

X: PC

c/o SWP
314 E. Taylor
Phoenix, Arizona 85004
November 10, 1978

David Frankel
c/o SWP National Office
14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

Dear Comrade Frankel:

In this letter I want to raise some questions concerning the approach the Party has taken towards the Cuban policy in Africa. I am writing to you because you authored the recent pamphlet that has seemed to guide all of the Party's propaganda, and I am not sure of the correct method to raise a criticism of the national line of the Party in the absence of a pre-convention discussion. I am writing you a letter because I do not like the way the Party is approaching the Cuba's Africa policy, but I do not have a clearly defined alternative of my own. I am writing to try to obtain clarification of the issues.

First let me say that I agree in general with the majority of the Party's present position on Cuba; that is, that the Castro leadership is not Stalinist or "state-capitalist," or degenerated to the point where we should call for a political revolution. Although I have not seen the word "centrist" used to define the Castro leadership, it seems accurate to me. Castro is not a revolutionary Marxist, but vacillates between Stalinist and revolutionary policies. Although there is a lot of Stalinism in Castro, the fact that he refuses to compromise his Africa policy as a bargaining chip for an end to the U.S. embargo indicates that there is still a little revolutionary content left in the Cuban leadership.

My main criticism of the Party's approach to Cuba's Africa policy concerns the way we have been weighing the positive aspects of Cuba's role compared to the negative aspects. The Party's approach, in particular your pamphlet, implies that the positive aspects far outweigh the negative. This is where I disagree. The only positive thing that I can see that the Cubans have done in Africa is to repel the South African invasion of Angola. But the negative side of the balance sheet includes helping to stabilize neocolonialist regimes in Angola and Ethiopia; not only through political support in speeches and newspaper articles but by Cuban troops helping to construct police apparatuses in these two states to suppress the struggles of the workers and peasants. You,

Comrade Hansen, and others refer to this negative side as "mistakes." But when other political tendencies in the working class give support to a capitalist government, much less defend it with arms against its workers, we call these acts betrayals. Why is it that when Castro does it, it is a "mistake," but if the Stalinists or the PCUM in the Spanish Civil War do it, it is a "betrayal?" Thus, my criticism concerns the tone, and degree to which we criticize the Castroist leadership, as well as how we weigh these "mistakes"-- or, to me, betrayals--in relation to the few progressive acts carried out by Cuba.

I also am uneasy about the change in the analysis made of the Somalian invasion of Ethiopia. You stated in your pamphlet that the invasion was aimed at the revolutionary process in Ethiopia. But that is very vague. Nobody has yet explained exactly how the Somalian invasion was bad for the revolutionary process taking place in Ethiopia. Was the Somalian army giving land back to the former landowners or something? Simply pointing out that U.S. imperialism encouraged the Somalian government to invade is not enough. I understand that the C.I.A. gives money to the Kurds to fight the government in Iraq. Should Cuba send troops to Iraq to help suppress the Kurdish struggle?

In fact, would not the Somalian invasion have added more instability to the situation in Ethiopia, making it more difficult for the Dergue to stabilize their state, and create openings for the masses? If, as you say, there was no national struggle of the Somalis in the Ogaden prior to the invasion, would not the invasion and nationalist demagoguery of the Somalian government serve to incite one? And is it not true that the imperialists are opposed to changing the old colonial borders in Africa, for fear of encouraging other nationalist struggles? Were these not some of the factors contributing to the imperialists half-hearted support to the Somalian invasion? It seems to me that a revolutionary course of action to deal with the Somalian invasion would be to grant the right of self-determination to the Somalis in the Ogaden, including the right to unify with Somalia. This would call the bluff of the demagoguery of the Somalian government. I am not sure that Somalia would want a group of aroused peasants in the Ogaden coming into Somalia to inspire the masses there. Nor do I think the U.S. imperialists would welcome such a prospect.

Carter's hostility, in my opinion, can be explained by the simple fact that Cuba cannot be depended upon, like the Stalinists to follow a consistent counterrevolutionary course and cooperate with the imperialists to hold back revolutions. Even though much of Cuba's foreign policy is counterrevolution-

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ary, and aids imperialism, at the same time they do not sit down with the imperialists and plan it all out, like the Stalinists do. Again, this goes back to the fact that the Cuban leadership has not yet degenerated to a qualitative degree, and is still capable of carrying out progressive acts. But just because Carter condemns Cuba for something does not make it progressive. At least, this is the way I was taught in the SWP; we do not simply put a "plus" where the ruling class puts a "minus;" we determine our analysis in an objective way. But this is what it seems we have done with Cuba. Since Carter has threatened Cuba, they must be doing something good.

Of course, I believe we should defend Cuba from Carter's threats. In fact, I think we should use Castro's denunciation of the hypocrisy of the U.S. imperialists: how can Carter complain about Cuban troops in Africa when the U.S. has troops all over the world? One point we have not been making in The Militant but should is the fact that the U.S. still has troops on Cuban soil--at Guantanamo. What hypocrisy! Included with the demand to end the embargo should be the demand: U.S. out of Guantanamo! The majority of American workers probably do not even know about this, and they need to in order to see through Carter's hypocrisy.

But I do not think that defending Cuba from the U.S. imperialists means that we have to cover up for Castro's betrayals, or gloss over them as "mistakes" or "errors." We should give credit where credit is due (repelling the South African invasion from Angola), but not say that the overall policy is revolutionary based on one incident.)

Again, my views are far from hardened; that is why I am writing to you. I do not want to take away too much time from your Militant writing assignments, but, if possible, try to answer my letter as soon as possible. The reason is that I am in the YSA which is having pre-convention discussion now. The NEC has included in the draft political resolution an analysis of the Cuban role in Africa similar to yours. For instance, the resolution states, after acknowledging some "errors," that...Cuba's foreign policy has been based on the goal of extending the revolution throughout the colonial and semicolonial world." I wonder what the worker militants in Neto and Mengistu's prisons would think about that? Or, for that matter, the young, left-wing political prisoners in Cuba?

I feel that it would be unprincipled to be silent in the pre-convention discussion about something I disagree with, but

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at the same time my own views are not clearly defined, and I could not present an alternative analysis. Essentially, I have some questions that need answering before I can go along with the majority position.

Feel free to show this letter to anyone else; like I mentioned earlier, I was not sure exactly who to write about this matter. (Just don't print it in anything, with all the spelling errors and bad style, with your reply!)

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rob Roper". The signature is written in dark ink and has a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

Rob Roper
Phoenix SMF