

The Cuban Revolution and its extension

Resolution of the Socialist Workers Party



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Preface

"The Cuban Revolution and its extension" is a resolution first written in September 1982 and adopted by the Australian Socialist Workers Party at its National Conference in January 1983. The SWP has also submitted this resolution for consideration by the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International.

In October 1984, the SWP's National Committee amended the resolution, and it is the amended version that is presented here. The purpose of these amendments was twofold.

In the first place, it was felt necessary to take account of two years of important political developments in the Caribbean and Central American region: the tragic defeat of the Grenadan revolution; the consolidation of the power of the workers and peasants in Nicaragua despite the stepped-up aggression of the US-backed counterrevolutionaries; the growth of the revolutionary struggle in El Salvador.

Secondly, while updating the resolution, the National Committee took the opportunity to incorporate the party's increased understanding of the Leninist theory of revolution in the underdeveloped countries, particularly as it relates to the Cuban Revolution. The party began restudying Lenin's views on this question following the victory of the Sandinistas in 1979, but at the time the resolution was drafted had not systematically applied the results of this study to the course followed by the July 26 Movement in its struggle against the Batista dictatorship and US imperialism. The amended resolution attempts to correct this deficiency.

Other changes are primarily the addition of more detail concerning the development of proletarian democracy in Cuba, and the rearrangement of several sections to give a more logical presentation.



Cuba: "Where the future becomes reality"

1. The central arena of the world revolution

Since 1979, the Caribbean-Central American region has been the focal point of the conflict between imperialism and the workers of the world. The powerful example of the Cuban socialist revolution is calling forth a historic challenge to capitalism and imperialism. In Nicaragua a workers and farmers' government led by proletarian revolutionists is guiding society along the road to the creation of a new socialist state, while in El Salvador and Guatemala the popular movements aiming to create similar revolutionary governments continue to grow in political and military strength. Vast sums of US military aid to the Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries and the Central American dictatorships have not reversed the revolutionary tide.

Imperialism has therefore put direct military intervention on the agenda. Imperialism cannot afford to allow the peaceful consolidation of new socialist states in the region. Nor can it afford new revolutionary victories in El Salvador and Guatemala. Economically, politically, and militarily, the Caribbean and Central and South America are the base and stronghold of US imperialism. In 1962 it demonstrated that it would risk nuclear war to maintain this stronghold. The stakes for imperialism are higher today than they were then.

The leaderships of the Central American-Caribbean revolution have demonstrated that they cannot be bought off with promises of "aid" and "detente." They have not been intimidated by threats. Imperialism has no alternative but to attempt to destroy them.

The US intervention has already begun: The invasion of

8 *The Cuban Revolution*
Grenada following the overthrow of the workers and peasants' government in that country was only the most overt action so far in a campaign that has included assassination attempts against the leaders of the Cuban Communist Party and Grenadan New Jewel Movement, CIA destabilisation and the organisation of Honduran-based counter-revolutionaries against Nicaragua, the supply of "advisers" and vast quantities of weapons to the dictatorships in El Salvador and Guatemala. But this is only the beginning.

US imperialism has not intervened more openly and massively so far only because of the opposition it would encounter from these revolutions and because of the tremendous price it would pay both domestically and worldwide. But Washington will use its own troops massively when it calculates that that price is outweighed by the cost of further revolutionary advances in the region.

Helping to defend these revolutions and stave off imperialist assault must be the highest priority of revolutionary Marxists in other countries. Concretely, this means doing everything in our power to raise the price that US imperialism would pay for intervention, primarily by building international understanding of and solidarity with the revolutions of Central America and the Caribbean.

Revolutionary Marxists must be active participants in solidarity organisations in each country, helping to create such organisations where they do not yet exist. Fourth Internationalists should affiliate to and actively build the activities of solidarity organisations initiated by the Caribbean-Central American revolutionaries themselves, such as the World Front in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. Our aim is to build broad united front actions involving working class, civil liberties, and all other organisations capable of agreeing on specific anti-imperialist actions.

Our press and other propaganda activity should reflect the high priority we place on this central arena of the world revolution. We should explain to the workers, particularly of the imperialist countries, why these revolutions are so important. We must help the workers to identify with these revolutions, to regard the workers and peasants of this region as their comrades, and to understand that they themselves need the sort of revolutionary proletarian leadership which stands at the head of the Caribbean and Central American revolutions.

2. The significance of the Cuban Revolution

The triumph in Cuba of the guerrilla forces of the July 26 Movement on January 1, 1959, and the passing over of the revolution from democratic to socialist tasks, culminating in the creation of a socialist state in late 1960, represented a major breakthrough in the worldwide struggle for socialism.

As the first socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere, the Cuban Revolution marked the beginning of the end of the imperialist "pax Americana" established following World War II. Anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles in the postwar period led to the creation of socialist states in China, North Vietnam, and North Korea. But while the imperialist powers were forced to grant formal political independence to most of their colonies, throughout the rest of Asia and Africa imperialism was able to keep the newly independent states within the framework of the capitalist world market, economically dependent and incapable of overcoming underdevelopment. Similarly, in the countries of South and Central America and the Caribbean — most of which had long been formally independent — US, and to a lesser extent European, capital maintained its seemingly unchallengeable domination, symbolised by the relative ease with which it overthrew the reformist Arbenz government of Guatemala in 1954.

This seeming invincibility of the imperialist system was dealt a powerful blow by the rapid development of the Cuban Revolution and the defeat of the US-organised invasion at Playa Giron in April 1961. Suddenly, even in its own "back yard," US imperialism was no longer all-powerful. Socialist revolution

was shown to be a practical, realistic path by which to overcome imperialist oppression, not merely in countries bordering the Soviet Union or other socialist states, where assistance against imperialist military aggression was more readily available, but anywhere that the exploited toilers waged a determined struggle with the guidance of a revolutionary leadership. Far more than any other of the postwar social transformations to that time, the Cuban Revolution demonstrated that socialist revolution was necessary and possible on a world scale. The heartland of capital's empire was as vulnerable to revolution as its periphery.

Multiplying the Cuban Revolution's impact on the international relationship of class forces was the fact that this was the first socialist revolution since the Russian Revolution directed by a leadership that originated outside the Stalinist current. This independence of Stalinism was emphasised and reinforced by the conservative and sectarian hostility displayed by the Stalinist Popular Socialist Party for the guerrilla struggle against Batista until May 1958. Similarly, in the period from January 1, 1959, to the consolidation of the Cuban socialist state, the PSP emerged as the chief ideological proponent (aside from the bourgeoisie itself) of confining the revolution to purely national-democratic tasks, of preventing it growing over uninterruptedly into a socialist revolution.

The Castro leadership's independence of Stalinism ensured a healthy beginning for the Cuban socialist state. Unlike the situation in Eastern Europe and China, the socialist transformation in Cuba was carried out with the full and active participation of the workers and peasants, without bureaucratic restrictions curtailing their mobilisation. Thus, from the beginning the Cuban toilers have been able to recognise both the gains and the difficulties encountered by the revolution as **their** gains and difficulties, rather than as the achievements or failures of a leadership separate from themselves.

Internationally, the Cuban Revolution contributed to undermining Stalinism's grip on the labor movement by destroying the bureaucratic misleaderships' claim to hold the sole key to socialist revolution. In the Cuban experience, Stalinism was clearly shown to be a conservative obstacle to revolution rather than the key. The Cuban leadership has attempted to win over forces to a revolutionary perspective even within the reformist Communist parties in South America — and at times quite successfully. Many, if not most, of the leadership of the pro-Fidelista groups in Latin America have

their origins in the Communist parties. On occasion, the Cubans have polemicised against specific Communist parties in Latin America, such as the Venezuelan CP, in defence of those carrying out a revolutionary orientation.

But the Castro team's contribution to resolving the crisis of revolutionary leadership goes beyond the necessary but negative task of undermining Stalinism's ability to divert the revolutionary strivings of the exploited into class-collaborationist channels. The Cuban revolutionaries have provided a host of positive lessons for revolutionaries in other countries. Among the most important of these are the Cubans' stress on international solidarity, the necessity of relying on the mass organisation and activity of the working people, the centrality of a firm worker-peasant alliance, how to use diplomacy for revolutionary purposes, and the need to defend socialist revolution by extending it internationally. These are key aspects of the Marxist-Leninist program that had been all but obliterated by decades of Stalinist misleadership of the socialist states.



3. Progress against underdevelopment

In a little more than two decades, and under conditions of imperialist economic blockade and military threat, the Cuban Revolution has made huge strides in overcoming the legacy of underdevelopment and improving the standard of living of the workers and peasants. While the complete and rational development of the Cuban economy is impossible so long as it is not integrated into a worldwide socialist economy, Cuba provides an outstanding example of what can be achieved through the establishment of a nationalised, planned economy.

Chronic unemployment, once the scourge of the Cuban proletariat as of all the neocolonial economies, has been eliminated.

Despite planning errors in the first decade of the revolution, based primarily on insufficient appreciation of the objective limitations on rapid economic development, there has been sustained growth of the economy. The government has correctly recognised the importance of protection against the fluctuations in world market prices for agricultural products, and has to a large extent secured this protection through long-term trade agreements with the European socialist states.

While sugar production remains dominant in the economic plan, there has been considerable diversification of both agriculture and industry within the bounds imposed by the country's size and its stage of technological development. There has been notable progress in mechanisation of sugar and other agricultural production, a process that both lightens the effort required of the working class and frees labor to develop other areas of the economy. Cuba has avoided the overemphasis on heavy industry achieved at the cost of limitations on mass

consumption that is characteristic of the Stalinised socialist states.

From 1958 to 1980 steel production increased more than 12 times, to 303,000 tonnes, and per capita cement and electricity production rose nearly five times. The mechanisation of agriculture is reflected by number of tractors, which increased six-fold to 54,000 in the first decade and a half of the revolution. While the number of canecutters has declined from 350,000 to 100,000 since 1970, employment in construction more than doubled, to 272,000, from 1970 to 1978.

The 1970s in particular saw a dramatic rise in industrial production. This has included the creation of new branches of industry. By 1980 some 48,000 people were employed in the machine building industry alone. The electronics and computer industry has been developed from scratch. Chemical production has grown from 7 to 11 per cent of total industrial output, and metal and engineering production from 1.4 to 9.7 per cent since the revolution. While sugar production has been maintained, its overall role in an industry has fallen from 26 to 11.5 per cent of total production. Many of the developing industries such as textiles and cement are now export oriented.

This industrialisation has been accompanied by a rise in the availability of consumer durables. Between 1970 and 1983 the number of these increased dramatically. The percentage of households with televisions rose from 17 to 73 per cent, as did the figures for refrigerators (24 to 65 per cent), washing machines (0 to 36 per cent), and radios (61 to 83 per cent).

There has been a notable improvement in the average income over the revolution's two decades. Unlike the situation in capitalist countries, this average reflects a real economic phenomenon, rather than an abstraction concealing extremes of wealth and poverty.

The dirt-floored *bohio* characteristic of prerevolutionary Cuba has all but disappeared, even in the more remote rural areas. Rents have been reduced to a small fraction of wages.

Free medical care is available to all, of a quality and accessibility unmatched by any other underdeveloped country and even rivaling that of some highly developed capitalist countries. The infant mortality rate, the most characteristic indicator of the level of health care, is lower in Cuba today than it is in the capital city of the United States. France has 135 doctors per 100,000 population. Cuba has 205 doctors per 100,000.

Education is free at all levels from preschool through university, including materials, books, and transportation.

Food shortages created by the imperialist economic blockade have been largely overcome, and those items still in short supply are shared equitably through rationing. Meat and poultry are still rationed, but fish, eggs, and dairy products, strictly rationed during the first decade of the revolution, are freely available at reasonable prices, as are fruits and vegetables in season. The quality and quantity of clothing available to the average Cuban have also greatly improved.

Cuban workers enjoy benefits such as social security, paid maternity leave, and subsidised holidays superior to those of workers in many imperialist countries.



July 26, 1980: crowd listening to Fidel in Ciego de Avila

4. Social gains

The revolution's impressive economic gains have been matched by equally important social conquests. Among those to benefit most from these conquests have been women and Blacks.

Prior to the revolution, Cuban women suffered the extreme oppression faced by women in colonial and semicolonial countries. In 1959, only 9.8 per cent of Cuban women had jobs, and 70 per cent of those were employed as domestic servants. Many were forced into prostitution. Contraception and abortion were illegal. Women were discouraged from taking an active part in society, and in many families women had to have a chaperone when they left the house. Overall, the effects of imperialist domination — malnutrition, illiteracy, poor housing and medical care — were doubly felt by women.

Despite these obstacles, women were drawn into revolutionary activity in the 1950s, playing a number of different roles. Some women became guerrilla fighters, and a women's unit was formed which distinguished itself by its courageous actions.

The creation of militias after the revolution was the first means of involving women on a mass scale in defence of the revolution. Although initially there was a questioning of women's role in the militias, every able-bodied person was needed to defend the country, and women were able to win acceptance of their right to participate in the militias.

The formation of the CDRs in 1960 also drew many more women into revolutionary activity. Another step was the formation of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) in August 1960, which provided a means for women to discuss and

organise to solve the problems they faced as women.

Women played an important role in, and especially benefited from, the mass literacy campaign carried out in 1961. Over half the volunteer teachers were women, many of them young women who had to leave their homes and travel into remote parts of Cuba — a radical departure from the chaperone system of only a few years earlier. Fifty-five per cent of those who learned to read and write were women. As well, women were encouraged to participate in the vast number of new educational programs being opened up.

Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders showed the way in raising consciousness about the role of women in the revolution. The growing confidence of women played a key part in helping to change old attitudes. The Cuban leadership recognised the need to incorporate women into the workforce both as a means of expanding production and to challenge the economic dependence and domestic isolation of women. In 1968, the FMC initiated a campaign to draw 100,000 new women into the workforce each year. During this campaign many of the old job stereotypes were broken down, with women becoming doctors, technicians, and cane cutters.

While the campaign was successful in this regard, it also highlighted the many problems that Cuban women faced in their struggle for equality. While many new women came into the workforce, domestic pressures, lack of services such as childcare centres, and continuing sexist attitudes all combined to make the net increase of women in the workforce average a little under 40,000 a year between 1969 and 1974.

Similar problems were also revealed in a study called for by Fidel Castro after the first People's Power election in 1974, when only a small percentage of women were elected.

The problems encountered in deepening the integration of women into public activity stemmed directly from the lack of material resources in the Cuban economy. This was particularly acute in the late 1960s and early 1970s. There were insufficient material resources to build the necessary childcare centres and other such services which would relieve women of their domestic chores. As well, rationing of goods and the provision of social services such as free medical care meant that there was not a strong economic incentive for women to join the workforce.

All these problems were analysed by the FMC and the Cuban Communist Party, and in 1975 a new stage was opened in advancing the struggle for women's equality. A number of

measures were projected such as expanding childcare centres, laundries, and cafeterias; reviving a Women's Front in the trade unions to try to solve the problems of women workers; and a drive to improve the educational level of women. In 1974, an advanced maternity-leave law was passed.

Particularly important was the opening up of an ideological campaign to educate people on women's rights. A central aspect of this campaign was the mass discussion of the new Family Code, which contained articles stipulating that women should be equal in marriage, that men should share in housework and raising children, and that both members of a couple have an equal right to work and study.

The conscious attention paid to trying to remove obstacles to women's full participation in society has resulted in further gains for Cuban women. Many problems still remain. While the new measures undertaken over recent years have lifted the percentage of the workforce who are women from 25 per cent to 39 per cent, many women still remain in the home. The struggle for women's equality in Cuba, however, has to be viewed as an ongoing process, a process that has to contend with Cuba's economic limitations.

The overall direction of the Cuban leadership in pushing forward this process is in accord with the traditional Marxist position of ending the economic chains that maintain the family system and the oppression of women in capitalist societies.

Freely available abortion and contraception, easily obtainable divorce, the right to work, and the provision of social services all help to free Cuban women from economic dependence on the family. In particular, childcare centres which provide free meals and medical services, and the new boarding-school system in which Cuban children participate in work-study programs, have helped to lighten the burden on women. These facilities also have benefits for children, who have the opportunity to develop their own confidence and independence.

Big steps forward have also been made in eliminating racism in Cuban society. One of the first acts of the revolution was to ban racial discrimination, which had prevented Blacks in prerevolutionary Cuba from going into certain areas such as beaches, hotels, and clubs, and from taking certain jobs. Legal penalties were introduced for anyone who refused to employ or provide services to Blacks.

The revolutionary leadership adopted a policy of undermining the ideology of racism through patient education, exposing the

class interests served by racial oppression. Typical was the following in an adult education manual prepared by the Ministry of Education:

"In all times and places racism (and national hatred) have been the means to oppress people. To justify colonial oppression in Asia and Africa, the colonials invoked the 'inferiority' of the people. The anti-national groups in our country, the great interests (foreign companies, large landholders, parasitic magnates) found racial discrimination and the persistence of prejudice beneficial and convenient, because they contributed to divisions among the people and permitted them to have at their disposal a reserve labor force for the most arduous work and creating fears that maintain distrust and weaken the Revolution. . . .

"Racial prejudice and discrimination in Cuba date from the slave period during which it reached its greatest height. It was necessary to proceed as if the slave was not a human being, or was an inferior being, and it likewise suited the slaveholder to make the slave believe this in order to dominate him more easily.

"When slavery ended, there remained in society the same discriminatory venom that used to justify it, since the criteria of inferiority accumulated against those who were exploited as slaves continued to be used once they were free to oppress them and their descendants as Negroes.

"The nature of the relationship of subordination that our country maintained until recently with the United States, where racial segregation has so much virulence, also contributed to the persistence in Cuba of discriminatory attitudes. This had a lot to do with the fact that when the War of Independence was over the foreign occupiers deprived humble Cubans, especially the Negroes, of the opportunity to participate in the development and enjoyment of the wealth of the country. . . .

"Whites and Negroes participated together in the revolutionary war against Batista and his foreign protectors.

"The Cuban nation, then — its culture, its real independence — is inconceivable if the Negro is left out of the historic past and revolutionary present. The union and brotherhood of whites and Negroes is indispensable for the triumph of the Revolution. . . ." (quoted in **How Cuba Uprooted Race Discrimination**, by Harry Ring. Pioneer Publishers, pp. 12-14)

While racial prejudice still exists among backward elements of the older generation, it is no more than a disappearing legacy

of the past. And Cuba's internationalist and anti-imperialist foreign policy has made it a leading fighter against racism internationally.

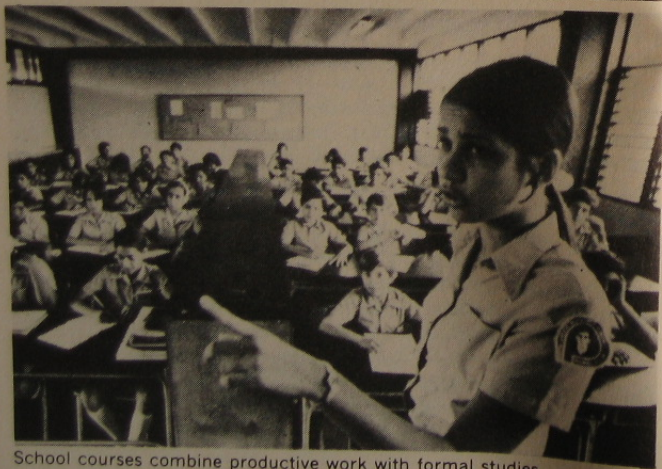
In recent years, the government has also repealed the laws inherited from prerevolutionary Cuba that made homosexuality a crime. Also abandoned are the propaganda campaigns against homosexuality that were carried out in the early years of the revolution. While anti-homosexual prejudices remain strong in Cuba and there has been no official effort to counter them, sexual preferences are regarded as a person's private affair.

