

X: NO, LS

FEB 14 1979

New York  
February 13, 1979

National Office

Dear comrades,

This is in response to the request relayed to me by Mary Roche that I put in writing what I told Rich Robohm over the intercom concerning Jack Barnes's February 13 letter replying to my February 11 note to him. This note of mine read in full as follows: "Enclosed for your information is a draft of a document on Cuba which I am preparing to submit to the SWP DB. Any comments that could clear away debaters' points, such as on facts, might help the discussion." (Emphasis added.)

I was not submitting a document for publication. I will submit the document, in final form, when the discussion bulletin opens.

One purpose of the note and enclosure was to inform Jack about the draft, which I have also sent to some comrades who would have some of the same opinions as I on Cuba. Another was to request correction of possible factual errors so that the discussion on Cuba can avoid unnecessary arguments over minor factual questions. One such factual error which has been pointed out to me is the sentence on page 14 of my draft, which states incorrectly that part of a Militant article had been omitted from an IP/I reprint.

Comradely,

*Dennis Kelly*

X: PC, Harsch

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
February 13, 1979

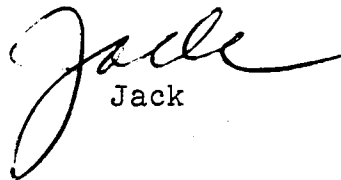
David Keil  
New York

Dear David,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of February 11 and your article for the SWP preconvention discussion bulletin entitled "Our Choice in Cuba." We will publish it in the bulletin as soon as we open the discussion.

If the discussion in the Political Committee and National Committee is an accurate gauge, I'm confident that the preconvention discussion on Cuba will not revolve around debater's tricks. It will be marked by responsible attention to factual accuracy and clarification of political line and program.

Comradely,

  
Jack

Xs; PC, Harsch

FEB 12 1979

February 11

Dear Jack,

Enclosed for your information is a draft of a document on Cuba which I am preparing to submit to the SWF DE. Any comments that could clear away debaters' points, such as on facts, might help the discussion.

David King

4. To call for the creation of organs of workers' democracy in Cuba to rule in place of the bureaucracy; legality for all parties recognizing the revolution; free <sup>form of expression</sup> ~~speech~~ for everyone.

5. To aid in building a party of the Fourth International in Cuba under the illegal conditions imposed by the Cuban Communist Party. This party will choose its own tactics but its aim will be to expose and replace the Cuban CP, an unreformable obstacle to the advance of the revolution.

OUR CHOICE IN CUBA

Are we Castroists or Trotskyists? This is the underlying question facing us in the Cuba discussion. It is posed in a practical way as follows: should we begin the task of helping build a Cuban section of the Fourth International or should we continue to support and build the Cuban Communist Party? This is not a tactical question; all our principles are placed under discussion.

Of course, no one will maintain that we should adopt Castroism instead of Trotskyism. The position of the majority of the <sup>SWP</sup> National Committee, as reflected in the Militant, seems to be that the two are consistent with each other.

But they are not.

This discussion article will show how Castroism is a counter-revolutionary, Stalinist current which we must oppose. Instead of helping and cher<sup>e</sup>ing on the Cuban CP, we should be starting the job of construction of a Cuban Trotskyist

party.

This article is submitted in support of the document,

"For A Change in the Fourth International's Position on Cuba:"  
An Introduction to the Discussion,"  
(International Internal Discussion Bulletin, No. 7, dated December  
1978.)

'Viva Fidel'

If there had been any doubt that the Militant  
unconditionally supports the Cuban leadership -- and the  
Castroists' general political line as the Militant sees it --  
it was ~~disputed~~<sup>correct</sup> by the centerfold in the January 19, 1979,  
issue, reporting on the rally held at the YSA convention.

Among the items featured were a YSA telegram to the Cuban

"internationalist aid...to the African revolution",  
government hailing it and its ~~Africa policy~~ and an enthusiastic

report that "Viva Fidel, down with the shah!" was among the

chants at the rally.

It is correct to chant "U.S. hands off Cuba" or "Viva  
Cuba," or to send a telegram promising to defend the Cuban  
revolution against the U.S. It is a different matter, and

incorrect, to endorse the program of the leadership in Cuba,  
as the YSA rally did to the Militant's applause.

"Viva Fidel" means support to the program of the  
Cuban Communist Party -- the party Fidel heads.

It is necessary for comrades in the party who disagree  
with throwing ourselves on the ground in front of Castro to  
stand up and say so.

