya, which also has an oppressed Somali national minority.

This fact alone makes clear that the struggle of the Somali people for national liberation was not Siad Barre's concern. It was only a propaganda screen.

As Frankel pointed out in the Militant, "... the invasion of the Ogaden by the regular army of Somalia--under the orders of the Somalian regime--was not the same as the national liberation struggle of the Somali masses." (See Intercontinental Press/Inprecor, July 24, p. 899.)

Siad Barre was afraid of the repercussions of the Ethiopian revolution in his own country. At the same time he had hopes of making an easy conquest of the Ogaden. With the encouragement of American imperialism he decided to strike. Is there any principle of Marxism that obligates us to support such a move because it is carried out under the pretense of a struggle for self-determination?

Let's look at the second possibility open to us--that of defending the Ethiopian revolution against Siad Barre's military attack. Had Siad Barre been able to consolidate his hold on the Ogaden, it would have immediately posed the threat of further military intervention against the Ethiopian revolution.

Another aspect should be mentioned. The people who live in Somalia itself are not oppressed by either Kenya or Ethiopia. They are oppressed by imperialism, as are the peoples of Ethiopia and Kenya. In their struggle

for national self-determination they face a common enemy--the various imperialist powers headed by Washington.

But Comrade Wohlforth leaves out of consideration the relation of the Ethiopian revolution to the overall struggle against imperialism. The fact is that the deepening of the Ethiopian revolution would give an impulse to revolutionary struggles against imperialism elsewhere in Africa. Crushing that revolution would be a victory for imperialism. The Ethiopian revolution can become a source of inspiration to the Somalian masses, not only in the Ogaden, but in Kenya, and above all, in Somalia itself. However, a serious problem is posed by the fact that insofar as the Dergue opposes self-determination for the oppressed nationalities within Ethiopia's borders it hands imperialism a weapon to use against the Ethiopian revolution.

But because Comrade Wohlforth misses the interconnection between the oppression of the Somalis in the Ogaden, and the larger framework of imperialist domination in the entire region, he fails to see that defense of the Ethiopian revolution is part and parcel of the defense of the national liberation struggle of the Somali people as a whole.

Finally, we could have taken an abstentionist position in regard to the Ethiopian-Somalian war. Comrade Wohlforth says some things that seem to indicate he favors such a position. For instance, he argues: "We do not take sides in boundary disputes or even wars between the dependent Black African states." He likewise argues: "Traditionally we do not take sides in wars between semi-colonial capitalist states."

But Marxist dialecticians always proceed in such questions concretely; that is, as participants in the class struggle seeking points of leverage to advance the long-range interests of the working class.

In the specific case of the Ethiopian-Somalian war, abstention would have left us in the awkward position of saying we were in favor of the general principle of self-determination, but had no suggestions on how to advance this goal in the actual situation. The key problem in revolutionary politics is to find a way to intervene in the class struggle, not to simply stand on the sidelines mouthing platitudes.

It should be clear from the preceding that what was involved in the discussion on the war in the Ogaden was the question of practice. How should we apply our general revolutionary principles in the specific situation? It was on this level of practice that the Political Committee voted for a tactical adjustment in regard to the war in the Ogaden.

Comrade Wohlforth splits principles away from their living combination with practice. Thus in his exposition,

principles become merely barren words. One of the results is his ambiguous position in the field of practice. Does he abstain or does he support Siad Barre's military intervention?

Along with failing to make clear what he actually stands for, Wohlforth leaves open the possibility of viewing either or both positions as principled matters. For example, it could be taken that supporting Siad Barre's action is demanded in principle. Or that abstention is called for as a matter of principle. Still another variant is that two conflicting principles confront us. If that is the case, which principle should we observe?

Comrade Wohlforth puts three questions to Frankel. We will try to answer them.

He asks, "Was there actually a Somalian invasion [of the Ogaden]? . . . The invasion in our opinion was only an 'invasion' if one accepts as sacrosanct the national borders of Ethiopia."

Yes, there was an invasion; and no, we don't regard the borders of Ethiopia or any other country as "sacrosanct." When the regular army of one state enters the territory ruled by another, that is generally called an invasion. Our political conclusions would not change, however, if we made a concession and called it an armed assault or a military thrust.

"Our second question," Comrade Wohlforth says, "is: can we really equate the Ogaden events with Angola at the time of the South African intervention as Castro and the Kremlin seek to do and as Frankel echoes?"

No, we do not equate the events in Angola with those in the Ogaden, nor did Comrade Frankel try to do so in his article.

"Our third question," Comrade Wohlforth continues, "is: even if there actually was a Somalian invasion, if what was taking place was simply a war over territory between Ethiopia and Somalia, on what Marxist basis would we support Ethiopia in that war?" (Emphasis in original.)

Comrade Wohlforth implies that either the key issue was the right of the Somalis in the Ogaden to exercise self-determination, or the war was simply a sordid conflict "over territory."

Once again, Comrade Wohlforth leaves out the Ethiopian revolution. After all, the territorial dispute between Somalia and its neighbors has existed for decades. What made Siad Barre pick this particular moment to launch a war? Why did he attack Ethiopia instead of Kenya, which is much weaker militarily?

The adjustment made by the Political Committee and explained in Frankel's article, was based on the evaluation of three elements: the danger to the gains of the Ethiopian revolution; the nature of Siad Barre's intervention; and the intensified imperialist campaign against the Cuban role in Africa.

It is necessary to take up this last point in more detail in view of Wohlforth's treatment of it.

Comrade Wohlforth charges that the modification of our stand on the Somalian-Ethiopian war "is an attempt to find some evidence in world politics of a revolutionary role for the Castro government." But, according to him, a revolutionary role for Cuba in Africa "can only be found by distorting the facts there and abandoning our principles in relation to the right of self-determination."

In short, to believe Comrade Wohlforth, the Political Committee distorted the facts, abandoned the principle of self-determination, and falsified the role played by the Cuban government in Africa all for the purpose of painting up Castro.

To advance such a charge is hardly conducive to a calm and objective discussion.