Cuba is also outstanding in Latin America for the development of the arts since the beginning of the revolution. The unfortunate Padilla affair of 1971, which might have heralded moves towards imposing the sterile cultural conformity of the Stalinised socialist states, has not been repeated. On the contrary, there is wide freedom of expression within the revolution, and Cuban arts, particularly film, literature, and music, are widely known for both their seriousness and diversity. The Cuban government and mass organisations act on the belief that cultural pursuits and sports should not be the exclusive preserve of a small elite, but part of the normal recreational activity of workers and farmers. "Amateur" movements in various artistic fields are a product of this concern.

The truly remarkable gains of the Cuban Revolution — achieved despite imperialist sabotage and economic blockade — make it obvious why Cuba continues to be a revolutionary inspiration for the exploited and oppressed of Latin America and of much of the rest of the underdeveloped world. Indeed, with the long-term stagnation of the international capitalist economy and the accompanying attacks on workers' living standards, Cuba will more and more provide even the working classes in the imperialist countries with a favorable example of what can be achieved through a government that represents the interests of workers and working farmers.

Cuba's example is made all the more powerful by the revolution's long record of selfless internationalism. Instead of hoarding their hard-won gains to themselves, the Cuban people have sought to share them with other peoples victimised by imperialist exploitation. The thousands of Cuban internationalist doctors, teachers, technicians, and agricultural specialists working in other countries are living proof of the

great progress that has been and is still being made by the revolution — progress in both material well-being and in creating a society whose highest principle is human solidarity.



School courses combine productive work with formal studies

5. The creation of the Cuban socialist state

The program of the July 26 Movement from the time of its founding until after the victory over Batista was a revolutionary-democratic one. It centred on such demands as constitutional rule by the majority, equality before the law, and punishment of those who had usurped the government. Its social and economic program did not explicitly go beyond the framework of bourgeois property relations, but the revolutionary-democratic content of its proposals had a clearly transitional character. These included profit-sharing by workers, confiscation of illegally amassed wealth, and nationalisation of the electricity and telephone trusts. The centrepiece of the social program was a thorough agrarian reform, to enforce the provision of the 1940 constitution that forbade the holding of more than 1000 acres in a single property.

The Castro grouping subordinated everything they did, including military action, to publicising their revolutionary-democratic aims. As a result, even setbacks could be turned to advantage. The July 26, 1953, attack on the Moncada army barracks that launched the revolutionary struggle was a military defeat for the rebels. But it was converted into a political victory by the propagandising of the rebels' aims and Castro's famous court speech "History Will Absolve Me." The wave of popular support for the rebels forced Batista to release Castro from prison. In launching the next stage of the struggle, Castro again put politics ahead of military considerations, publicly announcing in advance that the *Granma* would be landing in Cuba.

As the Rebel Army they formed in the Sierra Maestra

mountains began to consolidate its military position, the Castro team began to implement their radical agrarian program in the territory they controlled. This won them increasing support among the peasantry.

While the main base of support for the Rebel Army was among the peasantry, the July 26 Movement leaders also sought to build support among the urban working class and the agricultural workers on the big plantations (*latifundia*). The student movement was also an important base of support. Many of the July 26 Movement leaders had themselves become politically active originally as students, and the student-based Revolutionary Directorate was an urban ally of the rural guerrillas. Activity in the cities involved raising funds and supplies for the Rebel Army, gathering intelligence, spreading propaganda, strikes, and acts of sabotage.

A general strike called for April 9, 1958, failed as a result of a number of objective and subjective factors. Among the latter was the conservatism of the Stalinist Popular Socialist Party and the bourgeois-liberal allies of the July 26 Movement. As the struggle deepened the differences between the latter and the revolutionary forces around Castro became clearer.

Through 1958 popular opposition to the corrupt and brutal Batista dictatorship continued to grow. Finally, unable to stem the military advances of the Rebel Army and the wave of popular support for it, the ranks of Batista's army began to revolt and discipline broke down in the officer corps. Support for the July 26 Movement in the cities now became overwhelming, with a general strike preparing the way for the Rebel Army's entry to Havana in January 1959.

The victory over Batista resulted in a coalition government, in which bourgeois forces held the most prominent posts. Two bourgeois liberals, Manuel Urrutia and Miro Cardona, became respectively president and prime minister, while Fidel Castro took no post in the government. Fidel later commented:

"The revolution was not sectarian; if the revolution had been sectarian, it would never have put into the ranks of the government such gentlemen as Rufo Lopez Fresquet, Miro Cardona or Mr. Justo Carrillo and some others of that kind. We knew how those gentlemen thought: we knew they were men of plenty conservative mentality. But the fact is that the government itself of the republic, in the first days of the triumph, was not in the hands of the revolutionaries; the government itself of the republic was not in the hands of the men who had spent many years struggling and sacrificing; it

was not in the hands of the men who had been in prisons and had fought in the mountains; it was not in the hands of the men who lit that revolutionary spark and knew how, even in the moments of greatest uncertainty and scepticism, to carry aloft the banner of the revolution, and with that the faith of the people, to bring them to the triumph." (*Bohemia*, April 2, 1961, quoted in *The Nature of the Cuban Revolution*, Education for Socialists, pp. 23-24)

The Castro team, learning from the 1954 CIA-organised coup against the reformist Arbenz government in Guatemala, refused to allow the reconstitution of a bourgeois military force. They immediately moved to disband the remnants of Batista's army and police.

Thus a situation analogous to the dual power created by the February 1917 revolution in Russia appeared in Cuba during the early months of 1959. While armed power lay with the worker-peasant Rebel Army headed by Castro, the bourgeois liberals held the governmental apparatus in their hands. As Fidel later commented:

"I recall in those early days the responsibility for making revolutionary laws was left in their hands. . . . Throughout the whole period, we waited to see what would happen. . . . The first weeks went by and they had not passed a single revolutionary law. We had to put up with this because some of the gentlemen had a certain following among the people. . . ." (*Fidel Castro Speaks on Marxism-Leninism*, p. 27)

The contradiction between the government's inaction and the revolutionary-democratic goals which the Castro team continued to argue for had to be resolved. On February 16, Castro became prime minister, with a mandate to implement his democratic program.

On May 17, the agrarian reform law was adopted. Holdings larger than 1000 acres were seized and distributed among landless peasants and agricultural workers. All the cane land belonging to large sugar mills was taken, as was land owned by non-Cubans. The former landowners were compensated with long-term government bonds. The National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) was created to oversee the reform; it became another and important element of the counterpower to the bourgeois elements of the provisional government.

Other measures carried out included the elimination of governmental corruption, reduction of housing rents by 30 to 50 per cent, reduction of taxes on most wage-earners by two-thirds

and the prosecution of wealthy tax-evaders, the closing of the gambling dens and brothels of Havana, confiscation of the homes of wealthy emigres, the imposition of currency and import controls, and the opening of the books of US-owned utilities, followed by a reduction in their charges.

However, the bourgeois liberals continued to use their governmental positions to resist the most radical measures, particularly the agrarian reform. Matters came to a head in July 1959, when President Urrutia's opposition to the agrarian reform law led to Castro's resignation.

The revolutionary leadership of the July 26 Movement, supported by the trade unions, organised a series of mass demonstrations that forced Urrutia to resign. He was replaced by Osvaldo Dorticos, a firm supporter of Castro, and Castro resumed his post as prime minister. While bourgeois elements remained in the government for some time after this, they were unable to resist the implementation of the Castro grouping's revolutionary measures. Basing himself on the support of the worker-peasant masses, Castro was able to remove them one by one from the regime.

The mass mobilisations in July 1959 produced a shift in the class relationship of forces that enabled the Castro grouping to resolve the dual power situation in favor of the workers and peasants. The government that emerged out of the July 1959 crisis, while still including personnel from the bourgeois coalition government set up in January 1959, was nevertheless of a qualitatively different character from the latter. Governmental power was now in the hands of those who represented the interests of the exploited classes rather than the exploiting classes. The way was now open for the Cuban masses to use this lever to defend their existing gains and to go on to conquer new ones, including the eventual elimination of capitalist exploitation.

The Castro government formed in July 1959 was a **workers and farmers' government**. Such a government is described in the Transitional Program of the Fourth International, written by Leon Trotsky in 1938, as a "government independent of the bourgeoisie," and a "short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat."

The idea of such a government was first conceived by the Bolsheviks and elaborated on at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922. The "Theses on Tactics" adopted at that congress describe the workers and farmers' government as a government that is "born out of the struggle of

the masses, is supported by workers' bodies that are capable of fighting, bodies created by the most oppressed sections of the working masses."

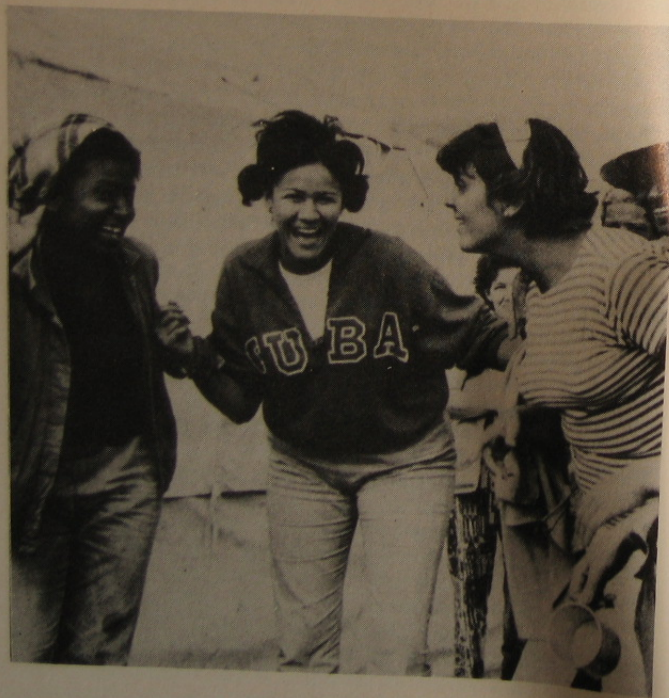
According to the "Theses," the elementary measures which distinguish such a government "consist in arming the proletariat, disarming the counterrevolutionary bourgeois organisations, installing supervision over production, shifting the main burden of taxation onto the rich, and smashing the resistance of the bourgeois counterrevolution." They point out that such governments "fall short of representing the dictatorship of the proletariat, but are still an important starting-point for winning this dictatorship."

The Castro government as it emerged out of the July 1959 crisis fulfilled these criteria. It was formed out of the struggle of the worker-peasant masses and based itself on their mobilisations and on the armed power of the worker-peasant Rebel Army. Its independence from the bourgeoisie was indicated by its refusal to subordinate the implementation of its revolutionary-democratic program to the interests and property rights of the bourgeoisie, either Cuban or foreign.

Regardless of the number of bourgeois-democratic tasks not yet completely solved, or the number of socialist tasks on which a beginning had been made in the period of dual power, the creation of the workers and peasants' government was a qualitative leap on the road to socialist revolution. From that point on, the long-term safeguarding of capitalist property would have required the destruction of the workers and peasants' government (by domestic counter-revolution or foreign imperialism).

The workers and peasants' government was also a **necessary** stage in the process of creating the Cuban socialist state. The number of uncompleted bourgeois-democratic tasks and the specific weight of the peasantry in Cuban society dictated that the destruction of the old order could be accomplished only through a government based upon both exploited classes and dedicated to solving the historic tasks specific to each of these classes. The expropriation of the big bourgeoisie could not be carried out instantaneously. Until that expropriation was accomplished, capitalist property relations still predominated, and therefore the full dictatorship of the proletariat had not come into existence. The Cuban workers and farmers' government was thus the transitional form of state power of a society passing from the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The high percentage of US ownership of agricultural land, the virtually unanimous opposition of Cuba's capitalists even to reforms within the framework of bourgeois property relations, the early flight abroad of the Cuban bourgeoisie, and the increasingly overt attempts to destroy the revolution by whatever means required, made it necessary for the revolutionary government to lead the working masses to a relatively rapid expropriation of capitalist property. In the period August-October 1960, the overwhelming majority of capitalist enterprises were nationalised and a proletarian dictatorship consolidated in Cuba.



6. The political course of the Castro leadership

In preparing the struggle against the Batista regime and its imperialist backers, the young intellectuals who became the leaders of the July 26 Movement carefully studied the history of revolutions, successful and unsuccessful, in Latin America, Europe, and Asia. This study, combined with the concrete experience of attempting to mobilise the social forces necessary to overthrow the dictatorship, enabled the Castro team to develop a program and strategy of alliances based on the Marxist-Leninist strategy of revolution in the underdeveloped countries.

The Castro team did not use Marxist terminology or present an explicitly Marxist analysis of Cuban society and its relations with imperialism. But it was able to lead the Cuban workers and peasants in implementing the Marxist program of socialist revolution because this program, as Marx and Engels themselves explained in the *Communist Manifesto*, is not "based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer." Rather, it is based on "actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes." Marx, Engels, and — using their scientific method — their successors uncovered the fundamental laws of motion of capitalist society and its transformation, through the revolutionary action of the proletariat and its allies, into socialist society. On the basis of these objective laws of motion they formulated a program expressing "the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."

The decisive role of the alliance of the working class and the poor peasantry, under the leadership of the former, in completing the national-democratic revolution and the uninterrupted growing over of this revolution into a socialist revolution are not merely desirable goals, but objective laws of the class struggle.

It was therefore not necessary for the masses of Cuban workers and peasants to accept an explicitly Marxist program in order to begin the transformation of society. Mobilised by the July 26 Movement to carry through its revolutionary-democratic program, they inevitably met obstacles that could be overcome only by socialist measures, which the Fidelista leadership then implemented with mass support. In this way, the workers and peasants overcame through their own experiences the anti-Marxist conditioning of capitalist propaganda.

In an article that appeared in the armed forces magazine *Verde Olivo* on October 8, 1960, Che Guevara outlined a similar explanation of the course of the revolution:

"This is a unique revolution which some people maintain contradicts one of the most orthodox premises of the revolutionary movement, expressed by Lenin: 'Without a revolutionary theory there is no revolutionary movement.' It would be suitable to say that revolutionary theory, as the expression of a social truth, surpasses any declaration of it; that is to say, even if the theory is not known, the revolution can succeed if historical reality is interpreted correctly and if the forces are utilized correctly. . . .

"There are truths so evident, so much a part of people's knowledge, that it is now useless to discuss them. One ought to be a 'Marxist' with the same naturalness with which one is 'Newtonian' in physics, or 'Pasteurian' in biology. . . .

"The Cuban Revolution takes up Marx at the point where he himself left science to shoulder his revolutionary rifle. And it takes him up at that point, not in a revisionist spirit, of struggling against that which follows Marx, of reviving 'pure' Marx, but simply because up to that point Marx, the scientist, placed himself outside of the history he studied and predicted. From then on Marx, the revolutionary, could fight within history.

"We practical revolutionaries, initiating our own struggle, simply fulfill the laws foreseen by Marx, the scientist. We are simply adjusting ourselves to the predictions of the scientific

Marx as we travel this road of rebellion, struggling against the old structure of power, supporting ourselves in the people for the destruction of this structure, and having the happiness of this people as the basis of our struggle. That is to say, and it is well to emphasize this once again: The laws of Marxism are present in the events of the Cuban Revolution, independently of what its leaders profess or fully know of those laws from a theoretical point of view. . . .

"[On January 1, 1959,] ends the insurrection. But the men who arrive in Havana after two years of arduous struggle in the mountains and plains of Oriente, in the plains of Camaguey, and in the mountains, plains, and cities of Las Villas, are not the same men, ideologically, who landed on the beaches of Las Coloradas, or who took part in the first phase of the struggle. Their distrust of the *campesino* has been converted into affection and respect for his virtues; their total ignorance of life in the country has been converted into a knowledge of the needs of our *guajiros*; their flirtations with statistics and with theory have been fixed by the cement which is practice.

"With the banner of Agrarian Reform, the execution of which begins in the Sierra Maestra, these men confront imperialism. They know that the Agrarian Reform is the basis upon which the new Cuba must build itself. They know also that the Agrarian Reform will give land to all the dispossessed, but that it will dispossess its unjust possessors; and they know that the greatest of the unjust possessors are also influential men in the State Department or in the government of the United States of America. But they have learned to conquer difficulties with bravery, with audacity and, above all, with the support of the peoples; and they have now seen the future of liberation that awaits us on the other side of our sufferings." (Che Guevara *Speaks*, Merit Publishers, pp. 18-23)

Fidel presented a similar explanation of his own political evolution in an interview in 1963:

"It was a gradual process, a dynamic process in which the pressure of events forced me to accept Marxism as the answer to what I was seeking. . . .

"So as events developed, I gradually moved into a Marxist-Leninist position. I cannot tell you just when; the process was so gradual and so natural." (Fidel Castro, by Herbert Matthews, p. 186)

In the two decades since, the Cuban revolutionaries have further enriched their understanding of Marxism, both from

theoretical studies and from the experience of leading the Cuban socialist state. This can be seen through an examination of a number of key areas of their policy.



City worker goes to countryside

7. The alliance of workers and peasants

The agrarian reform that has been carried out in the course of the Cuban Revolution is the most successful of any revolution in history, including the Bolshevik Revolution. (The Bolsheviks of course had to contend with a far larger peasantry and a situation in which they found it necessary to begin by implementing the program of the Social Revolutionaries rather than their own program. And of course, Cuba had not suffered the enormous destruction of industry and transport with which the Bolsheviks had to deal.) The result has been the forging of an unbreakable worker-peasant alliance and a great increase in agricultural productivity.

The agrarian reform was carried out in two distinct stages. The first was the reform of May 1959, which placed a ceiling of 404 hectares on landholdings. The expropriated land was made available free to some 700,000 landless peasants and agricultural workers, with priority going to tenants, sharecroppers, or squatters who had been living on the land. Each family was guaranteed a minimum of 25 hectares, with the right to purchase an additional 40 hectares. This land could be passed on to a single heir, but could not be sold or otherwise alienated, except to the state.

Laborers on the sugar plantations had a long tradition of collective struggles and therefore, for the most part, little interest in owning or working individual plots. The National Institute of Agrarian Reform, which was headed by Fidel Castro, began organizing this agricultural proletariat into co-operatives on a completely voluntary basis. These co-operatives were quickly and smoothly transformed into state farms. In this way, 40 per cent of Cuban agriculture was

collectivised.

At the same time, small farmers were guaranteed the title to their lands. The revolution saw to it that they received other important benefits as well, including the literacy campaign, health care, new housing, and schools.

The first reform left a significant layer of agricultural capitalists and rich peasants, estimated by Carlos Rafael Rodríguez (*Cuba en el tránsito al socialismo*) to number about 10,000, and holding an average of about 170 hectares each. This layer collaborated with the counter-revolutionary bands established by the CIA in remote areas of the Island in 1961 and 1962, and also engaged in economic sabotage. The second agrarian reform, in October 1963, eliminated this layer.

All landholdings greater than 67 hectares were expropriated. (As in the first reform, compensation was paid in long-term government bonds. This time, however, the compensation was not for the full value of the land.) Fidel Castro summarised the reasons for the second reform, and its limits, in a speech to the Third Congress of the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) in May 1967:

"Naturally, it was absolutely necessary to carry out a second reform. Why was it so vital? Because a large part of those landowners who still had between 250 and 500 hectares were virtually sabotaging production. It was necessary to carry out the other agrarian reform.

"What did they do then? They began to say, 'Our turn is coming next.' Then the Revolution stated — and this Revolution has been characterized by doing what it says, it has been characterized by its seriousness, for keeping its word — the Revolution said, 'there will be no more agrarian reforms.' The process of agrarian laws and reforms lasted up to that moment, in fact."