#### Campaigning for Castroism

The Castro rally and the Militant coverage of it  
are part of a campaign of our party since last spring on  
behalf of the policies of the Cuban CP. This incorrect and  
harmful campaign has been mixed together with a necessary  
campaign against Carter's threats against Cuba over its role  
in Africa.

The fact that the pro-Castro campaign has been  
carried on alongside a correct campaign in defense of the  
Cuban revolution does not make the pro-Castro campaign less  
harmful. In fact, our defense of Castro and his politics  
detracts from our defense of the Cuban revolution.

#

Ignoring facts

It has blinded the Militant to facts about Cuba's intervention in Africa and thus undermined the paper's credibility.

For example, since June the Militant and Intercontinental Press/Inprecor have been on a campaign to convince their readers that the weight of Cuba has not been placed against the Eritrean freedom fighters in their struggle against Ethiopian domination. To our credit, we have consistently defended the principle that Eritrea has a right to independent and that Ethiopia should get out of Eritrea.

But we have not defended the Eritreans very well in practice because we have in effect covered up Cuba's sizable intervention against them.

The Militant's campaign on behalf of Castro has impaired its objectivity so much that it has made obvious goofs which any copy editor should have been able to catch.

For example, an article by David Frankel in the June 9, 1978, issue states: "The Eritrean Liberation Front, one of the two main groups fighting the Ethiopian regime, says 'There is no evidence that they [the Cubans] are assuming a



direct role in combat,' according to a May 26 New York Times article."

The <sup>May 26</sup> Times article, however, reads: "The two groups <sup>in A.T.</sup> [Eritrean Liberation Front and Eritrean People's Liberation Front] also differ publicly on the issue of Cuban involvement. The ELF minimizes it, hesitating to provide figures for numbers of Cubans in Eritrea <sup>and</sup> insisting that there is no evidence that they are assuming a direct role in combat.

"A People's Front spokesman, by contrast, said there were 3,500 Cubans in the province, and that Cuban pilots, along with South <sup>Yemen</sup> Yemenis, were flying Soviet-built MIG-21 fighters and manning other sophisticated equipment."

Thus the Militant used quotation marks to attribute to the ELF words not used by it <sup>according to the Militant's source</sup> ~~it~~ -- a minor error but one symptomatic of sloppy attention to facts -- and, more importantly, passed over in silence the charge of the Eritrean <sup>an</sup> People's Liberation Front that Cuban forces were intervening in Eritrea.

The problem was not caused by poor copy editing;

Choice

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it was attributable to the false <sup>undergoing</sup> political analysis ~~presented~~  
-- that Cuban policy is to help the African revolution.

A later article by David Frankel, published in the Militant and reprinted in the pamphlet Upsurge in Africa, states, in ~~supported~~ defense of Castro:

"A representative of the Eritreans, speaking for the two main groups involved in the struggle, said in Paris June 21 that Cuban forces had not taken part in any military operations in Eritrea since February."

That was not the whole story. A  
But a New York Times account dated June 21 reports:

"The Eritrean, Nafi Kurdi, speaking at a news conference sponsored by a leftist group, said there were 3,500 Cuban soldiers and 'some hundred' Southern Yemenis on the Eritrean front but he said that they had not joined in any military operations against the insurgents since February."

Again the Militant turned a deaf ear on <sup>an</sup> Eritrean statement that forces were in Eritrea ~~charges of Cuban involvement~~ and only reported those facts

~~SA/10/10~~  
~~concerned with~~ its political line.

The ~~concern~~ concern of ~~the~~ Eritrean liberation fighters over Cuban involvement was expressed in an EPLF message to a Montreal rally in April 1978 which read in part: "The Soviet Union and Cuba have intervened on the side of the fascist Dergue against us. They have armed the junta with enormous quantities of sophisticated weapons. Most of these weapons are being used against us, against the just struggle of our people. Cuba has dispatched thousands of troops to our country's soil. The Soviet Union and Cuba are partners in the junta's offensive against our people. The U.S. imperialists are also plotting a conspiracy against our revolution." (Eritrea in Struggle, July 1978)

The Militant's position seems to have been to let bygones -- such as the pre-February 1978 combat intervention by Cuba -- be bygones.

Do we ask the Eritreans to forget about it too?

The Militant also seems to have believed that because Cuban forces may not have been in combat after February 1978, they were not a factor in helping the Ethiopian regime crush the Eritrean liberation struggle.