It puts into question the integrity of the majority of the Political Committee. Until that issue is settled, there is not much point in discussing the complicated situation in Africa or the role played in it by the Cubans.

But perhaps Wohlforth is not serious about his charge. If that is the case, he need only withdraw the charge, and the discussion can proceed as it should without undue heat.

Further, in relation to setting the proper tone for a comradely discussion, it is to be hoped that Comrade Wohlforth will reconsider the following paragraph:

"I wish to take particular exception to a line of argumentation which appears in Hansen's recent writings which borders on slander. Unable to produce any positive evidence of a difference between Cuba and the USSR over African policy, Hansen suggests that those who hold that Cuba and the Kremlin act in concert in Africa are repeating a State Department view. This is a line of reasoning more at home in the Stalinist movement than in ours. Our movement opposes the trials and persecution of the Soviet dissidents. Carter and the State Department also oppose these trials for their own reasons. Does this mean that our defense of Soviet dissidents is a State Department point of view?"

The truth is that in his "recent writings," Hansen has stressed the need for an effective campaign defending the Cuban revolution against the pressure mounted by American imperialism. Why Wohlforth feels that he was singled out as a target is a mystery. Perhaps he will help clear it up by citing the sentences or phrases that he considers alluded to him personally.

Another solution, which might meet with general approval, is to simply withdraw the unfortunate paragraph.

The majority of the Political Committee had no Machiavellian maneuver in mind in taking up the role of the Cubans in the Horn of Africa. Like it or not, Havana's foreign policy had become an international issue--made so by the Carter administration. The White House selected Cuba as a special target, utilizing the presence of Cuban troops in Ethiopia and their participation in defense of the Ethiopian revolution as one of the excuses for advancing the interests of imperialism in the region. The imperialist campaign has included threats of the most belligerent nature. No rounded analysis of the situation could brush aside this imperialist drive against the Cuban revolution.

Various questions were raised that the revolutionary Marxist movement had to answer, the main one being why Carter chose to center the imperialist fire on Cuba. What were the Cubans doing that so aroused the ire of the mightiest power on earth? Why did Carter distinguish so carefully between Brezhnev and Castro?

It would seem obvious why the Political Committee felt forced to assess this important aspect of the objective political situation in the Horn of Africa and to include it in the balance sheet.

To maintain his conclusion that what was really involved in the shift in tactical position was some underhanded maneuver by the Political Committee, Comrade Wohlforth is compelled to advance reasoning that departs quite widely from the reality. According to him, "This new position on Africa is clearly based on a theoretical position on the nature of Cuba today." Proof? Wohlforth has none. In place of proof, he gives us the word "clearly."

He ascribes this "new position" to Hansen, who has put it "forward in an authoritative fashion" without its having been "discussed or voted upon by the Political Committee or any other party body."

This gives the impression, of course, that Wohlforth's views represent the party's position and that Hansen is an innovator trying to fob off an ideological deviation.

To bring Wohlforth up to date: The position of the Socialist Workers Party on the nature of the Cuban revolution was adopted by the Political Committee, the National Committee, and the Nineteenth National Convention. Here is the motion approved June 23, 1961, by the delegates to the National Convention:

"To accept Comrade Hansen's report and to approve general line of 'Draft Theses on the Cuban Revolution' as adopted by January plenum of National Committee, and the Political Committee addenda 'The April Invasion and Its Aftermath.'"

The vote was 56 for. The vote for a counterreport made by Shane Mage was 3.

The position of the SWP has not been changed since then. Several comrades have now proposed that it be replaced by something new. In arguing for their proposals, two logically consistent lines can be advanced: (a) That the position adopted in 1961 was incorrect; or, (b) that a qualitative change in the Cuban revolution has occurred since then.

Comrade Wohlforth stands among those who want to change the position adopted in 1961--except that he seems to think that it was not adopted. Thus he says: "Clearly those who continue to cling to a 17 year old formula which bears no relationship to reality in Cuba or in the world, no longer are able to sustain a correct revolutionary line in Africa. I suggest that they abandon this theory in the upcoming discussions on the nature of Cuba."

What Comrade Wohlforth is actually saying here is that the party should simply abandon its position on Cuba. That would certainly make it easier for him to win adherents to his innovations. However the reality is that he still has to establish his case. Until he has done so, those who agree with the party's position will be inclined, we think, to uphold it until convinced otherwise.

It should be noted that it was Comrade Wohlforth who injected the question of the party's analysis of the Cuban revolution in the discussion over the Ethiopian-Somalian war. The Political Committee did not discuss the nature of the Cuban revolution; it only took up the role of the Cubans in defending the Ethiopian revolution. The majority of comrades viewed this element as but one among other considerations requiring a more rounded view of the situation there.

The continued efforts of American imperialism to contain, roll back, and eventually smash the Cuban revolution is

of first-rate concern to the international Trotskyist movement. It should be of similar concern to every anti-imperialist fighter. To mobilize an adequate defense in behalf of the Cuban revolution is one of the top tasks facing the Fourth International.

This applies with special force to revolutionary Marxists living in the United States. It is a task that must be met not only in acute moments such as the Bay of Pigs invasion but continuously, inasmuch as it involves a continuous policy decided on by the White House and maintained since the time of Eisenhower.

Our course of action, as it has been from the beginning, is to try to increase the political pressure nationally against Carter's goal of crushing the Cuban revolution. This should be an integral part of our response to imperialist thrusts in the Horn of Africa or elsewhere in the continent initiated under the guise of meeting the Cuban "threat."

July 26, 1978

STATEMENT BY KRAMER AND LEVINE ON JULY 22 POLITICAL  
COMMITTEE LETTER TO WOHLFORTH.

The PC letter comes after the PC's reversal of line on the Ethiopia-Somalia war. It sets forth the meaning and implications of the new line from the standpoint of the new line's supporters.

We disagree with this change of line and voted against it on June 2. We also differ with the PC majority concerning the new line's meaning and implications.