Castro explained the reason for this pledge:

"The bourgeoisie in general and the landowners used many arguments. They said to the peasant farmer, 'This is socialism, and that means they're going to socialize your land.' We came along and said to the peasant farmers, 'This is socialism and that means we're not going to socialize your land.' Because socialism is a realistic and scientific conception of society, and because the poor and exploited peasant is definitely an ally of the working class. And since the poor and exploited peasantry is an ally of the working class, the peasantry must be treated as revolutionary, it must be treated as a comrade, as a friend, it must receive all the political consideration to which it is

entitled."

Following the Fifth Congress of the National Association of Small Farmers in 1977, the government stepped up efforts to persuade small farmers to amalgamate into co-operatives. There is no coercion; the aim is to convince the small farmers, by argument and example, that the change will improve their working and living conditions. In the December 3, 1979, issue of *Intercontinental Press*, Jose Perez described a conversation that Juan Jose Leon, the vice-president of ANAP, had with members of the Antonio Maceo Brigade:

"Leon told us that the government would like to advance toward collectivization of the small farms as quickly as possible, but not at the cost of breaking its pledge to small farmers. He said their policy was based on the program of the *Communist Manifesto*:

"The goal of the revolution is to eliminate the difference between the countryside and the city. The basic tool we are using right now is promotion of cooperatives, convincing the small farmer.

"We can't take any other measures except convincing the peasants. If we are incapable of convincing the Cuban farmer that collective production is better than individual production, that means we have failed politically. Forced measures would mean the political failure of our revolution."

In a speech to the Sixth Congress of ANAP on May 17, 1982, Fidel Castro re-emphasised both the gains to be made from formation of co-operatives and the state farms and the government's pledge that no coercion would be involved:

"... Even though over 70 percent — nearly 80 percent of the land (including that made available under the Agrarian Reform Laws or acquired in other ways and rented land) had already been included in state enterprises in one way or another, we had reached a point where the economy and the population required that agricultural production on the remaining 20 to 25 percent of the land be developed technically. Small-scale private ownership had given all or nearly all it could. Sugarcane was being harvested by machine in many places, crop-dusting techniques were being used to spread herbicides and pesticides and irrigation systems were being developed; all this was practically impossible with so many tiny plots. . . .

"... Following the 2nd Agrarian Reform Law, it was announced that this was the last land reform — that is, everybody could relax — and this promise was kept. It was also

promised that no farmers would be compelled to join a farm or a cooperative, and this, too was and will be strictly kept, as Pepe [Ramirez, president of ANAP] pointed out here at the end of his speech. This principle has been scrupulously respected. . . .

"I wasn't an ardent believer in cooperatives.

"Whenever I speak of higher forms of production, I've always thought and still think that state enterprises are the highest. I've always liked the idea of having agriculture develop like industry and of having agricultural workers be like industrial workers. An industrial worker doesn't own the industry or production, except as part of the people, for the people are the owners of industry and production.

"I've always liked that form the best, but it wasn't the most realistic one. The most realistic form — since the most realistic thing is always the most revolutionary one — for the farmers' land, that 20 to 25 percent of the land that the farmers retained, was to use both methods: state enterprises and cooperatives. . . .

"We made little headway in 1977. As I recall, according to Pepe's report, there were 44 cooperatives, with 6052 hectares of land. It was slow going at first. It seemed it would take a lot of work for the idea of the cooperatives to catch on, but we said there should be no pressure or haste, that we should let the farmers gradually convince themselves of the advantages offered by the cooperatives. That was how this movement began.

"I used to think — and I still do — that this movement will last eight or ten years more, until a higher form of production is introduced on most of the land now individually owned. . . .

"I think our countryside will have a great future and I am sure that the day will come when, what with the state enterprises and the cooperatives, our agriculture will be highly developed — not just for Latin America, where we're already far ahead of the other countries, but also one of the most highly developed agricultures in the world (APPLAUSE) and one of the most thorough agrarian revolutions ever effected, (APPLAUSE) without resorting to violence, without using coercion and with the strictest respect for our workers' and farmers' feelings and wishes." (*Granma Weekly Review*, May 30, 1982).

By May 1984, the co-operative movement had already succeeded in forming 1457 co-operatives, covering 56 per cent of the land owned by small farmers.

On the worker-peasant alliance — one of the most central issues for a socialist revolution in an agricultural country — the Cuban revolutionary leadership has for more than two decades carried out a progressive and flexible agrarian policy unmatched in history. The lessons of this experience have enriched the Marxist understanding of relations between the proletariat and the peasantry under a workers and peasants' government and under the dictatorship of the proletariat.



National Assembly in session

8. The development of proletarian democracy

From its beginning to the present day, the Cuban Revolution has been characterised by an extremely high level of active participation by the masses of workers and farmers. From the two Declarations of Havana to the five-million strong March of the Fighting People in 1980, the masses have mobilised again and again to defend and advance their revolution.

The great popularity of the leadership team around Fidel Castro is a product not only of the tremendous social and economic gains brought by the revolution, but also of the Castroists' acute sensitivity to the needs and concerns of the working people, their ability to express the most pressing problems of the masses and suggest ways in which they can be overcome. The leadership has repeatedly stressed that the progress of the revolution must be the work of the workers and farmers themselves, not of government administrators or party officials.

Because of the success of the leadership in meeting the needs and wishes of the Cuban people, the process of institutionalising forms of mass democratic activity has proceeded relatively slowly in a situation in which a shortage of experienced cadres and economic problems caused by imperialist hostility made it difficult to proceed more rapidly.

Such institutions have never been totally lacking, of course. The National Revolutionary Militias of the early years of the revolution were intended not only for defence against imperialist attack, but also to provide a guarantee against a military coup. The Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, in addition to guarding against sabotage and other forms of

counter-revolutionary activity, became to some degree organs of popular control at the local level; in addition they largely replaced the police, to that extent doing away with the possibility of law being enforced in a manner contrary to the will of the masses. The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), founded in 1960, has been a vehicle for expressing the special interests of women; while it has no formal power to initiate or veto legislation, the FMC's views are clearly taken into account by the government in formulating policy.

But the need for more institutionalised democratic forms to guard against bureaucratic abuses began to make itself felt as early as 1962, when Fidel denounced the clique organised by Anibal Escalante.

Escalante sought to give the nuclei of the Integrated Revolutionary Organisations veto power over administrative decisions, while the nuclei in turn would be directed by Escalante. "The nuclei decided and governed on all levels," Castro said. "When a ministry faced a problem, instead of solving it themselves, they would refer it to the ORI." Such exaggerated authority, Fidel warned, was becoming a source of privilege that could undermine the party:

"And what was the nucleus? Was it a nucleus of revolutionists? The nucleus was a mere shell of revolutionists, well versed in dispensing favors, which appointed and removed officials. And, as a result of this, it was not going to enjoy the prestige which a revolutionary nucleus should enjoy, a prestige born solely from the authority which it has in the eyes of the masses, an authority imparted to it by the example which its members set as workers, as model revolutionists. Instead of coming from these sources, the authority of the nucleus came from the fact that from it one might receive or expect a favor, some dispensation, or some harm or good. And as was to be expected, around the nucleus conditions were being created for the formation for a coterie of fawners, which has nothing to do with Marxism or socialism."

Shortly thereafter, Fidel first proposed the Cubans' unique method of selecting party members, which was fully implemented after the dissolution of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution and the formation of the Cuban Communist Party in 1965. Before being accepted or rejected by their local party nucleus, prospective members must be nominated by their co-workers in mass assemblies that discuss their qualifications. The leadership has also deliberately restricted the number of administrators and functionaries allowed to join,

while encouraging the maintenance and strengthening of the party's working-class composition.

It is clear that the Cuban revolutionaries decided to investigate the sources of bureaucratism theoretically as well as practically, including by studying the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin on the subject. Some of their conclusions were set out in a series of four editorials published in *Granma* in 1967. This series analysed bureaucratism as an ongoing danger, traceable to the specific administrative role of the bureaucracy during the period of transition to communist society:

"As long as the State exists as an institution and as long as organization, administration, and policy are not fully of a communist nature, the danger will continue to exist that a special stratum of citizens will form in the bureaucratic apparatus which directs and administers the State. This apparatus has a given relationship to the means of production, different from that of the rest of the population, which can convert bureaucratic posts into comfortable, stagnant, or privileged positions.

"And this is the most profound and serious problem to be considered in the campaign against bureaucracy!"

"If the party does not win this battle over bureaucracy," the series warned, "if this danger is not eliminated through the formation of the new man and the application of an unyielding policy consistent with Marxist-Leninist principles, the party will end by bureaucratizing itself. And a party which stagnates is a party in decomposition.

"What does this mean? What occurs if the party organization sinks into this bureaucratic morass? When that occurs, a special stratum consolidates itself in the administration and direction of the state and in political leadership, a special stratum with aspirations toward self-perpetuation that draws constantly farther away from the masses, divorced from fruitful productive labor and from those who perform it, to become a privileged body, incapable of impelling the people forward, incapable of leading the consciousness of the people toward higher levels.

"And when this occurs the construction of socialism and communism has already been abandoned."

"Bureaucracy," one article stated, "causes us more damage than imperialism. Imperialism is an open and external enemy. Bureaucracy corrodes us from within and attacks the healthiest, firmest elements of the masses, those who must suffer the most from it. It is clear that our people have an

extraordinary sensitivity in detecting these problems and full confidence in the leadership of the revolution. Our people do not believe in the omnipotence of any bureaucratic functionary.

"They react immediately when something goes wrong, when it is necessary to discover and fight these errors of administrative overgrowth. For that reason the masses and our party, their vanguard, must lead the constant, stubborn battle against bureaucracy."

Saying that "the struggle against bureaucracy has come to be a veritable revolution within the revolution," the series concluded: "It is only when the young cadres and workers in general have acquired an ample, profound understanding that we will win this decisive battle, that is, that we will be victorious in the revolution that is yet to be made: the antibureaucratic revolution!" It proposed an ideological campaign against bureaucratic and petty-bourgeois attitudes, and a number of specific measures such as frequent rotation of administrative posts, requiring administrators to deal directly with the specific problems of production, and a big reduction in the size of the state apparatus. Within a few months, tens of thousands of government functionaries were transferred to productive work, the staff in some ministries being slashed by up to 70 per cent.

While these measures were important in curbing bureaucratic growth, they of course could not transform the objective economic realities which produce the bureaucratic danger. Moreover, certain economic policies followed by the leadership at this time had unfortunate side-effects on the struggle against bureaucratism. Egalitarian forms of distribution beyond the capacity of the Cuban economy led to moral incentives being counterposed to material incentives, particularly since such distribution resulted in workers accumulating cash wages for which there were not sufficient stocks of consumer goods available. This situation tended to create divisions within the working class between more and less politically conscious layers, with the former having to carry most of the burden of voluntary work and of making up for the difficulties caused by absenteeism and the lack of material incentives to work. Had this situation continued to develop, the less-conscious layers of the working class could well have become a social base for bureaucratic elements in the government or party apparatus. This danger was symbolised by the second Escalante case, at the beginning of 1968. The seriousness with which the Cuban Communist Party leadership regarded Escalante's "microfaction" was not due solely to

Moscow's support for Escalante, but also to the danger that the "microfaction" could gain a base of support from layers of the party or state apparatus becoming demoralised by economic problems and the strains imposed by imperialist blockade and military threats.

The problems arising in the course of the unsuccessful attempt to harvest 10 million tons of sugar in 1970 showed that institutionalised democratic structures were desirable on economic grounds as well as for curbing bureaucracy. Not only did the campaign lead to serious disruptions in the economy, but it also resulted in a decline of the activities of the mass organisations, as party cadres turned their attention to the harvest.

In his July 26 speech that year, Fidel placed the blame for these problems squarely on the leadership: "We are going to begin in the first place, by pointing out the responsibility which all of us, and I in particular, have for these problems. . . ."

Later in this speech, Fidel emphasised that it was workers on the job who often understood better than their leaders what was needed in a particular situation:

"And workers with torn shoes and clothes were asking for lathes, machine tools and measuring instruments — more concerned about this than with their other problems. Even in spite of the bad food supply, they were more concerned with the factory and production than with food. And this is really impressive. This is really a lesson for us. This is a living confirmation of the reality of the proletariat and what it is capable of. The industrial proletariat is the truly revolutionary class, the most potentially revolutionary class (APPLAUSE).

"What a practical lesson in Marxism-Leninism! We began as revolutionaries, not in a factory, which would have been a great help for all of us. We began as revolutionaries through the study of theory, the intellectual road, the road of thought. And it would have helped all of us if we had come from the factories and known more about them, because it is there that the really revolutionary spirit of which Marx and Lenin spoke is to be found."

Later that year, a series of meetings with workers in different branches of production were held to discuss grievances, economic problems, and their solutions.

"Administration on a large scale is a science," Fidel said at one of these meetings. "And we certainly do not have this kind of scientists. Therefore the terrific amount of confusion, mistakes and snafus that exist in this field are almost understand-

dable. In addition, there are problems of an ideological, political nature. Public administration is still deeply imbued with a petty-bourgeois spirit. . . . There is no doubt that this antiworker spirit, this scorn for the workers, exists among a number of administrators. . . ."

He also denounced bureaucrats who used their positions to obtain special privileges for themselves: "Now that we've abolished capitalism, who are the only exploiters that are left? Who are the ones who can exploit us today? Those who try to take privileges. Privileges can be a factor in exploiting the working people. We must always fight with everything we've got against any manifestation of privilege-taking."

One measure that was instituted to fight bureaucratic privilege was the establishment of workers' control over distribution of scarce commodities, through assemblies that vote on who will receive goods that are in short supply.

The Cuban leaders also set about consciously stepping up the activities of the mass organisations, particularly the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, which include the big majority of the Cuban population.

In 1974, the Cuban revolutionaries began the most important step towards the institutionalisation of democratic control with the People's Power experiment in Matanzas province. The Organs of People's Power have now been in place on a national level for eight years. They represent the most advanced form of workers' democracy since the degeneration of the Russian Revolution.

Nominations to the municipal assembly of People's Power are made by mass meetings and elections conducted by secret ballot, with at least two candidates for each seat. Electors have the right to recall their delegate, and are known to make use of it. Delegates normally maintain their regular jobs; when they do work full time for one of the People's Power assemblies, they receive the wage applying to the job they have temporarily left. These two measures, right of recall and pay no higher than that of a skilled worker, have been regarded by Marxists since the time of the Paris Commune as important obstacles to bureaucratic degeneration or usurpation.

The People's Power system also corresponds to the soviet system in that delegates to provincial assemblies and the national assembly are chosen by the municipal assemblies, rather than by direct election, thus assuring a greater measure of control over delegates.

The Russian soviets arose originally as organs of struggle,

and were therefore production-based. The People's Power assemblies, arising long after the victory of the revolution, are based on residential areas rather than productive units. It appears that, at least initially, this structure sometimes led People's Power assemblies to address problems from the standpoint of what was desirable for the workers and farmers as consumers rather than from the standpoint of what was possible on the basis of Cuba's productive forces. Marta Harnecker quotes a member of a municipal executive committee describing the early period of People's Power:

"... The debate just ebbed and flowed. Many topics shouldn't have been discussed at such length. But, in the long run, we gained a lot, especially in political savvy. Many resolutions, for example, had to be stricken later as unfeasible. Because we inherited exactly the same resources that Local Power had (CDRs), the same Department of Education had, the same Department of Interior Commerce had, etc. And, besides, we were forewarned: 'You're not going to get shiploads of cement; you're not going to get anything in any special way. You must learn to make do with the resources at hand.' Despite all this many a resolution was passed which was clearly contrary to existing possibilities.

"If we now went down to Sancti Spiritus, full of optimism, and began to operate in that town as a regular government, we'd set about creating work commissions at once, and we'd pay a lot of attention to what these commissions should handle. We'd advise delegates that all the problems they wished to present before the assembly should first be cleared with the executive committee, and checked further perhaps by a special commission capable of advising us whether or not the bureau affected by the proposal would be able to meet its demands, whether or not the resources existed to entertain such a beautiful proposal. Only then would we take the proposal before the assembly for final approval. If we had a technical advisory board that could tell us, for example: 'Look, this resolution is not feasible at the present time, but try again in six months' time,' we might be able to give the delegate a more complete reply, and the delegate, in turn, could inform his constituents at the accountability session that that particular motion could not be enacted at the time for this or that reason. . . . Dreaming up solutions is easy, if realities are not taken into account."

(Cuba: Dictatorship or Democracy? p. 126)

Fidel Castro also addressed this question in the National Assembly of People's Power in June 1978: "Everyone must be

able to distinguish between problems rooted in objective conditions and those issuing from subjective conditions. Only in this way will each delegate and voter be able to tackle in earnest the problems caused by subjective conditions, problems like hygiene in a restaurant, poor service to the public in a store, or unmotivated committees, assemblies, delegates, bureaucrats. For all these problems can be overcome by improved attitudes and a commitment to serious effort, and they should never be confused with objective problems that can only be solved by the process of development." (ibid, p.216)

By law, all organisations, including the Communist Party, are forbidden to present or campaign for candidates or slates. However, the small size of electoral districts (up to about 3000 people) means that voters are likely to be familiar with the political views of candidates. Use of the right of recall also provides a method of selecting delegates on the basis of political program.

The development of People's Power has been paralleled by a greater measure of control over production by the workers concerned. The economic plan, as it applies to each factory, is discussed and voted upon by the workers of that factory. They have the right to reject the proposals for their factory, and the plan does not apply until they have ratified it. Assemblies of workers also control production norms, and elected representatives are part of the management of enterprises. These measures of workers' control have been developed primarily following 1970 and the subsequent reorganisation of unions along industrial lines.

Another measure of the Cuban Revolution's continued democratic progress and control of bureaucratic abuse is the lack of a big spread in wage scales. Nominally, the ratio of the lowest to the highest wages is about 1 to 8; in practice the figure is closer to 1 to 3. A good part of this discrepancy is based not on higher salaries for administrators but on the "historic wage," which since 1973 is being gradually eliminated. Because of bonuses for exceeding production norms, workers can and do earn higher wages than administrators (who are not eligible for these bonuses). Unlike the Stalinised socialist states, there are also no special shops catering to bureaucrats at subsidised prices. Differences in living standards are also reduced by the fact that many essentials are provided free or at subsidised prices to all Cubans. This includes health care, education, childcare, rent, and meals at work.

The process of "institutionalisation" is not yet completed.

The Cuban masses, led by the Communist Party, are aware that they are engaged in a process of experimentation to find the most suitable forms for ensuring democratic control. What has already been accomplished, the unmistakable enthusiasm of the Cuban workers and peasants, and the deliberate leadership provided by the party to this process give every reason to expect further successes.



El Salvador

9. A proletarian internationalist outlook

The Cuban revolutionaries have always been characterised by a high degree of internationalist consciousness. The small size of the Cuban economy and the proximity of the imperialist giant make it clear that there is no possibility of "socialism in a single country" in Cuba; the fate of the Cuban Revolution is tied to its extension, particularly in Latin America.

The revolutionary victories in Grenada and Nicaragua in 1979, and the subsequent development of the revolutionary struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala, have ended Cuba's isolation and confronted US imperialism with the possibility of a series of struggles tearing Latin America out of its claws. As imperialism feared from the beginning, the example of Cuba is inspiring workers and peasants throughout Latin America to attempt to emulate it.

During the early 1960s revolutionaries in a number of other countries of Central and South America sought a rapid extension of the revolution through a rather mechanical repetition of the Cuban pattern. An insufficient appreciation of the real lessons of the Cuban revolution by those who attempted to imitate it, sabotage by the Stalinist parties of the region, the Cubans' inability to provide significant material aid, and the lessons that had been learned by imperialism led to repeated setbacks instead of the hoped-for breakthrough. In an effort to repeat the Cuban experience despite these obstacles, Che Guevara launched the guerrilla foco in Bolivia. Guevara's capture and assassination by government troops in October 1967 was a definitive proof that the guerrilla method by itself was an inadequate tool for extending the Cuban revolution.

