

(Typed on National Office letterhead)

May 1, 1978

Tim Wohlforth
Oakland

Dear Tim,

At the Political Committee meeting of April 27 we discussed your March 20 letter on Cuba. I want to let you know the decision of the committee on several points related to your letter.

First, on the plenum. We have decided to hold the next plenum--a one- or two-day affair-- on the eve of Oberlin, in Oberlin. This means we will not have a full-dress plenum until the fall.

The decision to forego a plenum in June reflects our view that a plenum then would not advance the implementation of the key decision we made in February: to act now to get the majority of the party into industry. We have run into no political disagreements that would make a plenum mandatory. And we don't think we will be far enough along by June to hold a real leadership review of the progress and problems of making this turn.

In fact, we think a June plenum would actually get in our way--coming less than four months after the last plenum, and only six weeks or so before Oberlin. Pulling all the NCers and organizers into New York is time-consuming for the leadership in the field, and it seems to us that the full attention of the NCers and organizers between now and Oberlin ought to be on driving through the decision of the February plenum.

Added factors, though these are not decisive in our minds, are the additional financial strain this would place on comrades, and the degree to which a plenum would cut across the summer school and get in the way of preparing Oberlin.

What we propose instead is to have a plenum just before Oberlin begins, focusing on the process of getting comrades into industry; how this affects our work in key arenas, such as the Black movement; and how it relates to some major questions facing the party, such as how to improve the circulation of the press.

We will not propose Cuba for the agenda at this plenum. What we will do is to begin a discussion in the Political Com-

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mittee on Cuba. We will review the basic approach the party has had toward the Cuban revolution--the theoretical premises and the political line--and decide whether, in the opinion of the PC, any modifications or revisions are in order.

We believe it is quite important for this discussion to be held by the PC prior to opening the discussion in the NC or in the party as a whole. Such a PC discussion will prepare the discussion in the NC and in the party, facilitate achieving clarity on the questions posed, and maximize the conditions for a discussion the whole party can learn from and be strengthened by.

Since we are not now opening the discussion in the NC, we have decided not to circulate the materials you have written. We couldn't send out your opinions without giving other members of the NC the right to have their views also distributed. Several comrades have already stated that if the documents from you are made available, they would request that their responses to your opinions also be included. Other NCers would undoubtedly make the same request once they received the materials. Then, willy-nilly, we would be in the middle of an NC discussion. This would short-circuit the responsible leadership task of the PC to prepare and organize the discussion.

We have already circulated to the PC the materials you referred to. We will, of course, do the same with anything else you would like to add for the PC.

Comradely,



Larry Seigle
for the Political Committee

APR 4 1978

X: PC

March 20, 1978

Dear Comrades,

On April 11, 1977 I submitted a brief discussion article summing up by theoretical position on the postwar social overturns with particular reference to Cuba. This document was in response to a discussion on the Political Committee, initiated by George Brietman on Cuba.

The conclusion of the document was basically the same as that reached by Comrade Brietman as well as that reached by Comrade Keil et al: Cuba is a deformed Workers State requiring a political revolution led by a Trotskyist party.

Just before I left for the West Coast in late May, 1977 an informal discussion of the question was organized with Comrade Barnes, Hansen, Feldman and some others which proved quite useful and it was understood that the discussion would continue within the leadership.

At the time of the party convention which I was unable to attend because of my work schedule I wrote a letter to Comrade Barnes on a number of matters including Cuba. I expressed my disagreement with sections of Comrade Hansen's contribution to the discussion bulletin on the question . I also expressed hope the discussion would continue within the leadership. I explained that I had not submitted my document to the discussion bulletin because it had been agreed that such a discussion would better be conducted within the leadership first.

At the recent Plenum Comrade Brietman once again expressed his opinion on the matter and urged that a discussion proceed-- a discussion which clearly had not taken place in New York in the interim period. It was the sentiment of the NC that such a discussion would now be organized by the National Committee.

I request that this letter, my document of April 11th on Cuba, and the appropriate section of my August 6th letter dealing with Cuba, be submitted at this time to the National Committee for consideration by Committee members prior to our next Plenum. I also request that the next Plenum have as an agenda point the question of Cuba.

The recent article by Ernest Harsch in IP-Inprecor, "Why Carter Wants Fidel Castro Out of Africa", I feel expresses the need for clarity on the Political Committee, National Committee, and in the party as a whole on the character of the Cuban Workers State and its leadership. The article suggests that Castro's role in Africa is somehow distinctive from that of the Soviet Union. And yet it provides absolutely no documentation to back up such a suggestion.