1. In point #3 of the PC letter, it is stated, "The position taken by the PC on the Ethiopia-Somalia war does not bring "into question our principled position on the right to self-determination as it applies to Africa."

The majority can hold this opinion because it denies that the issue at stake in the Ethiopia-Somalia war was the right of the Somali population of the Ogaden for national liberation. We consider that this right is exactly what was at stake. The Somali people--backed by Somalian troops--were fighting for their right to national unification and independence from their historic Ethiopian oppressor. Consistently applying our principles on the national question here dictated supporting the Somali camp. Instead, the PC majority has simply asserted that the element of national-liberation struggle in this war was submerged in an imperialist offensive against the Ethiopian revolution. No serious attempt has been made to support this mere assertion with hard evidence.

2. Point #4 of the PC letter denies that we have abandoned our traditional support to the Eritrean and Somalian freedom fighters. And it is quite true that we still stand by those freedom fighters in our general propaganda. But the Ethiopia-Somalia war put such general declarations to a practical test. We therefore view giving support to the Dergue's troops in that war as a de facto abandonment of the Somali freedom fighters where it counted.

3. The PC letter denies that our new line on the Ethiopia-Somalia war "dictated a position of opposition to the independence struggle of the Eritreans." (Point #5) Again, it is true that the party still holds to its traditional position of support to the Eritrean struggle; this we have said in the party press.

But it is also true that the same basic arguments which our press now uses to justify supporting Ethiopia against Somalia can be and have been used to support Ethiopia against Eritrea. This is what Fidel Castro has done. (See his arguments quoted in the article "Castro, Mengistu Differ on Eritrea" in Intercontinental Press/Inprecor of June 19.)

In our view, such arguments--if carried out consistently--

can undermine the party's principled stand in support of democratic struggles in general and national struggles in particular in other places as well.

4. The PC letter disowns any attempt "to 'equate the Ogaden events with Angola at the time of the South Africa intervention...'" (See point #8.) But, in the introduction to Joe Hansen's collection Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution, isn't this just the equation that is made on page 12? Comrade Hansen writes: "Let us recall that when Havana responded to the MPLA plea for aid, the shipment of troops received wide acclaim in the left. It was argued that the support granted by Havana not only proved how internationally minded the Castro regime was, it proved the progressiveness of the Neto government. However, this argumentation was shelved when the Mengistu regime appealed for similar aid [against the Somalis] and the Cubans responded favorably."

Such an equation is wrong, however, primarily because in Angola fighting the South African invaders was striking a blow for national liberation. In the Ogaden, Cuban troops were employed to help crush the national liberation struggle.

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The dispute over the war in the Ogaden is an important one in many ways. The PC has now held two rich and educational discussions on this question. We are in favor of broadening the framework of the discussion to permit the entire NC to join in as full participants. The written discussion which has already begun between comrade Wohlforth and the PC majority can help lay the basis for this.

The pre-Oberlin plenum, however, is too short--and its present agenda too important to carrying through the party turn--to raise Ethiopia-Somalia for immediate NC discussion. We do favor putting such a discussion on the agenda at the first NC plenum following the Oberlin conference.

Shelley Kramer  
Bruce Levine  
July 26, 1978

## THE POSTWAR SOCIAL OVERTURNS AND MARXIST THEORY

A discussion has been going on in the world Trotskyist movement for over 30 years on the social overturns in the postwar period. Judging from the resolution in Vietnam submitted to the next world congress by leading members of the IMT, this discussion is not yet completed.

Of course considerable progress has been made. It is difficult for us today to fully comprehend the very genuine confusion and disorientation which affected our movement over this question between 1948 and 1956 when the Hungarian Revolution settled many theoretical matters rather decisively through the actions of the masses. The differences which persist in our movement on Stalinism have narrowed considerable in scope since those days.

Extremely important progress has been made by the SWP and the LTF. A theoretical assessment has been made of China which has led to completely correct Trotskyist politics in relations to recent events. The SWP was not caught by surprise by the recent turn of China towards the American imperialist camp nor disoriented by the death of Mao and the purge of the gang of four.

The party's position on Vietnam has also been crystal clear. The party has carried out outstanding and consistent work in opposition to American imperialism in the course of the Vietnam War without making the slightest concession to Stalinism.

The Cuban question remains. We are sure the party will shortly fill this void in our theory in a principled Trotskyist manner.

We are still, I believe, a bit distant from what we really need--a completely consistent overall theory of the postwar social overturns which is fully integrated with Trotsky's own theoretical assessment of Stalinism. Such a theory would be a development of Trotsky's position, consistent completely with it, and expressing the same methodology.

The international movement began correctly in the East European discussion. The comrades sought to apply Trotsky's brilliant contribution on the possibility of the Russian workers state to be extended into new territories under exceptional circumstances. Then this attempt was abandoned as many followed Pablo in his impressionistic reaction to Tito's break with the Kremlin in 1948--the source of current IMT theories on China and Vietnam.

Cuba added an additional theoretical confusion because the comrades abandoned any attempt to understand Cuba within Trotsky's framework of understanding Stalinist expansions. They turned instead to a section of our theoretical capital never designed to explain such developments-- the workers and farmers government slogan. Then this new theory was applied retrospectively in China and Vietnam. It fitted, in our opinion, that reality even less perfectly.

The facts do not justify this abandonment of the correct theoretical beginnings of Trotsky in 1940 and our international movement in 1948. They require a return to this beginning and a new development from this base. This article will only sketch such an approach giving perhaps a little more detail on Cuba since that question is still to be politically resolved in the party.

## THEORETICAL CONQUESTS OF BUFFER STATE DISCUSSION

A re-study of this discussion would be very useful at the moment because of the monstrous confusion presently being introduced into the international discussion by the IMT Vietnam resolution. Their attempt to characterize South Vietnam as a workers state at the moment of the fall of Thieu because of the presence of "bodies of armed men" representing another class is completely absurd on the basis of the facts of East Europe alone.