The guerrillaists were unable to build sizeable organisations as against reformist currents, including the Stalinists, because

of the limitations of the guerrilla strategy during the 1960s and early 1970s. The guerrillaists' failure to orient towards the masses with a Leninist conception of a vanguard party weakened them against reformists who consciously built themselves a base in mass organisations. The central question was whether class struggle or class collaboration represented the road forward for the exploited masses, but the reformists were able to pose the alternatives as "mass work" or isolated guerrilla bands.

In these conflicts, the Cuban leaders always sided unambiguously with the revolutionaries against the reformists. This stance led to extremely sharp polemics with the conservatised Communist parties of Latin America and the effort by the Cubans to create an international organising centre for anti-imperialist struggles in the form of the Organisation of Latin American Solidarity. Fidel Castro's state visit to Chile, during which he repeatedly warned of the need to mobilise and arm the masses against the threat from imperialism and the Chilean right wing, typifies the Cubans' revolutionary attitude.

The escalation of US aggression against Vietnam and the mass struggle of the Vietnamese against the invader began to clarify the debate between revolutionaries and reformists by showing that armed revolutionary struggle and the involvement of the masses are not counterposed alternatives but complementary aspects of a single revolutionary strategy. The Cubans' militant solidarity with the Vietnamese was thus based not only on recognition of what the Vietnamese resistance contributed to the defence of the Cuban revolution but also on the belief that the Vietnamese were setting an example that could be and would have to be followed by all the countries exploited by imperialism — a belief summed up in Che's call to "Create two, three, many Vietnams."

At the same time, the Cuban leaders have always been careful not to abuse their authority by factional intervention in the affairs of other revolutionary organisations. While the Cubans are clear in their support for other revolutionaries, they do not try to force their advice on others who have not asked for it. This attitude is exemplified by their scrupulous non-interference in the 1983 split in the New Jewel Movement.

Unlike its impact in Latin America, during its first decade the Cuban Revolution did not galvanise broad layers of revolutionary or radicalising forces in the imperialist countries, with the partial exception of sections of the Black movement in the United States. This situation began to change following the

mass movement against the Vietnam War and with the development of working-class struggles in response to the downturn in the international capitalist economy. One important sign of this change is the possibility of approaching Cubans living in the United States (of whom there were 700,000 prior to the opening of Mariel). Beginning in the mid-1970s, there were visits by individual Cubans in the US who were friendly to the revolution. The revolutionary government then went on to propose visits by young Cubans who had been taken abroad by their parents while they were children. The first delegation of the Antonio Maceo Brigade, consisting of 55 people, visited Cuba at the end of 1977 and beginning of 1978. The second, of 200 people, toured in 1979.

The visits of the Antonio Maceo Brigade were part of a larger process, called the Dialogue, in which the Cuban government has sought to reach out to the Cuban community in the United States. Like other national minorities in the US, the Cubans suffer discrimination, lower wages, higher unemployment, etc. Seeing the gains of the revolution with their own eyes can have a profound effect on broad layers of this community — a point understood by the US government, which has now used the Trading with the Enemy Act to ban such visits.



Secondary students march on May Day

10. A revolutionary foreign policy

The Cuban leadership's efforts to extend the revolution in Latin America are part of a consistent foreign policy that has sought to exploit any opening for developing struggles against imperialism. In contrast to Stalinist ruling parties, which regard weaknesses in imperialism's armor as opportunities to collaborate with the imperialists for their own national bureaucratic benefit, the Cubans utilise such weaknesses to deal a blow at the enemy. Whereas "peaceful coexistence" to the Stalinists means deals with imperialism to hold back the class struggle internationally, in Cuban foreign policy it means mobilising whatever forces can be mobilised against imperialist intervention in other countries.

In his 1968 speech on the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, Fidel outlined the Cubans' approach to the struggle for peace:

"The real promoters of war, the real adventurers, are the imperialists. Now, then, these dangers are real; they are a reality. And this reality cannot be changed by simply preaching, in one's own house, an excessive desire for peace. In any case, the preaching should be done in the enemy's camp and not in one's own camp, because this would only contribute to stifling militancy, to weakening the people's readiness to face the risks, sacrifices, not only the possible ultimate sacrifice of one's life, but also material sacrifices.

"And when the peoples know that the realities of the world, the independence of the country, and internationalist duties demand investment and sacrifices in the strengthening of the defense of the country, the masses are much better prepared to work with enthusiasm to achieve this, to make sacrifices.

understanding this need, being conscious of the dangers that arise when the people have been stirred up and softened by a constant, foolish and inexplicable campaign in favor of peace. It is a very strange way of defending peace. That is why we who at the beginning did so many foolish things out of ignorance or naivete, for a long time now have not painted any signs around here saying, 'Long Live Peace,' 'Long Live This,' 'Long Live That.'

"Because at the beginning, out of mimicry, by imitation, we repeated things as they arrived here, until we reached a point, well, what is the meaning of 'Long Live Peace'? Let's put up that sign in New York: 'Long Live Peace' in New York, 'Long Live Peace' in Washington."

This has been a constant theme of the Cuban revolutionaries. In his speech to the Meeting of Non-Aligned Countries in 1979, Fidel expressed it:

"Peace is possible, but world peace can only be assured to the extent that all countries are consciously determined to fight for it — peace not just for a part of the world, but for all peoples. Peace, also, for Vietnam, the Palestinians, the patriots of Zimbabwe and Namibia, the oppressed majorities in South Africa, Angola, Zambia, Mozambique, Botswana, Ethiopia, Syria, Lebanon, and the Saharan people. Peace with justice. Peace with independence. Peace with freedom. Peace for the powerful countries and the small countries. Peace for all continents and all peoples."

The contrast between Stalinist class collaboration and the Cubans' class-struggle approach was glaringly evident during the US aggression against Vietnam. The heroic struggle of the Vietnamese was, for Moscow and Peking alike, the small change of negotiations or detente with Washington. The Cubans refused to buy into detente at the cost of lessening their solidarity with Vietnam, publicly calling on the Soviet Union and China to make Vietnam an inviolable part of socialist territory and announcing their willingness to send Cuban troops to help in the defence of Vietnam.

The Cuban leaders were quick to appreciate the historic importance of US imperialism's defeat in the Vietnam War, and equally quick to use the changed international relationship of class forces to the advantage of anti-imperialist struggle. Responding to the request of the Angolan government, Cuba sent thousands of internationalist volunteer fighters to help turn back the South African invasion of Angola. This bold move was the product of both revolutionary audacity and sober

calculation of the political restraints on the military power of US imperialism. Despite its obvious rage at the Cuban action, the US government proved unable to intervene militarily against it. The Cubans inflicted a heavy military — and equally importantly, a political — defeat on imperialism. The victory over the South African invader gave a new impetus to the struggle against the racist regime throughout southern Africa and in South Africa itself.

Two years later, some 17,000 Cuban volunteers were sent to Ethiopia to help in defeating the imperialist-backed invasion by Somalia. Once again, the Cuban leaders had correctly calculated the international relationship of class forces and the stakes in the struggle. And once again, the Cuban troops were instrumental in defeating the imperialist scheme. Cuban aid was decisive in stopping an attack aimed at crushing the Ethiopian revolution and thus pushed further the evolution of the relationship of forces against imperialism.

While less spectacular, the Cubans' internationalist aid in non-military forms is equally anti-imperialist in its content. In all its forms, Cuba's internationalist assistance is based on an understanding of the close and inseparable link between the struggle for socialist revolution and the fight against imperialist domination of the underdeveloped countries.

On the basis of this understanding, the Cuban government has been particularly effective in its role in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. It has succeeded in turning against imperialism in a number of situations the objective contradictions that exist between imperialism on the one hand and the semicolonies on the other, including those semicolonies with pro-imperialist governments. Its leadership role in the Non-Aligned Movement has been instrumental in giving that body a far more effective anti-imperialist direction. Thus when the contradiction between imperialism and the semicolonies led to war over the Malvinas Islands, the Castroists were quick to mobilise support for Argentina, to attempt to draw the Argentine government away from its close dependence on US imperialism, and to draw the lessons of what the war showed about the Organisation of American States and the Inter-American treaties.

It has been a matter of absolute necessity for the Cuban government to pursue its diplomatic aims with the utmost skill. It has been forced — as the Soviet government was in Lenin's time — to seek to exploit not only the contradictions between imperialism and the semicolonies but also the contradictions

within the imperialist camp, particularly in order, wherever possible, to break through or weaken the US economic blockade of Cuba. In seeking to maintain or develop its trade relations with semicolonies like Mexico and imperialist countries such as Britain and Spain, the Cuban government has necessarily observed the requirements of diplomatic protocol but has firmly resisted pressures to change its fundamental policies or its support for anti-imperialist struggles in exchange for economic or diplomatic concessions. The Cubans' success in diplomacy is all the more to their credit in that, unlike the Bolsheviks, they are not part of a mass revolutionary international, a fact which makes it more difficult to maintain the distinction between state-to-state relations and the attitude of Cuban Communists towards particular governments.

In its relations with governments that have issued from revolutionary upsurges — like the Angolan MPLA and the Ethiopian Dergue — the Cuban leadership seeks to provide aid and encouragement for further advances as well as support against the threats of imperialism and its agents. This approach has sometimes been misunderstood by leftists in other countries, particularly in connection with the Cuban government's attitude to the issue of Eritrea.

The Cubans recognise that the Eritreans are engaged in a struggle for national liberation, but they do not favor the secession of Eritrea from the Ethiopian state, believing that separation would weaken the Ethiopian revolution and leave both Ethiopia and Eritrea weaker in a conflict with imperialism. The Cuban government has therefore sought to help bring about a peaceful settlement on a basis acceptable to both sides. The Cubans' attitude on the question of Eritrea was expressed by Castro in a 1975 speech hailing the Ethiopian revolution:

"Unfortunately, a fratricidal struggle between the new government which broke the old structure and a national liberation movement is being waged within that very state. This situation in which two causes of progressive trends are confronting each other is complex. Therefore, what is the duty of the Non-Aligned? Is it perhaps to cross our arms or support one side to the detriment of the other? Urge on the war? Decidedly not. The least that should be done is to make a serious effort and seek a peaceful and just solution that would be acceptable to the parties in the conflict which is separating and confronting the Ethiopian revolutionary process and the Liberation Movement in Eritrea." (quoted in *The Ethiopian*

Revolution, by Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux, p. 252) At the same time as they attempt to strengthen anti-imperialist struggles, the Cuban leaders clearly specify that there is a difference between governments leading socialist revolutions and those that are only involved to some degree in conflicts with imperialism. In his July 26, 1980, speech, for example, Fidel said:

"It is inevitable that we say something about Nicaragua. It is of interest to us, all of us. Not only we Cubans, but all Latin Americans.

"I'm sure you all realize what it means, the impression, the happiness, the enthusiasm, the optimism, the emotion involved in arriving at the second Latin American country to free itself of imperialism. (APPLAUSE) In this hemisphere, there are now not two but three of us because Grenada has to be included, too. (APPLAUSE)

"Naturally, Nicaragua, Cuba and Grenada are not the only progressive countries. There are other progressive governments, friendly with Cuba. We could mention, for example, the Government of Mexico, (APPLAUSE) and we will soon have the great honor of welcoming the president of the sister Republic of Mexico. (APPLAUSE) There are governments like that of our dear friend Manley, in Jamaica; (APPLAUSE) There are governments like that of Panama. (APPLAUSE) But three of us have shaken the yoke of imperialism in the last 20 years in a radical way, once and for all (APPLAUSE) and it is a historical imperative that one day we'll all be free. (APPLAUSE) We'll either be free or we will cease to exist (APPLAUSE) because one day the battle cries of 'Patria libre o morir' and 'Patria o muerte' will be the battle cries of all the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean. (APPLAUSE)" (*Granma Weekly Review*, August 3, 1980)



Unloading shipment of flour from the Soviet Union

11. Cuba and the Soviet Union

The Cuban leaders have recognised and frequently stated the truth that the Cuban Revolution could not have survived had it not been for the existence of the Soviet Union. Economic assistance from the USSR and the Soviet role in helping to deter direct military aggression by imperialism have both been indispensable to the existence of revolutionary Cuba. The fact that the Soviet Union has been able to provide this crucial aid despite the rule of a hardened bureaucratic caste is indisputable evidence that the fundamental gains of the October Revolution have so far survived the Stalinist counter-revolution.

There could never be any question that the Kremlin rulers would exact the maximum political price possible for every bit of aid supplied to Cuba. The Cuban revolutionaries have not had the luxury of being able to "shop around" for this assistance. The aid was indispensable to the survival of the Cuban Revolution, and it was not available from any other source. The only question was how much the Cubans would pay, and they were not in a strong bargaining position.

Nevertheless, the world revolution has gained far more from Soviet-Cuban relations over the last two decades than have its enemies. First and most important is the fact that the Cuban Revolution has survived imperialist encirclement and blockade and has now spread into the English-speaking Caribbean and to the mainland of Latin America. These achievements would have justified a far greater price than the one that the Cuban Communists have actually paid for Soviet assistance.

The Soviet Stalinists and their international followers have undoubtedly strengthened their authority with the world working class to the extent that Soviet aid enables them to

identify themselves with the Cuban Revolution and its gains. In the final analysis, this political benefit for the Stalinists stems from the fact that they rule a country whose revolution they have not yet succeeded in totally strangling: The Kremlin rulers benefit similarly every time their base as parasites on a planned economy forces them to carry out a progressive action.

Aside from this, however, the Soviet bureaucrats have received remarkably little in exchange for their material assistance. They have not succeeded in dictating the Cuban revolutionaries' program in either foreign or domestic policy.

As long ago as the 1962 missile crisis, the Cuban leaders demonstrated that they would act independently and would publicly disagree with the Kremlin when they felt that was necessary. When Kennedy and Khrushchev reached their agreement, Castro announced to the world that he had not agreed to withdrawal of the missiles but could not prevent it. But the Cubans could prevent the UN "inspection" of Cuba, which Khrushchev had agreed to, and Castro and the Cuban masses made it clear they would prevent it if anyone were foolish enough to try to enforce it.

Well known also is Che Guevara's public criticism of the Soviet rulers for exploiting the underdeveloped countries by trading with them at prices set by the capitalist world market.

The Cuban Communists' criticism of Communist parties that refused support to armed struggle against imperialism and its agents was clear evidence of the intention to follow a revolutionary line despite Stalinist displeasure. Again, during the Vietnam War, Castro repeatedly and publicly criticised both Moscow and Peking for failing to unite in defence of Vietnam against US aggression.

Even the Cuban support for the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was presented from a quite different standpoint than that of the Kremlin. Castro in his speech did not accept the fiction that the invasion occurred by "invitation" and was therefore not a violation of the right of self-determination:

"What are the factors that created the necessity for a step which unquestionably entailed a violation of legal principles and international norms that, having often served as shield for the peoples against injustice, are highly esteemed by the world?"

"Because what cannot be denied here is that the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak state was violated. To say that it was not would be a fiction, an untruth. And the violation was, in fact, of a flagrant nature."

Castro was also unsparing in his criticism of the Czechoslovak

CP (not just the Dubcek leadership):

"Gentlemen, is it conceivable that a situation could occur, under any circumstances, after twenty years of communism in our country, of communist revolution, of socialist revolution, in which a group of honest revolutionaries, in this country, horrified by the prospect of an advance — or rather a retrogression — to counterrevolutionary positions and toward imperialism, could find themselves obliged to request the aid of friendly armies to prevent such a retrogression occurring? What would have happened to the revolutionary consciousness of this people? To the dignity of this people? To the revolutionary morale of this people? If such a situation could arise some day, what would be left of all these things which, for us, constitute in essence the revolution? . . .

"All of us know that the leadership which Czechoslovakia had, generally, for twenty years was a leadership plagued with many vices: dogmatism, bureaucracy, and, in short, many things which cannot be presented as examples of truly revolutionary leadership.

"When we speak here, when we present our thesis about the 'liberaloid' nature of this [Dubcek] group, so warmly greeted by imperialism, it does not mean in any way that we are expressing our solidarity with the former leadership. We must bear in mind that that leadership, with which we had relations from the very beginning, even sold this country, at a high price, many weapons which were spoils of war seized from the Nazis, weapons for which we have been paying, and are still paying for today, which belonged to Hitler's troops that occupied Czechoslovakia. . . .

"On many occasions they sold us very outdated factories. We have seen the results of many of the economic concepts on which they base their business transactions, on which they base their eagerness to sell any old junk, and it must be stated that these practices led to their selling old, outdated junk to a country which is making a revolution and has to develop."

Furthermore, Fidel asked, if the invasion was necessary to block an imperialist-backed counter-revolution, why didn't the Warsaw Pact countries openly denounce imperialism's role:

"We have been informed exhaustively concerning all the preceding events, all the facts, all the deviations, all about this or that liberal group: we have been informed of their activities. The activities of the imperialists and the intrigues of the imperialists are well known, and we are disturbed to see that neither the Communist Party nor the government of the Soviet

Union, nor the governments of the other countries that sent their troops to Czechoslovakia, have made any direct accusation against Yankee imperialism for its responsibility in the events in Czechoslovakia."

And Castro went on to point out that it wasn't sufficient to oppose a "rightist" line **only** in Czechoslovakia:

"Our party did not hesitate to help the Venezuelan guerrillas when a rightist and treacherous leadership, betraying the revolutionary line, abandoned the guerrillas and entered into shameless collusion with the regime. At that time we presented our analysis as to which side was right — that scheming, politicking group that betrayed the combatants, that betrayed those who had given their lives, or those who kept the flag of rebellion flying. . . .

"I ask myself, in the light of the facts and in the light of the bitter reality that persuaded the nations of the Warsaw Pact to send their forces to crush the counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia, and — according to their statement — to back a minority in the face of a majority with rightist positions, if they will also cease to support these rightist, reformist, sold-out, submissive leaderships in Latin America that are enemies of the armed revolutionary struggle, that oppose the people's liberation struggle."

The speech also included a sharp attack on the Kremlin's concept of "peaceful coexistence":

"We do not and cannot believe in the possibility of an improvement in relations between the socialist camp and the U.S. imperialist government as long as that country performs the role of international gendarme, aggressor against the peoples and enemy and systematic opponent of revolutions everywhere in the world. Much less can we believe in any such improvement in the midst of an aggression as criminal and cowardly as that being waged against Vietnam.

"Our position on this is very clear: one is consistent with world realities and is truly internationalist and genuinely and decidedly supports the revolutionary movement throughout the world, in which case relations with the imperialist government of the United States cannot be improved, or relations with the imperialist U.S. government will improve, but only at the cost of withholding consistent support from the worldwide revolutionary movement."

The bourgeois media normally portray the Cuban CP's backing for the invasion — and their similar statements on the "right" of the Warsaw Pact to intervene in Poland if necessary

— as an expression of "totalitarianism" supposedly inherent in socialist revolutions. By identifying the Cubans with the reactionary policies of the Soviet Stalinists, the imperialist propagandists hope to undermine working-class solidarity with the Cuban Revolution. It is therefore important for the press of the Fourth International to take the lead in explaining the real significance of the Cubans' position.

The Cuban revolutionaries' sometimes quite scathing comments on the foreign and domestic policies of ruling Stalinist parties, and their own revolutionary policies on both the domestic and international level, make it clear that their position on the socialist states of Eastern Europe is not an expression of the attitudes or interests of an emerging bureaucratic layer. However, the Cubans' public statements do not present the ruling Stalinist parties as expressing the interests of a social layer distinct from and hostile to the workers and farmers. Hence these parties are treated as guarantees, however inadequate, against imperialist-backed counter-revolution, rather than in their real role as an indirect aid to imperialism. This erroneous analysis is sometimes supported by reference to the attempts of imperialism to use Stalinist repression in the socialist states for its own ends.