But we know very well from experience with our own, <sup>imperialist,</sup> rulers that it is possible for a government to intervene against a national liberation struggle without participating directly in combat. A workers' state under a <sup>worker</sup> ~~troupe~~ leadership can do this. Citing diplomatic sources, John Darnton reported in the New York Times, July 27, 1978, that "the several thousand Cubans ~~inside~~ inside Eritrea -- along with many thousands more in Tigre province just to the south -- are reported to have taken a back-up role, providing help in logistics, communication, <sup>s</sup> and strategic." <sup>H.I.P.</sup> to Ethiopia, that is.

The Cuban leadership knows that what it has been doing in Eritrea, if widely known, would be despised and protested by every progressive force in the world, including

the Cuban people. It is forced to limit its criminal intervention and keep it a secret.

While the Militant has been silent about the Cuban intervention against the Eritrean liberation struggle, and the Eritreans' denunciations of it, others have not. La Gauche, newspaper of the Belgian section of the Fourth International, noted in the July 6, 1978, issue, that the Cuban soldiers "take part in the unjust occupation of Eritrea by foreign troops. This is already in itself an act of war."

Rouge writer Alain Vitold remarked in the French comrades' daily, "By organizing under its control a series of discussions on imperialism, [the Cuban leadership] hopes to avoid discussion of other possible forms of anti-imperialist solidarity than military expeditions, never openly acknowledged, whose aims, as in Eritrea, are not supported by the world's youth." ("World Youth Festival Opens in Cuba," Rouge, July 31, 1978.)

<sup>U.S.)</sup>  
The Guardian, too, which generally supports the

Castro leadership, nevertheless and to its credit reported the Eritrean protests and helped expose the Cuban intervention in an article in the November 22, 1978, issue, by Dan Connell,

The article quotes EPLF Assistant General Secretary Issayas Afewerki. The Guardian wrote: "Last month's <sup>semiannual,</sup> meeting of the EPLF Central Committee <sup>for the first time,</sup> criticized the Soviet and Cuban role in Eritrea and called upon them to correct their stand and get out of the war." It reported:

"The Soviet and Cuban presence in Ethiopia and in Eritrea has built up steadily since March of last year when the ruling military Dergue ousted the last of the U.S. and Israeli advisers who had spent 25 years arming and training the feudal army of Haile Selassie and suppressing the growing Eritrean movement for independence.

"The build-up of a Soviet and Cuban presence in Eritrea began gradually at first, says the EPLF. But in

September 1977, South Yemeni tank crews were leading charges against the EPLF, and by January of this year Soviet and Cuban advisers were reported in the cities of Asmara and Massawa.

"When Yemenis were captured by the EPLF in the Massawa fighting, they were quietly released to their government with strong but discreet protests by the EPLF. Months later, South Yemen pulled its forces out of Eritrea.

"Similar tactics have been used to bring pressure on Cuba. While Cuban infantry troops have yet to enter the battlefield here as they did in the Ogaden war against Somali aggression, Cuban and Soviet military experts appear to have virtually taken over the direction of the fighting, say EPLF sources.

"Soviet and Cuban personnel are manning the heavy Soviet artillery, planning the tactics and strategy of the campaign and taking responsibility for logistics, <sup>and communications</sup> according to Issayas Afewerki.

"The Cubans and Russians are distributed on all fronts,' Issayas said. 'Whenever there is any offensive from the Ethiopian side, it is sure that there are Russians and Cubans participating.'"

Was the EPLF lying? If so, what reason would it have for falsely claiming that Cuban troops were intervening in Eritrea's affairs on Ethiopia's side? Would that not have had the effect of inviting the Cubans to intervene if they had not already been doing so? Was the EPLF leadership

so stupid? *If the EPLF charges were true, why not participate in a stand against Cuba with the Militant and the rest of the EPLF?*

Even if the Militant had some reason to completely discount EPLF charges of Cuban intervention, which it did not, it should not have ignored the evidence provided by Castro himself of what the Cuban policy was. At a rally in Havana at the end of April 1978, with Mengistu present, Castro called for a solution in Eritrea that would preserve "the absolute unity, ~~integrity~~ integrity and sovereignty of Ethiopia." Ethiopia -- not Eritrea.