Part of the area, Finland, Eastern Austria, was occupied by the Red Army only to end up as strong capitalist states. Coalition governments with serious bourgeois parties and social democratic parties abounded everywhere until 1947. Rumania even remained a monarchy for a period despite the presence of bodies of armed men.

It is important to note the essential features of the buffer state process because these features would characterize in general all the social overturns which came later.

(1) Each country passed through a revolutionary stage to one or another degree of intensity. This occurred at the moment of liberation by the Red Army and/or by an indigenous partisan force. Capitalism was weak and discredited. The working class was on the ascendency with factory occupations and various forms of localized working class committees, peasant committees, etc. All the conditions, outside of a revolutionary party, were generally present for immediate socialist revolution.

(2) In every case it was at this point that the Stalinists

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insisted upon the bourgeois character of the regime and revolution. They bolstered existing bourgeois state apparatuses or constructed new ones on a bourgeois model. They resurrected bourgeois parties and formed coalitions with them. They demobilized the masses and protected what remained of capitalist industry. Thus they consciously defused the first, revolutionary stage in these countries.

(3) A change of policy took place as a result of a change in the international situation. Stalin responded to the heating up of the cold war by seeking to consolidate the East European region as a strategic defensive buffer against the imperialist ~~earma~~ment of Western Europe. East Europe could only be made safe through purging it of its capitalist elements and transforming it into the same social system which existed in the USSR. This vindicated our assessment of the class nature of the USSR. This took place between 1947 and 1949.

(4) The process of structural assimilation included the following steps in each country:

(a) The destruction of the political and social power of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois parties, never allowed to be strong, were physically eliminated and the remnants of capitalist property nationalized. A five year plan was instituted and the economy of the country tied more closely to that of the USSR through bilateral trade agreements.

(b) The consolidation of the monolithic party. The social democratic parties were forcibly fused with the Communist parties to produce a single party completely dominated by the Stalinists.

(c) The interpenetration of the monolithic party with the state apparatus. Suspected pro-capitalist elements (as well as potentially pro-working class ones) were purged from the state apparatuses and large numbers of CP cadres put in their place. Note the old state apparatus was not destroyed; it was purged and fused with the Stalinist party.

(5) This process took place with a limited amount of controlled mass participation but basically from on top in a military-bureaucratic manner. Note this process took place essentially through the indigenous Stalinist forces; not directly through action of the Red Army. It took place in essentially the same manner where the Red Army was not even present--Yugoslavia, Albania--as where it was present.

In seeking to understand these events our movement, largely through the work of Ernest Mandel (Germain), rested on Trotsky's pioneer work in assessing what happened when Soviet troops entered Poland and Finland in the early stage of the war. This same pattern was followed in the incorporation into the USSR of the small Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Trotsky saw no contradiction between the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism and its ability to extend its social system into other areas. He noted it did this in a reactionary way, as a defensive mechanism, while at the same time seeking collaboration with imperialism elsewhere and contributing to the defeat of the working class. He also was well aware that to the extent that the Soviet bureaucracy expanded its rule, it deepened its own contradictions and came closer to its own destruction as a ruling caste--to political revolution. This latter point would be fully born out in the future development of the buffer states.

Trotsky used the analogy with the counterrevolutionary period of the French revolution, the Thermidor of Napoleon Bonaparte. Bonaparte also extended the bourgeois revolution against feudal elements in Europe through military means. This extension also had many reactionary aspects as Bonaparte was very fearful of the radical democratic plebian wing of the revolution wherever

his armies penetrated.

## TWO THEORETICAL PROBLEMS

There were two important theoretical problems which bothered the comrades who developed this thesis in the late 1940s. They were never fully resolved and the resolution of them goes a long way towards understanding the somewhat more unique social overturns which occurred outside East Europe as well as Yugoslavia.

(1) The question of the relative weight of the USSR and domestic Stalinist forces in the process. Mandel tended to look at this question formally and strictly in the light of Trotsky's writings in 1940. He expected that the East European area would either remain capitalist <sup>or</sup> ~~and~~ become an actual physical part of the USSR as did the Baltic states. ~~Neither~~ alternative happened accept for sections of Eastern Poland and <sup>as Europe or</sup> other states which actually bordered on the USSR. It is quite possible that at one point Stalin himself actually considered this alternative but the national element was so powerful (Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, etc; testify to this) in the area that such a process was precluded.

From the very beginning it was necessary to build up a domestic Stalinist movement with its own apparatus, police, some roots among a section of the workers, and many opportunist recruits from the social democrats and outright bourgeois parties. Only such a movement could carry through the social transformation under the conditions prevalent. This indigenous movement was nonetheless Stalinist and linked ideologically and in many other concrete ways to the bureaucracy in the USSR. It was theoretically essentially an extension of that bureaucracy.

Furthermore, in most of East Europe the red army was in the background and was quite capable of coming into the foreground. The Soviet secret police was everywhere as Tito later revealed. The

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countries existed in any event under the protective umbrella of Soviet hegemony of the region, which the imperialists were forced to recognize, and which was backed up by a powerful military machine including atomic weapons.

But it must also be realized that Stalinism is in essence "socialist" in one country. There lay the contradiction. The protection of "socialism" in the USSR required Stalin to set up "socialism" in various East European countries. Yet as these Stalinist forces began to consolidate their power in the structural transformation process, they began to reflect the specific national interests of their own developing bureaucracy which did not always coincide with the national interests of the USSR bureaucracy. Thus the seeds for the disintegration of the USSR-dominated bloc were already being planted through the very process of the creation and consolidation of this bloc.

Yet we must note that the period of closest collaboration and relations of each of these states with the USSR was precisely the period of their structural assimilation process.