A further important factor, of course, is the Cuban Revolution's dependence on Soviet military and economic assistance. Only the Cuban revolutionaries themselves are in a position to decide how far it is possible to go in criticising the Stalinist regimes without endangering the survival of the Cuban Revolution. The press of the Fourth International should therefore aim to present our own position on the need for political revolution, and to **explain** the Cubans' position, including what we regard as incorrect in it, in a manner that takes account of both this particular problem confronting the Cubans and the qualitative difference between the Cuban CP and Stalinist parties.

Moreover, the Cubans' own experiences in developing and institutionalising democratic control and their own struggles against bureaucratic abuses, contrasted with the Polish regime's inability to win legitimacy in the eyes of the working masses, are in and of themselves powerful weapons helping to undermine Stalinism's hold on sections of the labor movement. Speeches by Fidel since the birth of Solidarnosc have frequently emphasised the theme of the necessity for close ties between the workers and farmers and the ruling party. In a September 1980 speech on the 20th Anniversary of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, he noted:

"... we should not gauge the merits and importance of the organization solely on the basis of its services. The implications are more important, more far-reaching. The CDRs represent an experiment that other sister nations have begun to put into effect. They also represent an extraordinary political experience, what a revolution really needs to protect itself and to be strong, something that no Marxist-Leninist Party can ever ignore, and that is the closest ties possible with the masses. (APPLAUSE)

"The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, along with our glorious trade unions, the Federation of Cuban Women, the National Association of Small Farmers, the student organizations and the Pioneer Organization represent a powerful mechanism and an insuperable instrument to link our Party to the masses. (APPLAUSE) And I dare say that they are unique in the world. (APPLAUSE) It isn't that many other revolutions and many other Parties are not linked to the masses, since all really revolutionary parties have always been characterized by such links. What I mean is that in our country we have the most complete mechanism to link the Party with the masses, and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution are one of the pillars of the mechanism. (APPLAUSE) Facts show and experience shows that no Marxist-Leninist Party can ever neglect its links with the masses. (APPLAUSE)"

In his report to the Second Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, Castro said in regard to Poland that "The success that reaction has had there is eloquent testimony to the fact that a revolutionary Party in power cannot deviate from Marxist-Leninist principles, neglect ideological work and divorce itself from the masses." This was in the same speech in which he said: "There is not the slightest question about the socialist camp's right to save that country's integrity and ensure that it survives and resists at all costs imperialism's onslaught."

Following the imposition of martial law in Poland, in his speech to the 10th World Trade Union Congress in February 1962, Fidel denounced the imperialist hypocrisy over the action, which he called "the unfortunate events in Poland." These were, he said, "an unquestionable result of serious mistakes made during the process of building socialism in the fraternal country as well as of the action of the imperialist enemy."

Answering questions of visiting Australians in January 1964, Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Ricardo Alarcon explained in more detail what the Cubans consider to be the errors made in Poland:

"We feel that these problems have to do with the socialist

model that was being applied in that country, a model which on the one hand had certain characteristics wherein there is no advancement in the socialist sphere, for instance in agriculture.

"Without meaning to imply that you have to hurry or force socialisation in agriculture, we do have our own experience in Cuba where we have advanced much more than Poland in the co-operative movement in the rural areas without forcing the issue, always on the basis of voluntary decisions of the individual farmer to join what we consider superior forms of production, that is the cooperative. . . ."

"But the basic thing in our opinion is the model of economic development which the Polish party implemented, a model which apparently is easy: to promote a sort of consumer society which was beyond their real possibility.

"This led to the situation we have, which is that Poland is one of the most heavily indebted countries, and that certain trends have developed toward crass material interests and certain accommodation of sectors of the working class. And they were able to do this by acquiring great dependence on the international banking institutions.

"These levels were making them more indebted to the West and putting them into a vicious circle which meant that, at the moment that Poland faced any economic difficulties, it would not be easy to find the conscious participation of important sectors of the working class.

"Our experiences are quite the contrary. We have taken great care in Cuba to avoid setting up objectives which are not inherent to socialism. Socialism offers mankind a society which we consider to be better. But not better because there are more cars or more obvious material advantages, even at the price of deforming the economy and acquiring indebtedness, apparently to satisfy immediate needs of the people and to gain the support of given sectors.

"There is an apparently complex way which we are convinced is the sure way and a better way, which is to develop an awareness, a conscience among the people, so that the nation can assume the responsibility and the burden of building a genuinely just and democratic society.

"This does not mean that our people have not advanced and reached material levels that are obviously better than before the revolution. But we have been able to do this on the basis of our own efforts, with a combination of seeing to material needs but at the same time creating an awareness that there must be sacrifices and that a country must live within its means in a

given historic moment.

"I am speaking a bit theoretically. But the list of mistakes in Poland is impressive.

"Now this situation there led to violent changes in policies. There were sudden drops in prices when there was opposition to them. There were sudden increases in prices.

"Here we have had to explain things that were more complex than raising the price of bread. We have had to explain, for instance, the limiting of some food products at the beginning of the revolution. But when there is a leadership that has a relationship with the people which is open and frank and direct, the people understand and it becomes possible to overcome any difficulty. The people develop their political awareness through this facing up to difficulties.

"In Poland the situation was quite the contrary, and all this led to a very peculiar situation where you had a socialist government which wanted to build socialism and at a given moment becomes alienated from appreciable sectors of the working class. And that brought about phenomena such as Solidarity or any other type of phenomenon. Because what is inevitable is that a response will have to emerge.

"This malaise has to be expressed, not necessarily against the system, but against the way that certain objectives are reached. We feel that in Poland socialism itself, its laws and rules have not been questioned. What we have seen is that any social system, no matter how just or good it may be, is susceptible to serious mistakes that can lead to consequences which might even endanger a system such as socialism.

Cuba's dependence on Soviet aid has had its greatest influence within Cuba in the area of restrictions on democratic rights. Even here, however, such restrictions have never been extensive, and the trend has been to enlarge democratic freedoms rather than to restrict them...

The Cuban Communist Party is the only party in Cuba today, and its guiding role is recognised in the Constitution. It should be noted, however, that the CP's special position arose from the specific course of events rather than by government decree. All the bourgeois parties openly went over to the counter-revolution at an early stage, leaving only the July 26 Movement, the Revolutionary Directorate, and the PSP as parties supporting the revolution. The Castroists at the head of the government did not use state power to force members of the Revolutionary Directorate or the PSP into a united organisation. On the contrary, they conducted a fusion of the three organisations, in the

process undermining severely the influence of the Stalinist leadership of the PSP. Within this united party, many of the cadres and even leaders of the PSP were won over to the revolutionary perspectives of the Castro team.

As a general norm of democracy in a socialist state, Marxists favor the right of political parties to exist and function within the context of support of the revolution. But such a norm is not at all the same thing as urging the creation of additional parties where they do not exist. The role of a Leninist Party is to unite the working class in conscious struggle for its historic interests, to lead the proletariat and working farmers in the creation of a socialist state and the battle for world socialist revolution. The most favorable situation in a socialist state is in fact to have the entire working people united in support of **one party**, the revolutionary communist party. This should of course be achieved, not by decree, but as a result of the genuine conviction of the masses that such a party represents their interests, and the voluntary unification of all the pro-revolution political forces into a single party.

Where, as in Cuba, the ruling party truly represents the interests of the workers and peasants, and unites the proletarian vanguard in the struggle for socialism, revolutionary Marxists oppose the creation of any other parties, which could create unnecessary divisions within the working class or between the working class and its allies.

In the concrete situation of the Cuban Revolution today, the program of government of an alternative party would almost certainly be politically retrogressive. As has been outlined, the Cuban government follows a revolutionary internationalist foreign policy; the alternative could only be adventurism or, more likely, acceptance of detente with imperialism on the basis of abandonment of Cuba's principled support for anti-imperialist struggles. The Communist Party of Cuba is leading the process of institutionalising democratic control; while it might be possible to argue for different specific forms or measures in this institutionalisation, an alternative **program** could only call for a reversal of this process. In terms of the economy, there has been indisputable progress in both development and in ensuring equitable distribution; the errors that have been made have been corrected by the party itself. Even in regard to the consistent errors of the Cuban CP, such as its inadequate analysis of the Stalinised socialist states, there is no reason to believe that these errors could be corrected more easily from outside the party than from within it. And a public

debate on the character of the Soviet government — which would necessarily follow from the existence of another party advocating that the Cuban government change its position on Poland — would jeopardise Soviet assistance and thus the very survival of the Cuban Revolution.

The most likely political character of an additional party in Cuba today is indicated by the nearest approach seen to such a phenomenon after the fusion of the three groups that formed the Communist Party. This was the faction organised around Anibal Escalante. This faction received the backing of the Kremlin to the extent that the Cuban government insisted on the recall of an official of the Soviet embassy.

Escalante and his "microfaction" were sentenced in 1968 to long prison terms for distributing secret government documents and attempting to undermine Cuba's relations with other countries. There have been no other known instances of criminal sanctions being taken against party members because of misdeeds related to factional activity, but the Communist Party at this time opposes the formation of factions or organised tendencies within its ranks, in this respect differing from Leninist organisational norms.

The Cuban leaders' position is not, however, directed towards guaranteeing the position of a privileged elite or preventing criticism of the policies of the leadership. Unlike the Stalin faction in the Soviet CP, which turned a temporary ban on factions into a permanent one in order to consolidate the power of conservative bureaucrats, the Castro leadership has consistently followed a revolutionary, anti-bureaucratic course, and it encourages democratic discussion within the party. The Castro leadership believes that organised groupings would weaken the party in the face of the imperialist enemy. Furthermore, tendencies or factions could become *de facto* parties, creating artificial divisions in the working class or jeopardising relations with the Soviet Union in the manner indicated above. And a pro-Stalinist faction, relying on direct and indirect Soviet support, could achieve an influence far out of proportion to its real strength inside Cuba.

The goal of the Fourth International is the development of full workers' democracy in Cuba, including such things as the right to form factions, tendencies, and even other working-class parties within the context of support for the revolution. The obstacle to this goal is not the Cuban CP, but the imperialist threat to the revolution and the revolution's dependence on aid from the Stalinised socialist states. Thus the best way to expand

workers' democracy in Cuba is through the extension of the world revolution — a goal consciously promoted by the Cuban Communists. In this situation, it would be mistaken and counterproductive for revolutionaries outside Cuba to try to second guess the Cubans' decisions on the tempo at which particular measures of workers' democracy can be introduced.



Nicaragua

12. The Nicaraguan revolution

The revolutionaries who formed the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua in 1962 were not merely inspired by the example of the socialist revolution in Cuba. They also studied and learned from the experiences and political evolution of the Castro leadership.

The FSLN therefore clearly understood the potential of a revolutionary-democratic and transitional program to mobilise the masses of workers and peasants to change society. The Historic Program of the FSLN published in 1969 called for the destruction of "the military and bureaucratic apparatus of the [Somoza] dictatorship" and the establishment of a "revolutionary government based on the worker-peasant alliance." This government would create a "patriotic, revolutionary, and people's army" and "arm the students, workers, and peasants, who — organised in people's militias — will defend the rights won against the inevitable attack by the reactionary forces of the country and Yankee imperialism."

The program projected that the revolutionary government would "expropriate and eliminate capitalist and feudal estates . . . turn over the land to the peasants . . ." and "encourage the peasants to organise themselves in cooperatives. . . ." Among the other economic reforms to be effected by the revolutionary government, the 1969 program included:

"A. It will expropriate the landed estates, factories, companies, buildings, means of transportation, and other wealth usurped by the Somoza family. . . .

"B. It will expropriate the landed estates, factories, companies, means of transportation, and other wealth usurped by the politicians and military officers, and all other accomplices.

by the politicians and military officers, and all other accomplices, who have taken advantage of the present regime's administrative corruption.

"C. It will nationalise the wealth of all the foreign companies. . . .

"D. It will establish workers' control over the administrative management of the factories and other wealth that are expropriated and nationalised. . . .

"F. It will nationalise the banking system. . . .

"M. It will establish state control over foreign trade. . . .

"O. It will plan the national economy, putting an end to the anarchy characteristic of the capitalist system of production. An important part of this planning will focus on the industrialisation and electrification of the country." (*Sandinistas Speak*, pp. 14-15)

Under the impact of the defeats its guerrilla units suffered in the 1960s and the dramatic growth of the urban proletarian and semiproletarian population in the 1960s and 1970s, a discussion developed in the FSLN over the relation of armed struggle to mass mobilisations, the respective roles of the urban and rural toilers, the relation between military and political struggle, and the purpose and acceptable limits of agreements with the opposition bourgeoisie. These debates over how to overthrow Somoza and end imperialist domination of Nicaragua led in 1975 to the formation of three tendencies and eventually to three public factions. The ripening conditions for the overthrow of Somoza contributed to a deepening of the FSLN's understanding of Marxist strategy and to the overcoming of the differences. This was reflected in the elaboration of a new program in 1977. Titled the "FSLN Military and Political Platform for the Abolition of the Dictatorship," it stated that the aim of the Sandinista Front was "to initiate a struggle to overthrow the Somoza gang. We then plan to form a revolutionary democratic government, to allow us, proceeding from a proletarian ideology and Sandino's historic behests, to make socialism triumphant and create that society of free people of which Augusto Sandino dreamed." The new program pointed out that "both historic goals will be secured, given a Marxist-Leninist approach and a firmly knit vanguard to direct the revolutionary process." This revolutionary process would take the form of a civil war:

" . . . We speak of a civil war insofar as it is hatched by the local reactionary forces resisting the revolutionary process. This will be a revolutionary war, insofar as, relying on a

worker-peasant alliance and led by a Marxist-Leninist vanguard, it . . . creates the conditions for carrying forward . . . the process through the democratic phase towards socialism."

The leading role of the working class in such a worker-peasant alliance was particularly stressed:

"The urban industrial workers and rural agricultural workers comprise the basic class capable of effecting profound revolutionary changes in the capitalist system of exploitation. The strength, development and organisation of this class are the guarantee that the socialist society desired will be attained. . . . Although the working class is the **basic force** of the revolutionary process of both today and tomorrow, it will not achieve its revolutionary aims without the broad backing of other segments of the people, especially the **peasantry and petty bourgeoisie** (students and intellectuals). . . . The motive force of the revolution is represented by the alliance of the three classes of the proletariat, peasantry, and petty bourgeoisie." (*The Agony of a Dictatorship*, pp. 46-48)

As the anti-Somoza struggle deepened, many of the disputed questions began to be resolved in life. This was encouraged by the growing unity within the FSLN after the reunification of the three factions in December 1978. Particularly important in this process were the 1978-79 urban mobilisations and the spread of popular committees and militias. These developments enabled the FSLN to overcome the weaknesses of its guerrillaist strategy and link its military campaign to a powerful mass insurrectionary movement, which in turn enabled the FSLN to topple the Somoza dictatorship in July 1979.

With the benefit of their political ties to the Cuban leadership, the more favorable international relationship of class forces in which the Nicaraguan revolution occurs and the different structure of its capitalist economy, the Sandinistas have been able to avoid or minimise some of the problems and difficulties that confronted the July 26 Movement.

Imperialism did not have the great amount of direct investments in Nicaragua that it did in Cuba, and it therefore exercised its control over the country in a less direct fashion. This meant that Nicaraguan capitalists, while they were still a neocolonial bourgeoisie dependent on imperialism, had somewhat greater room for manoeuvre in the conduct of day-to-day affairs, including greater room for intrabourgeois conflicts. This fact and Somoza's use of state power to enrich himself at the expense of competing capitalists combined to create a fairly

broad layer of capitalist opposition to the dictatorship, which even engaged in sporadic armed struggle on a few occasions. This bourgeois opposition was not revolutionary or even consistent in its opposition to Somoza, but it had sufficient reality — symbolised by Somoza's assassination of the publisher Chamorro — to attract a certain following among the workers and peasants.

In an effort to use these capitalist forces in the final struggle against Somoza, the FSLN projected a Council of State in which bourgeois forces would have had a majority. But the actual course of events in the final weeks of the civil war significantly altered the relationship of class forces. It was not the bourgeoisie but the workers and peasants who drove Somoza from power, in the process defeating the frantic efforts of US imperialism and Nicaraguan capital to keep intact at least some elements of the National Guard.

The FSLN took three of the five positions in the Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction (GRN) established on July 19, 1979. Convocation of the bourgeois-dominated Council of State was postponed to May 1980. In the meantime it was restructured to give the organisations of the workers and peasants an overwhelming majority. The FSLN moved immediately to disband the remnants of the National Guard and replaced them with a new army and police recruited from the ranks of the working masses and placed under the control of the nine commanders making up the FSLN's National Directorate.

From the very first, the GRN, as its actions revealed, was a workers and farmers' government, an instrument for carrying out the revolutionary program of the FSLN.

Confiscation of Somoza's holdings at one blow gave the workers and peasants' government ownership of more than 40 per cent of the economy (measured against Gross Domestic Product): 19.1 per cent of agriculture, 25.0 per cent of the manufacturing industry, 70.0 per cent of construction, 99.0 per cent of mining, and 54.7 per cent of services. (In 1978 the only state holdings were 39.9 per cent in construction and 30.8 per cent of services, for a total of 15.3 per cent of GDP.)

This state sector was already larger than the Nicaraguan workers and peasants would have been able to manage directly. Together with nationalisation of foreign trade, it provides a basis for the working class to begin learning to administer the economy. The FSLN correctly refrained from proceeding to early nationalisation of the property of the anti-Somozaist bourgeoisie. The capitalists' expertise was needed and will be

needed for some time to come. To the extent that the capitalists can be induced to continue production — under a government that regulates their prices and profits, controls foreign trade, and sides with the workers when disputes arise — it is a gain for the revolution. In this sense, the FSLN leaders are quite sincere when they speak of the revolution's long-term commitment to a "mixed economy."

The Sandinistas' decision not to proceed with overhasty nationalisations was also correct on political grounds. As already mentioned, many of the bourgeoisie could claim "revolutionary" credentials as a result of their opposition to Somoza. Premature attacks on their property would have seemed to many workers and peasants a betrayal of the "national unity" created in the struggle against Somoza. The FSLN has wisely put the onus of breaking this national unity on the capitalists who seek to decapitalise their enterprises or sabotage production.

Minister for the Interior Tomas Borge outlined this orientation to the bourgeoisie in a May 1981 interview:

"We reached the conclusion that they are necessary so that production will not have a sharp drop. Now it is up to the businessmen to see that the mixed economy — which is basic to political pluralism — does not disappear. We realise that we have to work to maintain a mixed economy, and we have a sincere interest in maintaining it. But if the entrepreneurs decapitalize the companies, if they conspire against the Revolution, they will bring an end to mixed economy and pluralism. Thus the economy depends on the businessmen. Our interest and good will are evident. It now depends on the degree of development of bourgeois culture and whether the entrepreneurs can go beyond the line of political savagery. Many bourgeois sectors still dream of the past and do not accept the fact that now we have power. That obstructs the national dialogue going on between the government and the opposition."

In this way, the revolutionary government has also undercut the basis for an imperialist propaganda campaign against the revolution. There are no "revolutionary" capitalists fleeing to Miami because their property has been "unjustly" seized; at most there are a few criminals convicted of decapitalising their enterprises, or known supporters of one of the most brutal dictatorships in history. Because of the relatively small size of direct imperialist investment in Nicaragua, Washington has not been able to engineer a confrontation over US-owned property. Thus the FSLN has gained valuable time in which to strengthen

the organisation and class consciousness of the workers and peasants for the inevitable showdown with imperialism.

The Sandinista government has also proceeded with the necessary mixture of determination and caution in the countryside. The Rural Workers' Association (ATC), set up by the FSLN in March 1978, began establishing production co-operatives on Somozaist estates even before the revolutionary victory.