Castro's all-out political support for the military



junta in Ethiopia under Mengistu, in the middle of the war in Eritrea, speaks loudly enough by itself to tell the world where Castro stands on Eritrea. Yet ~~the~~<sup>our</sup> campaign to defend Castro against left-wing criticism has gone so far that this support for Mengistu has been downgraded to a mere minor error of confusion. Ernest Harsch writes, "Castro is right when he points to the socialist dynamic of the Ethiopian revolution, but he confuses the Dergue itself with that process. This political position could lead to some serious errors, especially in a situation as complicated as that in Ethiopia."

(The Ethiopian Revolution, Pathfinder, 1978, p. 37. *Emphasis added.*)

Castro's speeches and rallies to back the Dergue, ~~far from being betrayals,~~ are not even "serious errors"! What a parody of Marxist hardness!

Even David Frankel, in an article in the January 12, 1979, Militant, had to acknowledge, "Cuban statements have placed growing emphasis on the aid received by the Eritreans from reactionary Arab regimes, suggesting that

✓ this has changed the progressive character of the struggle there." That is, the Cuban leadership has taken part in the chorus of Stalinist slander against the Eritrean liberation movement.

✓ This paragraph, among others, was not included in the Intercontinental Press/Inprecor reprint of the article.

This slandering of the Eritreans by the Cuban leadership is not merely an incorrect political position on Castro's part. He is a head of state and he is well-informed about what happens in the world. It is a betrayal, part of the ~~all-out campaign by the Cuban leadership for the neocolonial Ethiopian military dictatorship and part of the~~ overall counterrevolutionary policy of Castro in Africa.

#### Repeating Stalinist slanders

✓ The official position of the SWP is to support Ethiopia militarily against Somalia in the ongoing conflict over the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. The Militant implements this position by denouncing Somalian moves as "an imperialist-  
backed maneuver aimed at the Ethiopian revolution." (Militant,

January 12, 1979, p. 19.)

Previously, the Militant and Intercontinental Press had strongly supported the Somali side in the war in the Ogaden and criticized the Cuban policy. For example, Ernest Harsch explained in 1977 that the Somalians' desire for national unity is "rooted in the history and development of the Somali people and the efforts of the Ethiopians and the imperialist powers to divide and weaken them."

("Somali Rebels Gain in Ethiopia,"  
Intercontinental Press, September 12, 1977, pp. 972-73.)

Harsch reported the popular support of the Somalis in the Ogaden for the Somalian military actions.

Peter Seidman wrote in the Militant, February 24, 1978: "The support by the Soviet and Cuban governments to the Ethiopian dictatorship has strengthened the capitalist regime's repressive hand against the oppressed Somali and Eritrean peoples, as well as against the people of Ethiopia itself."

The new, incorrect position will require a thorough discussing <sup>on</sup> leading to a reversal back to our old position backing the Somalis.

The Somalian government, despite its reactionary

character, has aided the Somali national minority in Ethiopia in its effort to rejoin the Somalian state. The outbreak of the Ethiopian revolution and the intensified Eritrean struggle created an opening for the Somalis.

As the Soviet Union and Cuba abandoned their good relations with Somalia and made closer ties to the Ethiopian dergue, U.S. imperialism saw an opportunity to maneuver and held out an offer of arms in exchange for more pro-U.S. policies by Somalia. One condition held out by the U.S., after Somalia had militarily occupied the Somali-populated territory claimed by Ethiopia, was that Somalia withdraw and abandon the Ogaden Somalis. The New York Times, February 11, 1978, reported a public demand by U.S. Secretary of State Vance that Somalia get out of the Ogaden: "'We believe it is fundamental that there be a recognition and a respect by all parties of the internationally recognized borders,' Mr. Vance said."

Five major imperialist powers, the U.S., France, Britain, West Germany and Italy, issued a statement January 21, 1978, pledging support to <sup>efforts by the</sup> Organization of African Unity to get a settlement of the Ogaden conflict negotiated. John Darnton wrote in the New York Times, February 14, 1978, that the OAU "has all but taken Ethiopia's side."

After Somalia's defeat on the battlefield, Carter got the Somalian ruler Siad Barre to agree to withdraw. He made U.S. imperialism's position clear: "We notified Somalia many months ago that as long as they were in occupied territory that there would be no consideration on our part for defensive arms of any kind. I think it would require a tangible demonstration of the carrying out of this commitment on the part of the Somalians and also a renewed commitment not to dishonor the international boundaries of either Ethiopia or Kenya before we would be willing to discuss with them economic aid or defensive arms supplies." (New York Times,

March 10, 1978.)