(2) The theoretical problem of the state. Lenin held that socialist revolution required the destruction of the existing state apparatus of the capitalist class and its replacement by a new state apparatus thrown up by the working class in course of struggle--the commune or council kind of state. In East Europe--and this pattern was followed without exception in all other postwar social transformations-- the capitalist state had been either preserved or rebuilt during the capitalist stage of these states from 1944-5 to 1947. It was not destroyed in the 1947-49 period but rather purged and fused with. Is this not a variety

... We think not. The resultant state formation in East Europe was and is of a contradictory character. It is based on socialist property forms, but in every other respect is hostile to the working class and similar to a capitalist state. This is why a political revolution is necessary to overthrow it. We are not talking of the creation of a genuine workers state which would require the destruction of the capitalist state completely and totally, but the extension of the degenerated workers state in a new and different manner which reproduced from the beginning a fundamental contradiction between the state apparatus and the working class property forms--a contradiction only resolvable through the formation of workers councils as part of a revolution to overthrow the bureaucratic caste and its state apparatus.

In any event these theoretical matters tended to encourage Mandel to hold off in characterizing the buffer states as workers states well after these states had obviously changed their class character. This caused considerable confusion in the movement thus setting the stage for Pablo to enter and "resolve" the problems in a completely non-Trotskyist and liquidationist manner.

#### YUGOSLAVIA: ORIGINS OF NON-TROTSKYIST CONCEPTIONS

It was in the Yugoslav discussion in 1949 that the key elements of Pablo's revisions of the traditional Trotskyist conception of Stalinism were introduced to the movement. In 1948 Tito broke openly with Stalin and for a period veered sharply to the left to gain support for an independent course. Pablo reacted impressionistically to this temporary phenomenon (brought quickly to a close when Tito supported imperialism in the Korean War in 1950) and developed a series of new non-Trotskyist theories. These can be summarized as follows:

(1) While the YCP was originally Stalinist, it had broken with Stalinism to make a revolution and create a workers state.

(2) It is now a centrist party and the Yugoslav state, while partially distorted, is capable of positive evolution towards democratization and we no longer need to create an independent Trotskyist party there fighting for political revolution.

(3) The YCP was able to so change because of mass pressure under conditions of a new reality which gives the upper hand internationally to the working class.

(4) If this can happen in Yugoslavia (and appears <sup>ed at the time</sup> also to be happening in China) it can happen elsewhere -- perhaps everywhere -- to Stalinist parties under these new conditions. But of course distortions may still remain here and there and for a long time to come -- thus the theory of centuries of deformed workers states.

In time three additional points were developed out of this general approach:

(5) The war-revolution thesis. In reaction to the Korean War, Pablo projected a generalized world war in the next immediate period. It would be a war between two class camps. The Stalinists would head the working class camp and, as we learned from Yugoslavia (and China he would add), since mass pressure can change the Stalinists into adequate instruments of social change workers states of a distorted variety can develop all over the world out of this military conflict. This theory tended to recede from Pablo's repertoire with the receding of the war threat.

(6) Based both on the impressionist theory of war-revolution and the new ideas about the changeability of the Stalinists under mass pressure all Trotskyists were to try to enter the Stalinist parties <sup>To</sup> aid in the transformation process -- entrism sui generis.

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This theory was to survive well into the 1960s even after its rationale in the war-revolution thesis was quietly dropped.

(7) The Death of Stalin brought about minor concessions to the masses by the new bureaucratic rulers. This was seen, following the same basic idea of Stalinists changing under mass pressure, as a process of self-reform of the Stalinist bureaucracy which could possibly produce a proletarian wing of the bureaucracy which would lead the political revolution.

All these various theories actually hinge on one central point: Can a Stalinist party change its basic character under mass pressure? If it can then all the other theories have a plausibility to them depending on changing objective circumstances. The IMF comrades still answer yes to this question in the case of China and Vietnam. They, of course, do not carry out the logic of this position to the extremes that Pablo did in his day. And yet as long as this question mark remains over our basic conception of Stalinism as event<sup>6</sup> develop<sup>20'11'12</sup> comrades will extend this theory once again endangering our movement to the ravages that Pablo's theory wrought upon it.

Does the real evolution of Yugoslavia justify such a major and dangerous revision of Trotskyism? We think not. In all essentials Yugoslavia followed closely--in many instances led--the pattern of the rest of the buffer.

11-11-11

Tito <sup>by</sup> a hardened Stalinist who earned his credentials before the war <sup>by</sup> urging purported Trotskyists from the party. His Partisans sought, under Stalin's directives, to coalesce <sup>with</sup> the bourgeois Chetnik movement. But the Chetniks preferred the Nazis to the Partisans and thus Tito was forced to fight on his own. Even the imperialists realized this and gave their support to the Partisans in the end.

The Partisans <sup>^</sup> liberated Yugoslavia with little Red Army support (the Red Army entered Belgrade but later withdrew) . In this sense the situation was similar to Albania which the Red Army never even entered.

These events did give Tito (as well as Hoxha) a certain distinctiveness among the buffer states and a close similarity with China. The partisan movement <sup>gave</sup> Tito's party a certain semi-governmental <sup>base</sup> prior to final victory and thus a <sup>potential</sup> for independence at an earlier stage than the rest of the buffer.

Tito's course after liberation followed the pattern of East Europe--in fact led that pattern. A revolutionary situation existed <sup>which</sup> was deep or deeper than anywhere in East Europe at the time of liberation. Various councils and peasant committees existed. The bourgeoisie was among the weakest <sup>in</sup> the buffer. All the conditions were present for a socialist revolution.

But no such revolution took place at that time. Instead <sup>a</sup> Subsic and friends, bourgeois politicians, were imported from London to form a coalition government. This stage lasted shorter in Yugoslavia than anywhere else reflecting the unstable conditions for capitalism there. However it lasted long enough to demobilize the masses and reconstruct the state on a capitalist model.

12-12-12

The process of structural assimilation began in Yugoslavia sooner than in the rest of the buffer and was completed sooner giving Tito a base for his break in 1948 with Stalin. In the period of transformation from on top (there was little mass participation in this process) Tito had close relations with Stalin and in fact was held up to the rest of East Europe as the model to follow. There was in that period two wings of the bureaucracy in East Europe--the Golmulkaists and the Titoists. Golmulka favored a more gradual transformation process while Tito was seen as the super-Stalinist.