Within a year of the revolution, the government had expropriated some one million hectares of farmland — most of it from Somoza and his allies but also from owners who were restricting production or refusing to rent at reasonable rates. The government has tried to avoid the splitting up of the large estates, whose products represent an important part of Nicaragua's export earnings. Confiscated estates have been converted directly into state farms. Production of foodstuffs, much of which traditionally took place on small plots, is being encouraged by giving landless laborers access to land for the first time, as well as by forcing reductions in rent. The government is actively encouraging small producers to amalgamate into co-operatives, rather than remaining isolated on the plots made available to them by the revolution. As in Cuba, there is no coercion of small farmers who do not wish to join co-operatives.

The government has also set up a state food purchasing agency to buy foodstuffs from small producers, eliminating the extortionate profits of middlemen. Another agency provides small farmers with pesticides, machinery, and fertiliser at low prices, while the Nicaraguan Institute of Agrarian Reform provides technical assistance.

The ATC has been an important force in defending and advancing the interests of the rural proletariat on both private and state farms. It has campaigned against bureaucratic practices in government and on some occasions mobilised thousands of peasants to demand state intervention of idle lands.

Some small farmers were initially organised in the ATC, but a separate organisation, the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG), was set up in April 1981. This helped to break small and medium farmers away from control by the big agricultural capitalists, with whom they had previously been organised in the Union of Agricultural Producers of Nicaragua.

On the basis of such measures, the FSLN has already succeeded in establishing a firm worker-peasant alliance.

Working farmers have been shown in practice that their interests are best served by alliance with the working class.

The development of mass organisations — unions, the women's organisation, youth organisation, Sandinista Defence Committees, in addition to those already mentioned — has proceeded at even a faster rate than in the Cuban Revolution. In particular, with the growing threat of imperialist-backed invasion, the militias have been vastly expanded. Military power in Nicaragua is firmly in the hands of the working people.

A large percentage of these armed working people are female. Women were an important part — about 30 per cent — of the FSLN guerrilla forces, in commanding positions as well as in the ranks. A major role in the political struggle against the dictatorship was played by AMPRONAC, a broad-based women's movement organised by the FSLN. Women's prominent role in the revolution has earned the Nicaraguan revolution the description of "the most female revolution in history." Since the victory of July 19, 1979, AMPRONAC — renamed AMNLAE — has been among the strongest of the mass organisations.

During 1980, a nationwide literacy campaign succeeded in reducing the illiteracy rate from 50 per cent to 13 per cent. Special campaigns were conducted in the languages of the minorities in the Atlantic coast region. As in Cuba, the literacy campaign was only the beginning of an ongoing effort to raise the educational level of the workers and peasants so that they can administer the economy and society. Today there are more than twice as many students of all ages as there were in 1979.

The revolutionary government has also set about increasing the quantity and quality of health care. Spending on health now accounts for 11 per cent of the national budget.

Despite decapitalisation, there has been impressive economic growth. In 1981, Nicaragua had a growth rate of 8.7 per cent — the highest in Latin America. Between 1979 and 1981, the unemployment rate was reduced from 40 per cent to 13 per cent.

The success of the Sandinistas to date in preventing significant layers of the bourgeoisie from openly joining the counter-revolution has meant that capitalist parties continue to exist. There are as well several small ultraleftist and Stalinist sects with bases in particular unions. In the first months of the revolution the government responded to provocations from the latter by jailing some of their leaders and closing their papers. However, the FSLN soon realised that this was not the most effective way of dealing with such groups, and the repressive

measures were ended. Subsequently there has been some improvement in relations between the FSLN and these groups.

While the revolutionary government clearly has the right to ban the bourgeois parties if it judges them to threaten the revolution, and the ultraleft and Stalinist organisations if they step outside revolutionary legality, the present multiplicity of parties has been a clear benefit to the Nicaraguan revolution and to the cause of socialism internationally. It has helped to undermine further the baneful effect of Stalinism, which allows the capitalists to claim that socialist revolution leads inevitably to totalitarian dictatorship.

The decision to hold elections for president and for a constituent assembly in November 1984 has also benefited the revolution against its domestic and foreign enemies. The boycott by right-wing forces only underlines their lack of popular support, while US imperialism's lies about "totalitarianism" in Nicaragua are further exposed. The elections make clear that the Sandinistas have broad popular support for the social changes they have led, and will constitute a mandate for the further progress of the revolution.

The revolutionaries of the FSLN have clearly learned from the example of the Cuban Revolution. At the same time they deal with a different objective situation and have a different background and experiences than the Cuban communists. On some questions, they arrive at different conclusions than do the Cuban revolutionaries. And just as the FSLN has clearly learned from Cuba, so Castro has publicly and with undoubted sincerity expressed the desire and intention of the Cubans to learn from the Nicaraguan revolution. Discussion between the two parties may well lead one or both to modify particular positions. It is noteworthy, for example, that in May 1981 Tomas Borge indicated that the FSLN evaluated the situation in Poland differently than did the Cuban Communist Party, although this difference was not evident in the FSLN's response to the Polish government's crackdown the following December. This process of learning from each other's experiences can enrich the understanding not only of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutionaries but also of revolutionaries everywhere.

13. The revolutionary struggle in El Salvador

The revolutions in Cuba in 1959 and in Nicaragua in 1979 both mark major turning points in the political history of El Salvador. By assimilating the key lessons of these two victories the leadership of the Salvadoran revolution, which is today organised in the Democratic Revolutionary Front/Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, has been able on both occasions to move the revolutionary process ahead qualitatively.

At the same time the Salvadoran revolution has its own strong traditions going back at least to the 1920s and 1930s when the fledgling Communist Party, under the leadership of Augustin Farabundo Marti, began the struggle for power.

This early insurrectionary struggle was crushed, however, and for almost three decades prior to the victory of the Cuban revolution in 1959 the Salvadoran political process became dominated by electoralism among the opposition parties, including the Communist Party. With the Cuban victory a minority in the Communist Party drew the conclusion that it was necessary to break with electoralism and reformism and adopt the strategy of armed revolutionary struggle in order to overturn the ruling oligarchy. This political break and the establishment of guerilla forces marks the opening of the modern period of revolutionary struggle in El Salvador.

The revolutionary victory in Nicaragua gave a major impetus to the revolutionary forces in El Salvador. One important lesson that revolutionary forces there have drawn from the 1978 reunification of the FSLN is the need for unity in the struggle against the US-backed dictatorship.

The Revolutionary Democratic Front/Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front was formed in 1980 in the heat of civil war. It brings together former guerrillists, a major grouping that split from the Salvadoran Communist Party over the latter's opposition to armed struggle, the CP itself, a social Democratic grouping, and a minority tendency of the Christian Democracy, in addition to trade unions and professional and student organisations.

Under the leadership of Augustín Farabundo Martí, the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS) was formed in 1960 from the Salvadoran Revolutionary Workers' Federation, which Martí also led. This was a product of a period of peasant and labor struggles in the 1920s inspired by the Russian Revolution. The PCS was associated with the Third International.

On January 22, 1932, an ill-planned and abortive insurrection led by the PCS was crushed at the cost of 30,000 dead, including Farabundo Martí himself. This defeat, which decimated the fledgling PCS, ushered in the period of military dictatorship which still exists today.

Worker and student mobilisations inspired by the Cuban victory in 1959 played a role in the demise of the ruling military regime which fell to a junta pledged to the recognition of the Cuban government. This junta fell in a counter-coup which established a "Civilian-Military Directorate" constructed to implement the US "Alliance for Progress" plan, Washington's attempt to counter the influence of the Cuban Revolution.

The 1960s were a period of rebuilding the mass movement and the resurgence of mass struggles including a general strike in 1967 and a strike wave, led by teachers, a year later. In these circumstances, the Salvadoran rulers used a series of fraudulent elections — in 1962, 1966, 1967, 1972, and 1977 — as a tactic to head off the mass movement. The opposition parties, including the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats and the Communist Party — under the name of the National Democratic Union (UDN) — all regarded these elections as the main arena for political struggle against the oligarchy.

It was also in these conditions that the debate on armed struggle developed in the mass movement and within the Communist Party. A minority in the PCS which had fought for nearly 10 years to reorient the party in a revolutionary direction finally split in 1969 over this question and by 1972 had formed the Farabundo Martí Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), which

began the organisation of the guerrilla struggle.

When, in an attempt to head off the repercussions of the Nicaraguan revolution in July 1979, a reform-minded civilian-military junta took power with heavy US backing in the coup of October 15, the UDN along with the PDC and the MNR accepted cabinet posts. However, the repression continued and the junta proved incapable of instituting any reforms. As a result, the opposition parties left the junta, precipitating a split in the PDC and the formation of the Popular Social Christian Movement (MPSC).

An earlier split from the PDC produced the revolutionary organisation, the Party of the Salvadoran Revolution (PRS) — with an armed wing, the Revolutionary People's Army (ERP) — in 1971. In 1975, the National Resistance (RN) — linked to the guerrilla force known as the FARN — was formed from a split in the PRS.

While the 1970s were a period of differentiation and reorientation among the revolutionary organisations, the '80s are a period of unification. This was marked by the formation of the FMLN in October 1980 — including the FPL, PCS, PRS, RN, and the MPSC. In the preceding April the FDR was formed by mass organisations linked to these parties and included also the MNR.

Unlike the situation that existed in Nicaragua, there are not major divisions within the Salvadoran bourgeoisie, and no significant sector of that class is in opposition to the dictatorship. The FDR calls for a "revolutionary-democratic government" based on the workers and peasants, and the dismantling of the old state machine. The governmental program of the FDR envisions major and rapid structural changes to the Salvadoran economy, without, however, mistakenly excluding co-operation with smaller capitalists if that proves possible:

"The revolutionary democratic government will:
 "1. Nationalize the entire banking and financial system. This measure will not affect the deposits and other interests of the public.

"2. Nationalize foreign trade.
 "3. Nationalize the system of electricity distribution, along with the enterprises for its production that are in private hands.
 "4. Nationalize the refining of petroleum.
 "5. Carry out the expropriation, in accord with the national interest, of the monopolistic enterprises in industry, trade, and services.

"6. Carry out a deepgoing agrarian reform, which will put the land that is now in the hands of the big landlords at the disposal of the broad masses who work it. This will be done according to an effective plan to benefit the great majority of poor and middle peasants and agricultural wage workers and to promote the development of agriculture and cattle raising.

"The agrarian reform will not affect small and medium landholders, who will receive stimuli and support for continual improvements in production of their plots.

"7. Carry out an urban reform to benefit the great majority, without affecting small and medium owners of real estate.

"8. Thoroughly transform the tax system, so that tax payments no longer fall upon the workers. Indirect taxes on widely consumed goods will be reduced. This will be possible not only through reform of the tax system, but also because the state will receive substantial income from the activity of the nationalized sector of the economy.

"9. Establish effective mechanisms for credit, economic aid, and technical assistance for small and medium-sized private businesses in all branches of the country's economy.

"10. Establish a system for effective planning of the national economy, which will make it possible to encourage balanced development." (*Intercontinental Press*, April 7, 1980, p. 359)

The revolutionary-democratic government envisaged by the FDR/FMLN program conforms in its essential elements to a workers and peasants' government.

The leadership of the FDR, FMLN consciously understand this as a transitional form to a socialist state. In a 1984 interview conducted with the FMLN magazine, *Senal de Libertad*, Ruben Zamora, a member of the FDR/FMLN Political/Diplomatic Commission explains it as follows:

"The Program for a Revolutionary Government is the basis of the FMLN FDR alliance ... In the face of the final, global objectives of the revolution, which are consummated in a socialist society, the FDR/FMLN's Proposal for a Revolutionary Democratic Government was not a proposal for socialism, but a medium-term proposal for advances towards socialism."

The 1984 proposal by the FMLN/FDR for a Provisional Government of Broad Participation is consistent with this program and a necessary tactical step to advance the needs of the Salvadoran revolution. The object of the proposal is the establishment of a provisional government including all revolutionary and democratic forces outside the oligarchy, which will eliminate the repressive forces linked to the

oligarchy, purge and reform the armed forces which will then be amalgamated with the FMLN, institute a range of immediate economic, social and political reforms, and conduct open and free general elections.

As Ruben Zamora explains: "The Proposal for a Government of Broad Participation, as its name indicates, is first of all a proposal for negotiations, and secondarily, for a provisional government; that is a short term proposal. It sets forward the measures that are indispensable in the country right now."

Zamora correctly answers criticism of this proposal that it is an unprincipled compromise which overturns the previous FDR program:

"At the heart of this whole problem is the problem of reformism. The fundamental question, in my opinion, is this: does the plan for a Government of Broad Participation mean that our fronts are abandoning their revolutionary character and becoming reformist organisations — yes or no?

"If you were to try to answer this question solely on the basis of the proposals and concrete measures in the document, you would conclude: Yes, the FMLN-FDR have turned reformist.

"But this would involve a totally idealist analysis of Salvadoran reality, a formal analysis ignoring the fact that what is decisive in every social situation, in every process of social struggle, is the character of the social forces that are brought into action around the various proposals. It is on this basis, I believe, that one's analysis must be begun.

"If the majority of our people, if the organised power of our people were in the hands of sectors of the petty bourgeoisie holding to reformist positions, then the FMLN-FDR's proposal would amount in practice to reformism. But if the basic forces of our people, that is to say the organised workers and peasants, are tightly bound up with the revolutionary forces, that is with the FMLN-FDR, then the proposal for a Government of Broad Participation helps draw in intermediate forces, while the fundamental direction of the process is determined by the camp in which the basic forces are located.

"For this reason, proposing a measure in a European country is not the same as proposing it in El Salvador. In the European countries basic forces such as the organised working class are in the hands of parties like the social democrats and christian democrats. The thrust of a proposal will therefore be determined by the control exercised by the social democrats and christian democrats over these forces.

"In El Salvador on the other hand the basic forces, the

organised workers and peasants, are not on the side of the christian democrats or the army. They are with the FMLN-FDR, and therefore give the FMLN-FDR its fundamental direction."

Political differences with this analysis are behind the split in the FMLN which occurred during 1983, producing the Revolutionary Workers' Organisation (MOR). While it claims to represent the continuity of the revolutionary program of the FMLN/FDR, the MOR is outside this organisation and maintains a sectarian attitude towards the proposal for a Broad Government, claiming that the inclusion of democratic sectors is a betrayal of the revolution. Zamora answers this criticism as follows:

"First of all, the thesis that the MOR represents the mass work in El Salvador has to be rejected. That's false. The proof lies in the fact that the strikes, if they are to be linked to any revolutionary organisations, are to be linked to the organisations of the FMLN and not to the MOR. The MOR has no right to go into the exterior speaking about mass work which they are not doing within the country. That is the first element.

"But let's proceed to the question of continuity. I believe that to an extent the positions of the MOR do represent a continuity, but an ahistorical and mistaken continuity. The MOR represents the positions of the revolutionary movement of the 1970s, and has been incapable of modifying these positions; it has proven incapable of recognising the very strength of the revolutionary movement as it has developed, and of recognising the change in the conditions that four years of war have produced in the country.

"The problem of the MOR is not a problem of who may or may not be revolutionaries; I don't believe we have to discuss that. The basic problem is that they are revolutionaries who are totally mistaken, who are living in the 1970s instead of in 1984. They are thus expressing hard-line positions which would have made sense and been correct in 1975, but which in 1984 are quite divorced from reality.

"Because of the actual development of events in El Salvador we believe that the MOR does not represent and will never represent a really important force. It is the problem of remaining anchored in the past and not recognising the realities of the country."

Despite massive supplies of modern weapons, the training of its forces in the United States, and the assistance of US military "advisers," the dictatorship has been unable to make

significant headway militarily and in fact appears more and more on the defensive.

Since the General Offensive of January 1981 which signaled the opening of the civil war on a broad scale across the country, the FMLN has increased both its ability to fight and defeat contingents of the armed forces on numerous fronts and to secure as "liberated zones" big areas of territory in the north and east which the dictatorship cannot penetrate.

The FMLN/FDR now controls and administers one-third of the Salvadoran countryside in which it organises social and military production, operates an extensive health system, conducts literacy and other educating classes, and in which it has established organs of popular power through elections to local administrative bodies. These liberated zones are defended by the troops of the FMLN, popular militias and the people in arms.

This is correctly characterised by the FMLN/FDR as a situation of dual power.

Under heavy pressure from the government of the United States the dictatorship responded to these advances by the revolutionary forces by staging elections in 1982 and 1984. Behind this was an attempt to win support in the United States, especially in Congress, for Reagan's military policy in the region by making it appear that the US is supporting a democratically elected government. Consistent with this is US support for Christian Democratic forces led by Napoleon Duarte as the so-called middle ground between the extreme right (D'Aubuisson-ARENA-oligarchy) and the extreme left. For this reason the CIA contributed a reported \$1 million to ensure Duarte's victory in the 1984 presidential elections.

While this strategy frees the hands of the US administration to continue funding the dictatorship, in the longer term it can only succeed in destroying the fig leaf of a "middle course" between the real alternatives of brutal repression and a revolutionary victory. Consequently, the US has carefully supported its political manoeuvres by completing preparations for a massive invasion of El Salvador in the event of an FMLN military victory and or to overthrow the government of Nicaragua.

By putting forward the proposal for a government of broad participation the FMLN/FDR has responded in the best possible way to these complex political and military conditions. The proposal is based on the unity and military strength of the FMLN/FDR, the achievement of extensive support throughout El Salvador for the rebel forces, and the social, economic and

political developments in the liberated zones. It is significant, for example, that the proposal calls for the inclusion of the popular power organs already developed into the provisional government.

The proposal is also designed to split the armed forces between the extreme right wing supporters of the oligarchy, the "gorillas," and a "constitutionalist" wing which was evident in the first civilian-military junta of 1979 in which many of the current leaders of the FDR participated as ministers.

The FDR/FMLN has also made skilful use of international diplomatic initiatives, of which the provisional government proposals are a part, to undermine the dictatorship. By stating its willingness to negotiate an end to the civil war, it clearly places the responsibility for continuing violence on the regime, wins broader international support, and raises doubts in the minds of government troops as to the future of the regime for which they are risking their lives.



Guatemala: guerilla fighters

14. Developing class struggle in Guatemala and Honduras

In Guatemala, the four main organisations engaged in armed struggle against the military dictatorship united in February 1982 to form the Guatemala National Revolutionary Union (URNG). The URNG was able to demonstrate considerable support only a month later, when 60 per cent of voters responded to its call to boycott the dictatorship's rigged elections (even though failure to vote is illegal), and another 30,000 voters cast blank ballots.

The URNG is based primarily among the country's oppressed Indians (the majority of the population) and most of its struggles have been conducted in the north-west.

The founding document of the URNG indicates that its goal is a workers and peasants' government that would implement policies broadly similar to those being carried through by the FSLN in Nicaragua:

"The principal cause of our people's poverty is the economic and political domination of the big, wealthy, and repressive foreigners and Guatemalans who rule our country. The revolution will put an end to that domination and will guarantee that the product of the labor of all will benefit those who produce the wealth through their creative efforts.

"The property of the big, wealthy, repressive ones will pass into the hands of the revolutionary government, which will ensure that this wealth is utilized to solve the needs of the working people. The revolution will assure the implementation of a true agrarian reform, distributing land to those who work it in an individual, cooperative, or collective way.

"The revolution will guarantee the existence of small and

medium agrarian holdings, and will distribute to those who work it the land now held by the top military chiefs and by the corrupt, avaricious, and repressive officials and businessmen. The revolution will guarantee small and medium commercial property, and will encourage the creation and development of the national industry that Guatemala needs in order to progress.