Carter:  
~~the~~ opposition to the Somalian struggle was consistent with U.S. opposition to all national liberation struggles and the imperialist fears of the instability implied in changing ~~revisions of~~ boundaries in Africa.

The leaderships in the Soviet Union and Cuba, acting on behalf of the Ethiopian ruling Dergue, slandered the Somali struggle as "imperialist-backed." This was similar to the Stalinist action on behalf of the Iraqi government against the Kurdish struggle. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

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David Frankel defended the Kurds' just struggle in IP, November 17, 1975, against the Stalinist slanders based on CIA aid to the Kurds. He wrote, "There is nothing

new in national liberation movements turning to one or another imperialist power for material support. The Irish revolutionists, who led the famous Easter Rebellion of 1916, for example, turned to Germany for aid.... A similar example was the struggle of the Arab people for independence from the Ottoman Empire during World War I. A massive Arab rebellion was encouraged by British agent T.E. Lawrence ('Lawrence of Arabia'), and armed by British imperialism."

Comrade Frankel pointed out at that time that imperialist maneuvering with a national liberation struggle does not make ~~the~~<sup>at</sup> struggle reactionary. He wrote that the purpose of Washington in sending arms to the Kurds "was simply to maintain the Kurdish rebellion as an ongoing internal problem for the Iraqi regime, while not giving the Kurds enough aid to attain their objectives."

But instead of defending the Somalis and exposing the Stalinist betrayal under cover of slander, IP/I and the Militant ... repeated the slanders. David Frankel, forgetting

the Marxist ideas he had defended three years before, wrote:

"The intervention of the Somali regime, despite its propaganda, had little or nothing to do with the liberation of the Somali population in the Ogaden. The decisive factor was the encouragement of the Carter administration, which hoped to use the territorial ambitions of the Somali regime to strike a blow against the upsurge of the Ethiopian masses. In light of this, it was necessary to support Ethiopia against the Somali invasion." (Upsurge in Africa, p. 19.)

Somali nationalism in the Ogaden goes back to the nineteenth century when the imperialists carved up the territory of the Somalian nation. The Ogaden part was handed over to the Ethiopian empire.

John Darnton reported in the New York Times, September 14, 1977, that "Since 1960, when Italian and British Somaliland united as an independent state, the defining feature of national life has been to unite the Somali-speaking peoples of Ogaden, Djibouti and northern Kenya into a single nation



of 10-<sup>6</sup>million.

"'Greater Somalia' is proclaimed in the country's Constitution, delineated <sup>or</sup> ~~in~~ all Government maps and symbolized by the five-pointed star on the Somali flag." These are the "territorial ambitions" -- to use Comrade Frankel's ~~error~~ <sup>deprecating term</sup> -- of the entire Somalian nation!

John Darnton reported the following from Somalian-  
liberated villages in the Ogaden:

"'Never,' shouted Ahmed Farah, a 75-year-old herdsman, regal in long white robes and a white beard. 'Even myself, I am ready to fight if they return,' he said, raising a two-pound stone with his wrinkled right arm.

"Around him, all the people of the village, 2,000 men, women and children, lined the central square where, atop a makeshift wooden pole, the red and green flag of the Western Somali Liberation Front fluttered in a breeze that swept down from the mountains....

"In El Kere, conquered by Menelik's forces in 1892,

the tradition of resistance to Ethiopian domination runs strong. Jama Gas Ma'Awye, the local commander, can sit upon a carved wooden stool and recite the names of four generations of 'freedom fighters.'...

"'If they try to come back,' said Halimo Haya Mohamoud, the mother of eight children, 'we will treat them mercilessly. I myself participated in the fighting. I threw stones.'" (New York Times, September 26, 1977.)

Reunification of the territory of the arbitrarily divided Somali nation is a task of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. It is a democratic right of this nation. For the Somalian government to attempt, for its own reasons, to carry out this task and secure this democratic right is progressive. Attainment of this right would not ~~hurt~~ hurt the Ethiopian revolution but would ~~have~~ aid it and would ~~encourage~~ encourage national-liberation struggles throughout Africa.

In the actual situation, the Somalian military

aid to the Somalis in the Ogaden helped the Eritrean liberation fighters and the leftist opponents of the Ethiopian Dergue.

It did not help imperialism and it does not do so today.

To say that the Somalian struggle in the Ogaden was an imperialist probe was calumny not worthy of the Militant.

We should stop repeating such slanders and begin to support the national liberation struggle as best we can.