Tito's break from Stalin in 1948 only proves what we have stated--the very process of extension of the degenerated workers state produces almost from the beginning conflicts between the newly arising national bureaucratic castes and the "mother" caste. This again proves the temporary, transitional character of Stalinism--its real crisis and weakness underneath the appearance of its strength and growth.

The future evolution of Tito no longer made Tito the popular example to support the Stalinists plus mass-pressure equals-revolutionists' theory. This is perhaps why the IMT is rather quiet about Yugoslavia.

The future evolution of the buffer as a whole illustrates that Tito was unique only in the timing and degree of his ability to carry through a course independent of the Kremlin for virtually all these states now seek in one fashion or another such a course.

Then there is the problem of little Albania. If Tito was transformed into a centrist by mass pressure the same conditions were also at work on Hoxha. The only difference is that conditions were such that Tito expressed his independence by mouthing anti-Stalinist phrases while Hoxha sought his independence from Yugoslavia through being a super-Stalinist-- first blocking with Stalin against Tito and then shifting to China against the Kremlin as Tito shifted back closer to the Kremlin. Certainly Hoxha, the world's super-Stalinist, makes a strange figure of a man breaking from Stalinism. And so most have just not wanted to discuss Albania. It is, after all, a small country, and perhaps no one will miss it.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF CHINA

The next big theoretical challenge to come along for the movement was China. Chinese events appeared in a surface way to justify the reasoning Pablo had developed around Yugoslavia. Of course China did follow very closely the Yugoslav pattern. And Vietnam followed very closely both patterns. This is why once Yugoslavia is properly understood neither China nor Vietnam offer any serious theoretical problems.

Many comrades associated with the LTF have quite thoroughly documented the evolution of Mao. He was a Stalinist and he died a Stalinist. Those who now carry on his bureaucracy are likewise Stalinists. As was the case with Tito and Hoxha, he carried on the liberation struggle in the war largely on his own and was unable to develop a real relationship with Chiang--and for similar reasons.

After the war Stalin hoped to establish on his eastern border a ~~feared~~ but capitalist state just as he pursued the same policy in East Europe. He hoped to achieve this through a coalition government with Chiang Kai Chek. Mao agreed with this policy and did his best to implement it. Chiang did not agree with it undoubtedly feeling the bourgeois forces in China were too weak to survive such a deal. So Chiang went on the offensive against Mao.

Mao was forced to fight back in self-defense. There is still a question as to whether at this point Mao had sharp differences <sup>with Stalin</sup>. If they did it was not a decisive matter because differences of this sort arise from perspectives based on Mao's part on his own situation in China and those based on Stalin's situation in Moscow. Mao, even more than Tito, had a base for his party, a semi-state structure which went back many decades and thus certain interests of the embryonic bureaucracy of the army, party and partial governmental apparatus distinct and contrary to those of the Kremlin.

There is every indication that particularly in the last year of Mao's march to power Stalin enthusiastically supported him. He would have preferred a neutralist capitalist government on his Eastern flank. But he did not want a U.S. Puppert government which would place a string of U.S. bases along his immense eastern border. Thus Mao's victory was the lesser evil.

Mao came to power in 1949 and acted precisely as did the Stalinists in East Europe. He formed a coalition government with rump bourgeois forces. He guaranteed private property and capitalism. He maintained the large hunk of the old bourgeois apparatus which remained and rebuilt the rest on that model.

was carried through structural assimilation only after the Korean War and especially after American troops approached the Yalu River forcing Chinese troops to intervene heavily. The process was identical and the resulting state institutions and economy were also identical. Is it so wild, so strange, to assert that I do that the Chinese social overturn was essentially the result of the extension of the <sup>Soviet</sup> property forms into Russia's Eastern Buffer through an agency of the bureaucracy, the CCP, and with the support of the bureaucracy? Is China quantitatively or qualitatively different from the process of Yugoslavia and the buffer? If the latter than why was the process so identical and the results so identical?

When the SWP resolution in 1955 speaks of the entire system in the USSR with its bureaucratic caste being "reproduced on Chinese soil" how else can this be explained except through the theoretical position I have sketched out here?

Vietnam needs no special discussion here because it follows so closely the Chinese pattern. Everyone's theory of Vietnam is dependent on their theory of China. Theoretically China, we maintain is not distinct from Yugoslavia. And a proper understanding of Yugoslavia brings down all theories which attempt to explain these developments as distinct and separate from the East European developments.

16-16-16

The workers and farmers government theory, is not, in our opinion very helpful when applied to China. This is for the following reasons:

(1) It gives to a class--the petty bourgeoisie--which is distinct from the working class, the role in the creation of workers states. The petty bourgeoisie is a class of small proprietors (peasants, independent artisans, small self-employed businessmen) which therefore bases itself upon capitalist property relations. It has sharp differences in periods with large capital but its distinct role in history is, no matter how radical it becomes, to limit this radicalism by its defense of private property relations. We do not believe postwar events require us to change this basic Marxist assessment of this class. At least China offers us no such basis for change as it is totally understandable within the framework of our traditional theory of Stalinism. We will deal with Cuba shortly.

(2) In order to apply this theory to China, comrades have had to change our basic assessment of the nature of Stalinist parties by asserting that the CCP is a petty bourgeois party. This is a half-truth and therefore completely wrong. Stalinist parties represent petty bourgeois forces within the working class. They may be largely petty bourgeois in composition in one country and largely working class in composition in another. In China, for instance, they were almost totally petty bourgeois for a long historic period, and yet after 1949 were able to bring into the party an important layer of workers.

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(3) There remains the question of whether the workers and farmers government label is a correct one to apply to these countries during the process of social transformation. We believe this tends to distort the facts. In the first period, in all these countries we had not workers and farmers governments but bourgeois coalition governments based on a capitalist state. During the next stage whatever petty bourgeois parties existed (and they did exist especially in East Europe) were destroyed along with any independent workers parties (the social democrats in East Europe). It would be best to refer to the governmental form in this transitional period as bureaucratic, as the bureaucratic caste in the process of creation.