"The revolution will guarantee effective control over prices so as to benefit the great majority, and will guarantee by law adequate wages for all rural and urban workers. Power in the hands of the people will be the basis for solving the big problems of health care, housing, and illiteracy that the immense majority of the Guatemalan people suffer." (*Intercontinental Press*, March 8, 1982)

Responding to the threat posed by the formation of the URNG, younger officers of the Guatemalan army staged a coup in the aftermath of the March 1982 elections and placed General Efraín Ríos Montt in power. The new regime expanded and intensified the army's war against the population, basing its strategies on counterinsurgency techniques developed by the US in Vietnam. Urban death-squad activities, which had become politically expensive, were curbed; at the same time a ferocious onslaught was unleashed against the Indian population of the highlands. By mid-1983 the Ríos Montt government had presided over the murder of an estimated 10,000 civilians; close to 200,000 people, mostly Indian peasants, had fled over the border into Mexico, and as many as one million people had been displaced within Guatemala itself.

Initially, many villagers fled into remote mountainous areas to escape the army massacres; when the guerrilla organisations proved incapable of providing food for them, most of these people were forced into army-controlled "model villages." These are little better than concentration camps.

As the areas where the URNG was strongest were largely depopulated, the guerrilla advances of the earlier period were brought to a halt. But although the revolutionaries were forced by the attacks on their social base to curtail their military activity, the movement's fighting cadre remained virtually intact.

By mid-1983 Ríos Montt's many unorthodox methods had alienated important sectors of the Guatemalan ruling class. On August 8 that year he was ousted in a military coup, apparently organised with the connivance of Washington. The new head of state was General Oscar Mejía Victores, a soldier of a more

conventional stripe.

Under Mejía Victores the urban terror has resumed its former ferocity. Between October 1983 and April 1984, 57 political leaders and activists were reported killed. Later in 1984 murders of civilians were reportedly running at close to 100 a month. Undismayed by this slaughter, the Reagan administration has resumed supplies of military hardware to Guatemala and has greatly expanded economic assistance. Washington announced plans to extend "non-lethal" military aid worth \$10 million to Guatemala in fiscal year 1983, along with food and economic aid worth \$96 million.

During 1984 the URNG appears to have partially reconsolidated its base in the countryside, and the level of armed struggle is said to be increasing. The revolutionaries claim to have caused the army 200 casualties in the month of March alone. In April 1984 the US State Department was advising tourists against travel in most of the western half of the country because of guerrilla activity.

In addition, the URNG has stepped up its urban work during the recent period. In March 1984 it was reported that the army was obliged to commit 4000 troops to the defence of Guatemala City.

Meanwhile, the Guatemalan ruling class shows no sign of being able to cure the long-term economic malaise that underlies its political dilemmas. The country's Gross Domestic Product shrank by 2.5 per cent in 1983; the external debt, much of it contracted on highly unfavorable terms, was expected to reach \$2.2 billion in 1984. In August 1984 the Guatemalan government was reportedly under strong pressure from the International Monetary Fund because of a domestic budget deficit twice that planned.

In Honduras, acute economic crisis and a rising tempo of class struggle have helped bring about a significant destabilisation of ruling-class politics during 1984. Serious antagonisms have developed between bourgeois factions over the large-scale US military presence in the country and the local military's close integration into Washington's war plans.

During the period from 1980 to 1983, Honduras' gross domestic product per capita shrank at an average annual rate of 3.1 per cent. USAID economic assistance of \$68.9 million in 1984 has gone nowhere near offsetting capital flight, estimated by the US embassy at \$1 billion over the past few years. Private investment in the economy has fallen to negligible levels. Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund has made

stringent demands on the government to cut living standards and government expenditures in order to contain the spiraling foreign debt, which by early 1984 exceeded \$2 billion.

Most of the burden of this economic collapse has been placed on Honduras' impoverished workers and peasants. Six of every 10 Hondurans are now living in conditions of extreme poverty, with half of the population receiving only 17 per cent of national family income. Unemployment and underemployment are estimated at 65 per cent.

The Honduran labor movement, traditionally among the better organised in Central America, has fought back against the attempts to cut workers' living standards. In late May 1984 50,000 workers marched in protest against new tax and bond laws, forcing the government to withdraw the measures. These struggles have been impeded by the right-wing leadership of most labor movement organisations, and also by armed forces terror. According to the Honduran Human Rights Commission, 113 people have disappeared since early 1982 after being detained by the police. Many more have fallen victim to death-squad killings.

The attacks on human rights have been met with repeated mass protests. Workers have responded to the kidnapping of labor leaders by organising strikes and demonstrations; in March 1984 25,000 people rallied against what labor leaders termed "escalating anti-union repression."

Unable to come up with a workable strategy for dealing with the social and economic crisis, the traditional Honduran ruling parties have split in recent years into a long series of warring factions. Nominally, Honduras is ruled by the Liberal Party administration of President Roberto Suazo Cordova, elected in November 1980. However, real executive power in the country is reckoned to lie with the armed forces commander and with the US ambassador.

During 1982 and 1983 Honduran political life was dominated by high-handed, bellicose armed forces chief General Gustavo Alvarez. Under Alvarez, the Honduran military collaborated closely with the US in organising the counter-revolutionary guerrilla war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. On at least one occasion, in early 1982, plans by Alvarez to stage an all-out invasion of Nicaragua reportedly reached an advanced stage of preparation.

Alvarez also provided enthusiastic support for Washington's efforts to turn Honduras into a support base for direct US military intervention in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Mesoamerica in its March 1984 issue provided details of these preparations:

"To date, US-funded military construction includes five airstrips, two barracks and office complexes, a field hospital and 13 miles of antitank trenches, as well as the Regional Military Training Centre (CREMS) near the Caribbean port of Puerto Castillo, where 120 US Green Berets are training Honduran and Salvadoran troops. Plans for future building include four more airstrips, creation of an ammunition storage depot, a permanent base north of Honduras' capital, Tegucigalpa, and the \$32 million US-Honduran naval base at Puerto Castillo, which could replace the Pentagon's Guantanamo (Cuba) and Panama bases after their leases expire in the year 2000."

In 1983 the US and Honduran armed forces increased their readiness for war in Central America by beginning an open-ended series of large-scale joint manoeuvres code-named "Big Pine" and, unsubtly, "Grenadier." Since these exercises began, the minimum number of US military personnel stationed in Honduras has been put at 700-800; at times the total has exceeded 5000.

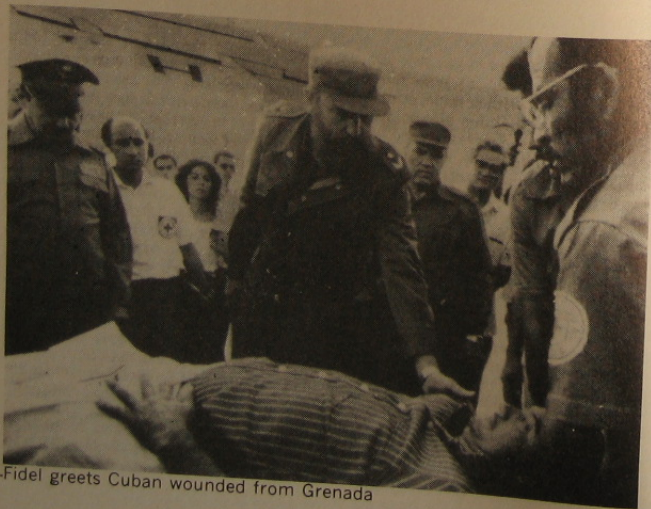
In March 1984 Alvarez was sacked and exiled, in what amounted to a virtual coup d'etat. The reasons for his ouster reportedly relate both to his imperious methods of command and to a widespread sentiment in the armed forces that Alvarez was demanding too low a price for Honduran collaboration in Washington's war projects. Honduras at this stage was spending 20 per cent of its state budget on the military, and was setting aside tens of millions of dollars in scarce foreign currency to purchase extra fuel for the military exercises.

Alvarez's opponents in the military are also believed to have been dissatisfied at his failure to insist that the US train more Honduran troops at the CREMS base, which was set up in order to provide extended training for Salvadoran units. Suspicions in the Honduran military of the Salvadoran armed forces have remained strong ever since the 1969 war between the two countries.

Under new strongman General Walter Lopez Reyes, the Honduran military announced its determination to review the country's 30-year-old military agreement with the US. Lopez also set out to create an image of greater independence of imperialism. Nicaraguan contra installations were moved from near Tegucigalpa to the border region. Unlike Alvarez, Lopez has expressed support for the Contadora peace efforts.

The changes Lopez has brought to Honduran policies, though essentially cosmetic, represent a response to the increasing popular opposition that the US presence in Honduras is encountering. At the end of July 1984 a demonstration of 2000 people demanded the expulsion of US military personnel from Honduras. One of the three main factions of the Liberal Party has also demanded an end to the US military presence, and a cut in Honduran military spending. Furthermore, the Catholic church in Honduras has taken a strong and vocal stand against the foreign military presence.

The revolutionary left in Honduras has not been strong enough to play a major political role, but it is implanted in fertile soil. Early in 1983 six revolutionary organisations joined forces in a single front, the National Unified Leadership of the Honduran Revolutionary Movement. Members of the front are the Revolutionary Workers Party of Central America (PRTC), People's Revolutionary Forces-Lorenzo Zelaya (FPR-Lorenzo Zelaya), Movement for Revolutionary Unity (MUR), Communist Party of Honduras (PCH), People's Liberation Movement-Cinchoneros (MPL-Cinchoneros), and Morazanist Front for the Liberation of Honduras (FMLH).



Fidel greets Cuban wounded from Grenada

15. Revolution and counter-revolution in Grenada

The Grenadan revolution, led by the New Jewel Movement, brought to power the first workers and farmers' government in an English-speaking country. In the four and a half years of its existence, this government provided an inspiring example for the oppressed peoples of the other Caribbean islands. The New Jewel Movement itself developed out of the Black Power movement in the Caribbean in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This movement was never solely nationalist, however. The example of the Cuban revolution showed that socialist revolution represented the road of liberation from national and racial oppression. Moreover, as the countries of the Caribbean gained formal independence, local Black politicians generally replaced the white colonialists as the immediate agents of oppression and defenders of exploitation.

The NJM was formed in 1973 through a fusion of two organisations, both of which were initiated by radical intellectuals, many of whom had studied or worked abroad and thus come into contact with all the ideas of the radicalisation of the 1960s. It quickly developed broad mass support, being able to organise actions of up to 10,000 people within a few months of its founding.

Out of these actions and the repressive response of the Gairy dictatorship came a months-long general strike in 1974. Leadership of the strike was not in the hands of the NJM, however, but in the hands of bourgeois forces, which led most of the unions on the island. These bourgeois forces called off the strike when it was within sight of victory.

Following this experience, the NJM consciously set about

expanding its influence among the masses of exploited and oppressed, including the country's tiny working class. Over the next few years, it was instrumental in founding the Bank and General Workers' Union and won a leadership role in a number of other unions.

In 1976, the NJM formed an electoral bloc, the People's Alliance, with two bourgeois parties. Despite extensive fraud, the alliance was credited with 48 per cent of the vote and won six of the 15 seats in Parliament, three of these going to the NJM. With Maurice Bishop as leader of the parliamentary opposition, the NJM used Parliament as a forum to the limited extent possible. But from the experience it drew the related conclusions that the way forward did not go through Parliament and that the bourgeois parties were not reliable allies.

As the Gairy dictatorship's already limited support was eroded following 1976, repression in both legal and illegal forms was steadily intensified. In these conditions, the NJM was able to develop an effective underground network that ensured distribution of its press and organised support in both urban and rural areas. It also began preparing for insurrection by developing an armed organisation of the party.

The events of March 13, 1979, were a true insurrection of the workers and farmers. Once the NJM had seized the main army barracks and Bishop had broadcast the NJM's revolutionary call, the workers and peasants mobilised in their thousands to disarm the police and guard against any attempt to counterattack by Gairy's supporters.

The workers and farmers' government issuing from this insurrection faced a horrendous objective situation: unemployment up to as much as 50 per cent, an economy dependent on a few agricultural exports and tourism, a large degree of subsistence farming, and virtually no industry or even processing of agricultural goods, imports being the main source even of many staple food items. And of course, from the first day of the revolution, it confronted the active hostility of US imperialism, with economic sabotage, the organisation of counter-revolutionary attacks and assassination attempts, and the threat of invasion.

The People's Revolutionary Government headed by Maurice Bishop sought to overcome these difficulties by organising and relying upon the strength of the workers and small farmers. Under Bishop's leadership, the Grenadan revolutionaries took major steps forward in transforming the union movement, important sectors of which were still led by conservative forces,

through patient political persuasion and example. Unionisation itself rose from 30 per cent to 90 per cent of the workforce, with the organisation of agricultural and unskilled workers. New mass organisations — of women, of youth, and even of children — were built by the NJM. A popular militia with broad participation of the workers and farmers began to be constructed. A network of parish councils, workers' parish councils, and zonal councils were being developed as important democratic forums through which the producers could express their views and demand an accounting from government officials.

Under the Bishop government impressive progress was made within a few years in bringing about a series of improvements in the economic and social conditions of Grenada's working people. The living standard of the vast majority of the people rose rapidly. Between 1979 and 1983 an overall real growth in the economy of 13.4 per cent was achieved. Unemployment dropped from nearly 50 per cent in 1979 to 14.1 per cent by the end of 1982, and plans were under way to eliminate it entirely by 1986. The inflation rate was reduced from 22 per cent in 1978 to 6.5 per cent in 1983. For the first time in Grenada's history workers' wages rose faster than prices. During the period 1981-83, real wages rose by 30 per cent. In addition, the PRG exempted the poorest 30 per cent of the population from taxes.

The PRG carried out a land reform suited to the particular conditions of Grenada — acquiring idle land by forced long-term lease and aiding the establishment on it of co-operatives of previously unemployed young people. Aid from Cuba made possible the development of fishing co-operatives. Food-processing industries were established to create jobs, reduce the effect on the economy of world market price fluctuations on raw agricultural goods, reduce imports and increase export income. An international airport to boost the tourist trade, long dreamed of but never begun by the colonial or Gairy governments, was nearing completion in 1983.

The PRG provided Grenadans with free health care, new expanded hospital services, and, with Cuba's help, a 100 per cent increase in the number of doctors. Free education and a major literacy campaign reduced the number of illiterates to 3 per cent of the population. Milk for young children and lunches for schoolchildren was provided free or at subsidised prices.

The Bishop government followed the same sort of anti-imperialist foreign policy that is followed by the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions. In such forums as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Commonwealth, and CARICOM, it tried to forge

a united front, particularly among the small island nations, of countries suffering the effects of imperialist exploitation.

The NJM consciously sought to educate Grenadan workers and farmers in a spirit of revolutionary internationalism and solidarity with the struggles of the oppressed, particularly in Central America and the Caribbean and in Africa. Grenadan volunteer teachers participated in Nicaragua's literacy campaign in English-speaking regions of the Atlantic coast.

However, the immense economic and social problems that confronted the PRG and the limited number of politically experienced cadre that were available to the NJM to carry out the tasks of state administration and the building of the mass organisations meant that the work of building the NJM itself was neglected. This weakness provided an opening for the development within the NJM of a clique centred around Bernard Coard, which, through methods that were very reminiscent of those used by the Escalante group in the Cuban Communist Party, set out to usurp control of the NJM and the PRG. Using his position as chairman of the Organising Committee of the NJM and as minister of planning and finance, Coard, by offering special privileges to those who would support him, consolidated a secret faction within the leadership of the NJM and within the army command.

The Coard faction sought to foster opposition to Bishop and other leaders of the NJM by claiming the difficulties the revolution faced were not due to objective circumstances but to the supposed "petty-bourgeois" character of these leaders. The Coard faction considered itself to be the "genuine" Marxist-Leninist wing of the NJM. It expressed dissatisfaction with the pace of the revolutionary process and advocated the immediate implementation of "socialist" measures. Coard's views, however, far from being Marxist-Leninist, expressed the bureaucratic impatience characteristic of a petty-bourgeois functionary who has become divorced from the masses. Not surprisingly, the Coard faction's adventurist perspectives were combined with a contemptuous attitude toward the masses and their authentic revolutionary leadership.

Having lined up a majority of the Central Committee of the NJM, the Coard clique placed Bishop under house arrest on October 12, 1983, and usurped control of the PRG. A week later, Bishop and five other central leaders of the NJM were murdered by soldiers acting on the orders of the usurpers. General Hudson Austin, a Coard supporter, declared the PRG dissolved and proclaimed the establishment of a

"Revolutionary Military Council" headed by himself. A four-day, round-the-clock curfew was immediately imposed, effectively placing the entire Grenadin people under house arrest. These events marked the overthrow of the workers and farmers' government and created the opportunity that US imperialism had long sought to invade Grenada and re-establish a stable neocolonial regime.

On October 25, two weeks after the Coard coup, thousands of US troops landed on Grenada. US imperialism's goal, as Fidel Castro explained to a rally of over one million people in Havana on November 14 to honor the Cuban volunteer construction workers killed during the US invasion, was to "kill the symbol of the Grenadan revolution." However, as Fidel said, "the symbol was already dead. The Grenadan revolutionaries themselves destroyed it with their split and their colossal errors. We believe that, after the death of Bishop and his closest comrades, after the army fired on the people, and after the party and government divorced themselves from the masses and isolated themselves from the world, the Grenadan revolutionary process could not survive."

"In our view," Castro said, "Coard's group objectively destroyed the revolution and opened the door to imperialist aggression."

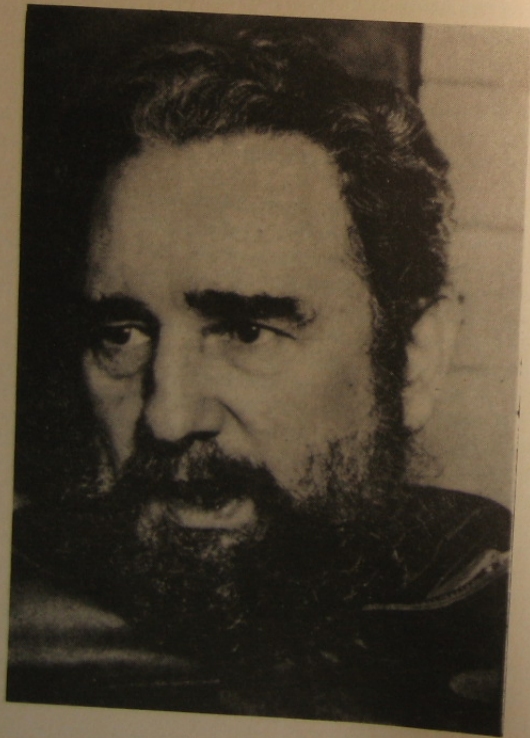
The brutal overthrow of the Bishop government demobilised the Grenadan masses, severely weakening the resistance to the US invasion. Many Grenadans, in fact, regarded the US military occupation as a lesser evil in comparison with the terrorist regime imposed by the Coard faction.

Following the US invasion, some 2000 Grenadans were detained and held in barbed-wire concentration camps. Cadres of the NJM and the mass organisations were particular targets of the US occupiers' repression. A major purge of government employees was launched and the US-imposed puppet regime of Governor-General Paul Scoon set about reversing the political, economic, and social gains the masses had made under the Bishop-led workers and farmers' government.

Numerous PRG programs, such as the international airport project, the agrarian reform, the adult literacy program, and free milk distribution have been halted. Idle land expropriated by the PRG to create state farms has been handed back to its former owners. Industries set up by the PRG have been closed or sold off to private owners. Within six months of the US occupation the numbers of Grenadans who were unemployed had trebled.

However, the pace at which the US puppet regime is able to carry through its goal of dismantling the accomplishments of the PRG is hampered by the fact that the Grenadan people continue to identify with the policies of the Bishop government. As the real goals of the US occupation have become clear to the Grenadan masses, resistance to the counter-revolutionary policies of the US-imposed government has begun to grow.