Otherwise Harsch could have answered the question he raise in a single paragraph--Carter is opposed to the growing influence of the Soviet Union in Africa for the same reasons he opposes that influence everywhere--Carter heads the imperialist camp and thus is the mortal enemy of all the workers states despite their deformities.

The truth of the matter is that Cuba has acted strictly as an agent of Soviet foreign policy with Africa. The USSR supplied the equipment while Cuba supplied the ground troops to bolster bourgeois nationalist regimes which hopefully will be friendly to the Soviet Camp.

The result in Angola has been that Cuban troops played an important role in supporting and stabilizing the existing bourgeois regime there. In Ethiopia Cuban troops were essential for the defeat of nationalist insurgents and again in bolstering up the bourgeois military regime there.

Clearly the confusion on the nature of Cuba on the Political Committee prevents us from saying plainly what is in the African situation. Otherwise we would think Hirsch would have made a main theme of his article on Cuba, a condemnation of the perfidious policy of Stalinism in relation to the genuine national liberation struggle of the Somalian and Eritrean national minority in Ethiopia. Instead this point was buried in the article.

I wish to disagree with a point which Comrade Barnes stressed at the plenum. He insisted that those who wish to change the party line and characterize Cuba as a deformed workers state requiring political revolution have a special obligation to provide a vast quantity of facts to support such a change.

I am, of course, highly in favor of as many facts as possible on Cuba. But I do not believe this obligation falls only on the shoulders of the supporters of a deformed workers state characterization of Cuba. I feel this obligation falls on the entire party leadership, including those who are not yet ready to make such a characterization. Clearly everyone in the party recognizes that Cuba today is not identical with Cuba in 1961. Thus we all must make clear exactly what is now is. Is there a single member of the Political Committee who can honestly claim the characterization made of Cuba in 1961 today adequately describes the character of that State and leadership?

Is it adequate to say as the party said then that the Cuban government has "proved itself to be democratic in tendency" and that "it stands in welcome contrast to the other noncapitalist states, which have been tainted with Stalinism?"

As far as facts are concerned let me simply point out a few, very hard, very concrete facts which should lead us to certain very definite political conclusions:

(1) Some 18 years have now passed since the party characterized Cuba as a workers state lacking in democratic forms. This appears to me to be more than a reasonable time for the "democratic in tendency" leadership of Cuba to institute such forms. It has not. Are comrades proposing we wait another 18 years before becoming sceptical of this particular course of Cuban evolution?

(2). The only internal struggle of a political character to become

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public was with escalante. We were treated to a detailed account from the Castro leadership of the positions of the "microfaction" and how wrong they were but this "microfaction" was never allowed to speak publically or internally in defense of its positions. How is this different from the recent treatment of the Gang of Four in China? Is this not a hard fact from which conclusions can be drawn as to the character of internal democracy in Cuba?

(3). The Cuban Communist Party had, finally, its founding conference in December 1976. It is a fact that Cuba was governed first by a group from the 26th of July Movement, then by a formation called the Integrated Revolution Organization and then by the CCP for 16 years without that organization ever even going through the forms of a national conference. Furthermore the speeches to and documents of the 1976 conference are public record. We have not reported on them in our press. Yet, they make it clear that this conference institutionalized a Stalinist structure of rule in Cuba, mimicing the USSR, down to detail. This is a fact and the information is available to the party leadership from back issues of Gramma.

(4). Since at least 1968, when Castro came out in support of the crushing of the Cæech working class by Soviet tanks-- an action even opposed by many European Stalinists-- Castro has not only followed uncritically every single detail of Soviet foreign policy but has done so more consistently than many Stalinist parties and states.

(5) This includes support to pop frontism in Chile, to the military Junta in Peru, and to the sell-out Panama Canal treaty.

It seems to me that those who continue to see Cuba as distinct from the other deformed workers states are the ones who have an obligation to come up with some facts. All the known facts lead to the contrary conclusion. These definitely include the recent events in Africa.

It seems to me that if democratic forms are not to be forthcoming from the leadership (and this conclusion is bolstered by 18 years of fact) then where are they to come from? Clearly from the Cuban masses themselves. How are these masses to obtain them? Obviously in struggle against those who presently have power but refuse to hand it over to the masses. Who is to lead such a struggle in Cuba where only a single party, the party of the governmental bureaucracy, is allowed to exist? Obviously that obligation falls to our international movement.

In any event it is about time we discussed seriously this matter. Unless it is insisted upon I am afraid the discussion will never take place. I reiterate my request: (1) please distribute this letter, my statement on social overturns and Cuba, and the relevant section of my August 8th letter to the NC; (2) I request that Cuba be a major point at our next plenum.

Comradely,
Tim Wohlforth