#### CUBA --A UNIQUE CASE

Cuba was, without a doubt, the most unique of all the social overturns of the postwar world. For this reason it has created a considerable amount of theoretical confusion.

We are <sup>AL</sup>~~A~~, of course, aware of the facts. Fidel Castro led a petty bourgeois nationalist formation to power through an extended guerilla war. His main base in the course of this war was among the small peasants in the mountainous country. As he approached Havana his victory was accompanied by a massive mobilization of the working class, agricultural laborers, and the middle class.

He established a bourgeois coalition government with Urruti. Up to this point his evolution was not particularly unique and has been repeated many times since.

18-18-18

The United States then reacted with extreme hostility to Castro's attempts to actually implement his bourgeois democratic program--particularly when American sugar interests were threatened.

Castro at this point had three courses open to him:

(1) He could continue with the coalition government of Urruti and come to some terms with U.S. imperialism by sacrificing his program. This course would have maintained capitalist relations on the island in a typical neo-colonialist fashion.

(2) He could turn decisively to the working class and mobilize this class through its own democratic organs as did Lenin and Trotsky carrying through a social transformation on the model of October, 1917. Then we could utilize this base for the extension of the revolution into Latin America and elsewhere on the same model as the best way to defend Cuba.

(3) He could turn to the Soviet Union for support and carry through a social transformation from on top, modelled after the East European pattern, fusing with the local Stalinists, and going over to Stalinism in the process.

Clearly he choose the third course. He would not bend to imperialism and the masses mobilized behind him exerted great pressure against such a course. He no doubt could not even conceive the second course because his movement was not trained in Marxism, had no roots in the working class, or real acquaintance with Trotskyism.

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All the evidence backs up this conclusion. It is not accidental that the social transformation in Cuba was accompanied by: (1) close economic relations with the Soviet bloc and sizable actual subsidy; (2) Castro's conversion to Stalinist ideology and the fusion of his movement with the Cuban Communist Party (like the East European fusions but in reverse); (3) no change in the direction of democratic control over the real state power in the country.

We ask: What would have happened if Castro did not have this third road open to him? Suppose the USSR and the other Stalinist states either did not exist or refused to give him aid? Clearly he would have collapsed before the U.S. or gone over to or collapsed before the working class. He was able to steer a course partially independent of both fundamental classes in the world only because of his special relationship with world Stalinism.

Cuba was, of course, highly exceptional and its evolution distinct in many ways from that of the other Stalinist states. Cuba was and is not a buffer of the Soviet Bloc nations. It was always expendable. It was supported by Khrushchev as a point of counterpressure well within the U.S. sphere of influence to lessen pressure upon the USSR. This is one reason why other Cubas did not happen--the third course was not open to them.

Cuba was the only place where the leading group which led the transformation was not Stalinist in origins but became converted to Stalinism. Its rule was therefore different and the development of a ruling caste more extended in character.

The possibility of a relatively peaceful development of a democratic workers state was therefore not theoretically excluded in the early stages of the regime. However, it must be recognized that the 26th of July movement did not have a working class base before coming to power nor a tradition of democratic centralism within its own organization. After coming to power Castro never developed democracy beyond a bonapartist <sup>1)</sup> p~~er~~ibiscitory form. The masses were mobilized from ~~on~~ top, consulted from above, but never allowed to directly participate in decision making with the right to <sup>2)</sup> separate parties.

Even such a development in the early period would have required attempts at the independent mobilization of masses under our own leadership and could not be expected to be handed down from above by Castro.

There is also considerable evidence of Castro's partial independence from the Kremlin. Interestingly, this took the form of attempts to develop policies, which were not based on Marxism, but reflected a return to thinking which Castro had as a petty bourgeois nationalist. Thus his strategy for Latin America, to the extent that it differed with the Soviet Union, did so in the direction of guerilla warfare not in the direction of the independent mobilization of the working class.

Internally, on two occasions, Castro moved against a section of the local Stalinists within his own party. Both moves centered on Escalante. Most interesting is the second move against what was known as the "microfaction." Significantly, Castro acted towards this supposed group in a manner similar to the recent purges in China. The microfaction was never allowed

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to present its own views on matters. This illustrated that in the struggle against bureaucracy, bureaucracy was already well developed

There are two other interesting aspects of this affair. First, it was not a move against <sup>The</sup> whole of the Stalinist group which had fused with Castro but only a small section of it. The rest of the Stalinists played it safe and supported Castro against Escalante. Secondly, the issue around which it was fought, material incentives, was to be only a temporary difference between Castro and the general policy of Stalinism. Material incentives have been reinstated in Cuba and today are a central part of the present five year plan.

Another difference which arose was over Castro's attempt to develop Cuba independently by raising sugar production to ten million tons. This proved to be a complete disaster, distorting further the already highly distorted one crop economy of Cuba, and the failure of this plan led to Castro's ever closer relations with the Kremlin.

Looking at this process as a whole, it appears that Castro's assimilation into the Stalinist camp has not been smooth at every point. To the extent that he has resisted this process, it has been through a turn back to petty bourgeois conceptions from which he arose and not a turn towards revolutionary Marxism. Each such turn has led to disaster. Thus he has now settled in to this role as administrator of a deformed workers state.

Let us now look at where Castro has ended up. The final act of institutionalization of the deformed workers state, with its developed bureaucratic caste occurred a year ago December when a congress of the Cuban Communist Party was finally held

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and the governmental institutions rounded off.

Today Castro is President of the State Council, Prime Minister, Secretary General of the Cuban Communist Party, Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. This is a bit more formal power than any other leader of a deformed workers state can claim.

The politburo of the CCP has three old line Stalinists out of 13 members. Some 91 per cent of the successful candidates elected in 1976 to the National Assembly are members of the CCP.