The experience of four years of a workers and farmers' government provides an indestructible legacy upon which the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist wing of the NJM, regrouped in the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement, will be able to rebuild the mass revolutionary movement in Grenada.



16. Learning from the Bolsheviks

The course followed by the Bishop leadership of the NJM from March 1979 demonstrates that it had learned not only from the experience of the early years of the Cuban Revolution, but also from the lessons drawn by the Bolsheviks from the experience of the first years of the Russian Revolution. The FSLN's course has also demonstrated that it too has learned from the attempts by the early Soviet government to utilise the capital and expertise of Russian and foreign capitalists to reactivate the devastated Russian economy and prepare for a systematic transition from workers' control of the capitalist economy to workers' management of a nationalised economy. The international relationship of class forces today makes the successful application of this course far more likely than was the case with the Bolsheviks.

The fact that the Russian Revolution stood alone in 1918 gave encouragement to the Russian and world bourgeoisies to launch a counter-revolutionary war that forced the Soviet government to cut short its experiment with what Lenin called "state capitalism," and to carry through the wholesale expropriation of the bourgeoisie in July-August 1918. While this was politically necessary because of the outbreak of the civil war and the foreign intervention, it was economically premature. It forced the Bolsheviks to allow a partial restoration of capitalism with the New Economic Policy in 1921.

Given a more favorable relationship of class forces internationally during the first few years of the revolution, the Bolsheviks would have proceeded more slowly to the consolidation of a nationalised economy. As Trotsky pointed out in his report on the NEP to the Fourth World Congress of the

Communist International in 1922:

"It is perfectly obvious that from the economic standpoint the expropriation of the bourgeoisie is justified to the extent that the socialist state is able to organise the exploitation of enterprises upon new beginnings. The wholesale, overall nationalisation which we carried through in 1917-18 was completely out of harmony with the conditions I have just now outlined. The organisational potentialities of the socialist state lagged far behind total nationalisation. But the whole point is that under the pressure of the Civil War we had to carry this nationalisation through. . . .

". . . had we been able to enter the arena of socialist revolution after the victory of the revolution in Europe, our bourgeoisie would have quaked in its boots and it would have been very simple to deal with it. They would not have dared to do so much as stir a little finger upon the seizure of power by the Russian proletariat. In that case, we could have tranquilly taken hold of the large-scale enterprises, leaving the middle-sized ones and small ones to exist for a while on the private capitalist basis; later we would have reorganized the middle-sized enterprises, rigidly taking into account our organizational and productive potentialities and requirements." (*The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Volume 2, p. 226)

The victory of Soviet Russia in the civil war, however, created conditions in which other Soviet governments could follow a more gradual course toward the establishment of a planned economy based on socialist property forms. When Soviet republics were established in the Caucasian countries of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia in 1921, Lenin urged them to "effect a slower, more cautious and more systematic transition" in their economies through "an extensive policy of concessions and trade" with the capitalist West. As distinct from the tactics of the Russians, Lenin urged the Caucasian communists to "practice more moderation and caution, show more readiness to make concessions to the petty bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia, and particularly the peasantry." (*Collected Works*, Volume 32, pp. 316-18)

17. The Marxist-Leninist strategy for revolution in backward countries

The Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Grenadan revolutions have added further confirmation of the correctness of the Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution in the underdeveloped countries, a theory first tested in the Russian Revolution. This theory explains that:

(1) The national-democratic revolution in the backward countries cannot be consistently led by the national bourgeoisie. If it is to carry through a thoroughgoing agrarian reform and the destruction of the old neocolonial state apparatus, it must be led by the working class, in alliance with the broad masses of the peasantry and other petty-bourgeois strata; united around a revolutionary democratic program.

(2) On the basis of such a worker-peasant alliance, the military and political power of the bourgeoisie and large landowners must be overthrown and replaced by a workers and peasants' government resting on the armed power of the worker-peasant masses;

(3) Such a workers and peasants' government first solves the national, democratic, agrarian, and anti-imperialist tasks, improving the workers' conditions and expanding their control over the economy at the expense of the capitalists;

(4) As the organisation and class consciousness of the workers and their alliance with the poor peasants deepens, the revolution develops as a permanent process, growing over uninterruptedly to the specifically socialist tasks of expropriation of the bourgeoisie and establishment of a workers state based on a nationalised, planned economy. The workers and peasants' government is thus the transitional form of the

state power of the proletariat and its allies preceding the consolidation of a socialist state. As Trotsky pointed out in 1922, it is a "transition to the proletarian dictatorship, the full and completed one." (*The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol. 2, p. 324)

The workers and peasants' government is the essential link between the democratic and socialist stages of this uninterrupted revolutionary process; it is the bridge by which the working class moves from the first to the second.

This is the line of march which the Cuban revolutionaries implemented in practice in 1959-60. They subsequently codified the lessons of their experience in their key programmatic statements, beginning with the Second Declaration of Havana in 1962. In the Programmatic Platform adopted by the First Congress of the Cuban Communist Party in 1975, the Castro leadership gave its most rounded theoretical formulation of the permanent dynamic of the Cuban revolution:

"The Cuban Revolution — while presenting a whole series of specific features deriving from concrete national peculiarities and conditions and the international situation in which it is unfolding — has taken place in accordance with the fundamental laws of the historical process discovered by Marxism-Leninism, and has confirmed the main Leninist thesis on the revolution and the possibility of its uninterrupted course until turning into a socialist revolution.

"There is no insurmountable barrier between the democratic-popular and anti-imperialist stage and the socialist stage. In the era of imperialism, both are part of a single process, in which national-liberation and democratic measures — which at times have already a socialist tinge — pave the way for genuinely socialist ones. The decisive and defining element of this process is who leads it, which class wields political power. . . .

"A specific characteristic of the transition from the democratic, popular, agrarian and anti-imperialist stage to the socialist stage in Cuba lies in the fact that it took place in a brief period of time and under the same revolutionary leadership. The problem of political power had already been solved in essence from the very start for both stages of the Revolution.

"In the first stage it took the form of a democratic revolutionary dictatorship of the popular masses: of workers, peasants, the urban petty bourgeoisie and other strata of the population, with interests opposed to imperialism and bourgeois-latifundist oligarchic domination.

"Now, in the second stage, that of socialist construction, it has

taken the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat in alliance with the working peasants and all other strata of our society, with interests opposed to those of the capitalist regime. . . .

"As a first step an anti-imperialist, agrarian, democratic and popular revolution was necessary to resolve the contradiction between the demands of the development of the productive forces and of the existing production relations.

"The national bourgeoisie was incapable of leading such a revolution because of its economic weakness, its subordination to Yankee imperialist interests and its fear of the action of the popular masses. This made it oppose even the measures of a national-liberation character of the first stage.

"The interwoven economic interests of the Yankee monopolies, the bourgeois latifundist oligarchy and the rest of the national bourgeoisie would make any measure affecting any of these sections bring about immediate opposition and resistance of the bourgeoisie as a bloc. In conditions of economic and ideological domination by imperialism, measures that do not even go beyond the bourgeois democratic framework are generally rejected by the bourgeoisie of dependent countries. In these countries, the bourgeoisie fears that the development of the revolutionary process will inevitably lead to socialism.

"This situation in which the objectives of national liberation and of a democratic nature had to be implemented by the working class at the head of the State power, conditioned the close interrelationship between the measures and tasks of the first and the second stages of our Revolution and the uninterrupted character of the transformation leading to the transition from one stage to the other in the context of a single revolutionary process."

It is along this Marxist-Leninist strategic line that the Nicaraguan revolutionaries are consciously moving today. And it is this same Marxist-Leninist line that the Salvadoran and Guatemalan revolutionaries are consciously fighting to put into practice.



Havana, May 17, 1980: March of the Fighting People

18. Castroism and the Fourth International

As the first socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere, the Cuban Revolution inevitably became a symbol for the aspirations of workers and peasants throughout the region. The goal of "socialism," which could be paid lip service by reformist misleaders and bourgeois demagogues, could now be defined more precisely as "the kind of society being constructed in Cuba." It is in this sense that Marxists speak of the extension of the Cuban Revolution: The working masses moving forward in Central America and the Caribbean are continuing on their own national territories the international proletarian struggle that was first explained scientifically by Marx and Engels and which achieved such an inspiring victory in Cuba.

In the same way the practical and theoretical achievements of Fidel Castro and the team he developed have made them symbols of the type of leadership required for the victory of the workers and peasants in each country. The leaders of the revolutionary struggles in Central America and the Caribbean have in common that they are showing their peoples the way to victory over imperialism and capitalism. They are Marxist vanguards strongly influenced by the lessons of the Cuban Revolution in societies with a common history of imperialist exploitation and oppression. They thereby constitute a current quite distinct from both Stalinist and Social Democratic reformism and from centrism, as well as from revolutionaries in the imperialist countries.

Of course, referring to the Cuban Communist Party, NJM, FSLN, FMLN, URNG, and similar organizations in other countries as a distinct current does not at all imply even

organisational links, let alone identical outlooks on strategy, tactics, or major events of the international class struggle. The successes of the revolutionaries of Grenada, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala demonstrate that they have understood the necessity of building parties firmly rooted in each country's particular conditions and traditions of anticapitalist and anti-imperialist struggle. This need for revolutionaries to base themselves on the specific realities of the class struggle in their own countries, to map out their own roads and learn from their own experiences — rather than mechanically repeating the Cuban "pattern" — is itself an important lesson of the Cuban Revolution, one often stressed by Fidel and other Cuban leaders. Thus Jesus Montane, a candidate member of the Cuban CP's Political Bureau, provided a good description of this current when he said that revolutions can be led to victory only by "those who learn from others and think for themselves."

Abstractly, it would be accurate to describe this current simply as "Marxist", but the term does not adequately distinguish these revolutionaries from the Stalinists, Social Democrats, and sectarians who falsely claim that title. Both enemies and supporters of socialism have recognised the distinct character of these new Marxist vanguards by describing them, in reference to the first of them to achieve victory, as "Fidelista" or "Castroist." The term should be understood in the sense just outlined: The FSLN, for example, is "Castroist" in the same way that Fidel and the Cuban CP are "Sandinistas." Both terms refer to Marxist vanguards that have emerged in the specific conditions of the underdeveloped countries of the Western Hemisphere. A correct political orientation to this current is of the utmost importance for the Fourth International.

In the early 1960s, it was common in the Fourth International to describe the Castro team as "revolutionists of action." This phrase had been used by Trotsky to stress that in this epoch of imperialist decline the fundamental task of Marxists is to lead the revolution, not to engage in further theoretical elaborations of program or analysis. But as applied to the Cuban revolutionaries, the phrase was used to suggest something quite different: that they had led a socialist revolution by learning from experience rather than from Marxist classics, that their course of development was from revolutionary action to Marxist theory instead of from Marxist theory to revolutionary action.

This view was based on a false conception of the relationship between theory and action, implying a dichotomy between the two that is contradictory of historical materialism. The source of this error was the failure of the Fourth International to assimilate the Leninist theory of revolution in the underdeveloped countries, which guided the actions of the Cuban revolutionaries. Because of this failure, the Fourth International tended to view the successive stages of the Cuban Revolution as the result of a changing consciousness in the Fidelista leadership rather than as the course of development foreseen by Leninist theory. Our own underestimation of and consequent impatience with revolutionary-democratic tasks caused us to misjudge those who were leading the Cuban masses through the necessary development from the national-democratic to socialist revolution.

This approach, of belittling the Cuban revolutionaries' theoretical understanding in order not to confront the weaknesses in our own grasp of Leninist theory, was expressed in a resolution of the Reunification Congress of the Fourth International in 1963:

"... Cuba became the first example in our epoch of a revolution in which the leadership through its own experiences in the very course of struggle came over to the concepts of Marxism-Leninism.

"Subsequent experience has proved that this is a profound conversion. . . ."

The concept that the Cubans were "revolutionists of action" had further harmful consequences in addition to allowing the Fourth International to delay confronting the flaws in its theory of revolution in the underdeveloped countries. It inevitably suggested that the "Castroists" were theoretically handicapped by their supposedly late acceptance of Marxism, and that they would therefore be less able than other Marxists to resist hostile pressures, in particular the pressure of bureaucratisation.

It could not, of course, be excluded *a priori* that the Cuban Revolution would degenerate as a result of imperialist encirclement, the influence of Soviet Stalinism, and the bureaucratic pressures inherent in any socialist state in conditions of underdevelopment.

As events have proved, however, the Cuban Marxists were able to overcome those dangers, in the process reviving for Marxists everywhere important Leninist ideas that had long been obscured by Stalinism. They have gone on to greatly broaden the democratic control that the Cuban workers and

farmers exercise over their society, to undermine the ability of layers of the apparatus to accumulate bureaucratic privilege, and to inspire new revolutionary victories in the region.

The conscious extension of the socialist revolution in Central America takes place in the context of a new rise of mass struggles throughout Latin America as a whole, as evidenced by the collapse of military dictatorships in Argentina, Brazil, and Bolivia, and the mass upsurge against the Pinochet regime in Chile. In this situation the influence of the Marxist leaderships of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions has been greatly enhanced throughout the continent. Other revolutionary and class-struggle forces, such as the Brazilian Workers Party leadership, have been inspired by the Sandinista revolution and have sought to assimilate its lessons for their own struggles. These forces are seeking to extend and deepen their collaboration with the Cuban and Nicaraguan leaderships. These developments greatly increase the opportunities for overcoming the crisis of revolutionary leadership in Latin America as a whole.

The "Castroist" current has as its class basis the workers and small farmers. It represents and fights for their interests in opposition to both capitalism/imperialism and bureaucratic abuses. It does so by mobilising the masses themselves to fight in their own interests. Its policies and political positions are developed through analysis of the world with the scientific tool of Marxism. It is the most influential current of Marxist revolutionaries in the world today, an important component of the forces that will resolve the international crisis of proletarian leadership. The Fourth International was founded in a period of profound defeats for the world proletariat, defeats caused largely by the inadequacies and betrayals of working-class leadership. The historic task of the Fourth International was to prepare the overcoming of the crisis of proletarian leadership by preserving the programmatic continuity of Marxism-Leninism following the irreversible degeneration of the Soviet Communist Party and the Communist International.

Isolation from the mass movement and the domination of the workers' movement by reformist currents inevitably created strong sectarian pressures within the Fourth International. Precisely because the Fourth International is a programmatic nucleus, even seemingly minor programmatic differences could and did generate sharp factional struggles and even splits. Decades of swimming against the stream, of isolation from the main forces of the working-class movement, created

pressure to treat necessity as a virtue and to regard isolation as proof of programmatic orthodoxy.

It was quite natural therefore that the major sectarian splits from the Fourth International — those led by the Healy, Lambert, and Moreno groupings — were to result directly from the advances in overcoming the crisis of proletarian leadership represented by the victories of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions. By setting up this or that point of "Trotskyist" orthodoxy as an obstacle to recognising and acting towards the "Castroists" as fellow Marxist revolutionaries, the sectarians converted the programmatic acquisitions of Marxism into their opposite: from instruments to aid in building the mass Leninist international necessary for the victory of socialism into obstacles to its construction.

The strength of the Fourth International's programmatic continuity is seen in the fact that our errors concerning revolutionary-democratic tasks in the underdeveloped countries did not prevent a common appreciation of the Cuban Revolution from forming a fundamental basis for the reunification of the International in 1963, and that a majority of Trotskyists at the time recognised the Cuban leaders as Marxists who could be an important part of the solution of the crisis of proletarian leadership. In the 1960s our movement was presented with major opportunities to link up with and collaborate with the "Castroist" current. The failure to achieve significant advances in this regard were not due to an unwillingness on the part of these comrades to enter into collaboration with us. Rather, it was due to the failure of the Fourth International to give this process of seeking collaboration the priority it deserved. It is also necessary to recognise that for a period of years beginning in the early 1970s the Fourth International as a whole fell into a *relatively* sectarian attitude towards the "Castroist" current. The International as a whole stopped paying close attention to developments within Cuba and within "Castroist" organisations elsewhere in Latin America. Events such as the organisation of the system of People's Power were evaluated incorrectly, as evidence of increasing bureaucratisation. It was some months after the Grenadan revolution before the International even became aware that a revolution was going forward in that country.

The quite varied responses within the International to the victory in Nicaragua demonstrated how far this sectarian drift had gone, of which the Morenista response was a grotesque

extreme. It is only necessary to compare the worries and lack of enthusiasm of too many sections with the response that would have come from the entire International had the victory occurred in 1962, or if Che's effort in Bolivia had succeeded instead of meeting defeat in 1967.

The Marxists of the "Castroist" current have proved in three different countries and are proving today in a fourth and a fifth that they are consciously leading the workers and poor peasants to the creation of socialist states. If it is to remain true to its historic tasks, the Fourth International must seek the closest possible political collaboration with these Marxists in the struggle to build the mass Leninist international and its sections in every country. To allow programmatic disagreements — even serious ones, such as on the political revolution in the bureaucratically-ruled socialist states — to stand in the way of this collaboration would be to convert the Fourth International into a sectarian obstacle to the overcoming of the crisis of proletarian leadership. We must recognise that we are part of the same movement as these comrades — the world revolutionary Marxist movement, the genuine world communist movement, and act accordingly. We must seek to maximise at every point our fraternal political collaboration with these comrades, to seek out and emphasise the points of difference we have with them, and to **subordinate** our differences with them in order to achieve the maximum possible collaboration. Without ignoring or blurring over the differences we do have, we should nevertheless not make a priority of polemicising with them on these differences.

In our propaganda we must seek to inspire our own members and those whom we influence with the achievements and revolutionary example provided by Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Salvadoran revolutions and their Marxist leaderships. We must devote major resources to building the solidarity movement with these revolutions, seek to work closely with the representatives of the Cuban and Central American revolutions in the countries in which we have sections in order to build this movement, invite them to our conferences and other major gatherings, and organise tours by our members and leaders to Cuba and Nicaragua. Already many sections of the Fourth International have taken exemplary initiatives along these lines with regard to the Nicaraguan revolution and its revolutionary vanguard; the FSLN. Similar initiatives should be taken in regard to the Cuba and its revolutionary vanguard, the Cuban Communist Party.

In countries where "Castroist" parties are leading revolutions or revolutionary struggles, the only proper place for Marxist revolutionaries who adhere to the Fourth International is in their ranks, as loyal builders of those parties. We must seek to link up with and attempt to fuse with other revolutionaries in Latin America and elsewhere who identify with the Cuban and Central American revolutionaries. Adherence to the Fourth International should not be made an obstacle to this process. We must ensure that the articles our press publishes or that are written by our members do not cut across these efforts to deepen and extend our political collaboration with the "Castroist" current. This is particularly important because the past history of sectarian attacks on these comrades by those claiming adherence to Trotskyism has created justified suspicion of our movement on their part.

Through this political collaboration, the Fourth International will bring to the future world party of socialist revolution thousands of cadres trained in the heritage and application of the Marxist program, and in many countries sizeable nuclei of future mass parties — including in the imperialist countries, where there are few significant "Castroist" groupings.

The Marxists of the "Castroist" current have demonstrated their own willingness to work with anyone who is serious about seeking to defend and extend revolutionary gains. And it is guaranteed that these leaders are not unique — they are only the vanguard of future revolutionary proletarian tendencies and groupings that will emerge from the class struggle itself in the underdeveloped countries, the imperialist countries, and the Stalinised socialist states. Our collaboration with the "Castroists" will teach us important lessons and prepare us for the work of linking up and combining forces with such currents in the struggle for socialism.

The unevenness of capitalist development and the unevenness of the world revolution make it inevitable that the mass Leninist international will be built at different tempos in various countries, from forces that have come from different starting points and arrived at Marxism by quite different routes. Construction of the world party of socialist revolution can go forward at any point only by utilising the forces presented by history. The most politically advanced forces available today are the Fourth International and the "Castroist" current.



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