Cuba has been admitted to the Comecon with full membership and its 1976-80 Five Year Plan is coordinated and synchronized with that of the Soviet Union. There are 6,000 Russian advisors stationed in Cuba to aid in this economic coordination. There is no doubt that presently Cuba has closer ties economically with the USSR than any of the East European states. Cuba's financial indebtedness to the USSR is fantastic and new credits are being extended especially since Cuba has been very helpful to USSR's influence in Africa. Also important are the close cooperation in fishing efforts with floating docks used in common, a whole Cuba port built for the Soviet fishing fleet, etc.

There is no doubt that Cuba's recent intervention in Angola was carried out in behalf of the USSR. Even Andrew Young refers to the presence of Cuban troops there as a "stabilizing" factor. After all, Cuban troops were deployed in Cabinda to protect American oil facilities from insurgent attacks.

Now we have Cuba aggressively entering the Detente game seeking to better its relations with the United States.

To sum up: Cuba became structurally transformed into a workers state in late 1960. This was only possible because of the support the USSR extended to Castro and the support in return Castro extended to the USSR. This process was distinctive from all other postwar social transformations in the non-Stalinist character of the force which initiated the process, the vulnerability of the resultant state apparatus before the masses, and the extended length of time it has taken to consolidate a bureaucratic caste. Thus the possibility of a transformation into a democratic workers state without a violent overthrow of the existing leadership was present in the early stages. This possibility is today completely ruled out as the consolidation of the bureaucratic caste, long in progress, has now been completed and formalized.

We do not feel that the theory of workers and farmers governments is particularly helpful in answering the theoretical problems posed by Cuba either. In the first place it makes an unnecessary generalization--it attributes to the petty bourgeoisie in general in underdeveloped countries a capability to create workers states which is not proven by the 17 year history since the Cuban transformation. The Cuban revolutionary process was dependent upon the USSR. But the USSR is a counterrevolutionary world force. It is this which limits future Cuba<sup>5</sup>/<sub>λ</sub>--does not rule them out completely but definitely and specifically limits them. The workers and farmers government theory is flawed because theoretically it contains no such limit.

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The party, however, in practice, has acted as if its theory did have such a limit. The comrades obviously concluded from Algeria that other Cubas would be most unlikely but they failed to explain this theoretically. Certainly Angola--the product of a civil war, led by quite radical sounding petty bourgeois nationalists, with Cuban troops present--was not viewed by the comrades as a potential Cuba. And yet, theoretically, from the theory developed around Cuba, that would have to be held as a strong possible development.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the theory I put forward has several merits: (1) It explains why it is all social transformations of the postwar era have created deformed workers states essentially identical in all critical respects. How can we explain an identical end product with differing and contradictory theories of the process of creation of this end product?

(2) It is consistent with, and is in fact a development of Trotsky's own theoretical work in developing his basic theories in the light of the 1940 events. It is thus completely Trotskyist. It holds to the outlook that Stalinism is completely counterrevolutionary, thermodynamic in character, basically a degeneration back towards capitalism, but a degenerative process that has not been completed. It thus sees Stalinism as temporary, unstable and crisis ridden. It is however capable of expansion in a reactionary way under exceptional

conditions. That expansion, however, rather than strengthening it in the long run contributes to its disintegration. While expanding, it does not abandon but clings to and deepens its anti-working class policies of collaboration with imperialism under any circumstances where such collaboration is possible.

(3) It preserves in all respects everywhere the Trotskyist perspective of political revolution, of a violent character, against the bureaucracy of all these states, including Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, and Cuba, under the leadership of a Trotskyist party. It preserves the central need to construct these parties in every country of the world and to fight on the basis of a Leninist strategy for leadership of the working class.

(4) It places clear and easily defined limits on the process of social transformation not under a Trotskyist leadership. It makes clear such transformations can happen--may even happen again in the future--but that indigenous forces alone are insufficient for such a development. Thus one must assess the whole international situation in which they occur--the policies of the imperialists as well as those of the Soviet countries and their connections. A process of social change which is dependent in any way on a counterrevolutionary force has by this fact alone a great limitation put upon it.

(5) It happens to be correct. That is, it is verified by the experiences in the world of the last 17 years. It fits the facts, The theory deserves, at this point in the theoretical development of the Fourth International, some serious consideration.

14 Charles Lane  
New York, NY 10014  
July 21, 1978

TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

In addition to Joe Hansen's book, Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution, which has already been sent to you, there are some other materials that will be helpful to read or reread in preparation for the discussion on Cuba at the August 14-16 meeting of the Political Committee in Oberlin.

Several educational bulletins contain relevant material. These are: The Workers and Farmers Government, by Joseph Hansen; Workers and Farmers Governments Since the Second World War, by Robert Chester; and Class, Party, and State and the Eastern European Revolution.

In addition, the 1973 article on China submitted by the International Majority Tendency to the international discussion bulletin, in effect proposes rescinding previously commonly held positions on the workers and farmers government. ("The Differences in Interpretation of the 'Cultural Revolution' at the Last World Congress and Their Theoretical Implications" in IIDB, Vol. X, No. 22, November 1973.)

Jack Barnes's report on "The Meaning of the IMT Steering Committee's Self-Criticism on Latin America" in IIDB, Vol. XIV, No. 5, May 1977, includes as appendices positions the International Secretariat took in 1960 in relation to Cuba, as well as the 1964 statement of the United Secretariat characterizing the regime in Algeria at that time as a "Workers and Peasants Government." The significance of these documents is discussed in the summary to the report.

The Revolutionary Marxist Papers Number 12, State Capitalism and the Proletarian Dictatorship, published by the Revolutionary Marxist Committee before the fusion, is the best explanation of the views of those comrades in the SWP who hold the state capitalist position. We also have these in the National Office.

Tim Wohlforth's 1964 document, "The Theory of Structural Assimilation," has just been republished by the Workers Socialist League in Britain along with a new article by Adam Westoby on the document. These are included in a book called 'Communists' Against Revolution. The National Office has a few copies of this book. Also relevant is a document by Tim Wohlforth on "The Postwar Social Overturns and Marxist Theory." This was submitted to the Political Committee in April 1977. We will mail copies to the NC in a few days.

Comradely,

*Larry Seigle*

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Larry Seigle  
National Office