#### Recruited to Castro's Line

The Ogaden and Eritrean questions will have to be debated ~~out~~ on their own merits. But the errors of our party did not originate in a simple misjudgement of the facts about what has been happening in Africa. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

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This is particularly evident in the case of the Ogaden war, in which we began with a correct position supporting the Somalis. The sequence in which the 180-degree turn was made is instructive:

1. Castro publicly acknowledged Cuba's direct participation in the Ogaden war in a speech March 15, 1978. Among the justifications he gave was the need to defend borders in Africa: "...all African states, with a great sense of the practical, have wisely agreed on the inviolability of the borders left by colonialism."

2. Intercontinental Press/Inprecor, April 17, 1978, published Castro's speech with a short introduction. The introduction made no criticism of the speech but noted favorably that it reported "efforts made by Havana to bring the conflict to a peaceful resolution." ~~the same issue contained an item~~

~~the conclusion of the Ogaden war reporting Carter's demand~~

~~to support Somalia's demand to arm her the international~~

~~to support Somalia's demand for the return of the Ogaden~~

3. An article in IP/I, June 19, 1978, <sup>by Joseph Hansen,</sup> ~~reprinted in~~ <sup>that</sup> ~~the Militant,~~ reported "in the case of the military attack

mounted by the Somali government in the Ogaden, the Cubans saw this as an imperialist ploy aimed at injuring the Ethiopian revolution. The Somalian offensive also constituted a rejection

of the Cuban proposal to form a common united front against imperialism." The article was reprinted in the Militant.

4. The Militant, July 7, 1978, published an article by David Frankel taking Ethiopia's side in the Ogaden war. <sup>It did</sup> ~~not~~ explain how a Somali victory would have been a defeat for the Ethiopian revolution. Comrade Frankel argued ~~that~~ <sup>was not the</sup> ~~impure~~ <sup>suspicious</sup> motives of the Somali dictator, Siad Barre, and the alleged U.S. support for Somalia proved that the Somali move was an imperialist probe.

5. IP/I, October 2, 1978, published an article by Ernest Harsch, explaining how a Somali victory would <sup>supposedly</sup> have set back the Ethiopian revolution: "If the Somali troops had been successful in consolidating their position in Ethiopia, or at least in hanging on longer than they did, it would have provided an ideal opening for Washington and its allies to move in in much greater force." ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

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To recapitulate: First, Castro spoke. Second, our press presented the Cuban leadership's line, which was in direct opposition to our own. Third, comrades began to be recruited to Castro's line, despite presumably disagreeing with his main argument, a pro-imperialist one, that the borders in Africa must be maintained. Fourth, our line was reversed and the subjective intentions of Carter and Siad Barre were given as reasons for the new position. Fifth, an argument was at last presented based on the ~~alleged~~ objective results a Somalian victory would have had.

If we approached American politics with that method, the Socialist Workers Party would be in sad shape.

#### Differences in the Fourth International

The revised position of the Militant and Inter-continental Press/Inprecor contrasts not only with their previous line, but, even more so, with the line of Trotskyists in some other countries. In an article published in IP/I, May 29, 1978, Claude Gabriel of the French LCR denounced the

Cuban role in Ethiopia, concluding, "Such a policy cannot be supported in any way. It must be condemned."

The newspaper of the Belgian LRT/RAL, La Gauche, attacked the Cuban policy in Ethiopia, including in the Ogaden, in its May 11, 1978, issue, under the headline, "No, It's Not Internationalism!"

Que Hacer?, published by the Organizacion Socialista de los Trabajadores of Costa Rica, likewise opposed the Cuban policy in Africa in an article on peaceful coexistence in the June 26 to July 13, 1978, issue, saying, "In Ethiopia, we have seen the Cuban bureaucracy take military action against the national liberation movements of the Ogaden and Eritrea."

The differences are thus public.

The United Secretariat has taken no explicit position on the explosive events in Ethiopia and Cuba's role, but its draft resolution, "The World Political Situation and the Tasks of the Fourth International," states:

"The Cubans, recognizing Washington's temporary paralysis [in Angola and the Horn of Africa], sent material

aid with Moscow's acceptance, including thousands of troops to Angola, Ethiopia, and other countries in Africa. Ford and subsequently Carter threatened reprisals, which they are prepared to carry out. However, Havana accepted the risk, winning the gratitude of most anti-imperialist fighters in Africa. The contrast between the standing of revolutionary Cuba and counter-revolutionary America among the insurgent peoples of Africa could hardly be more dramatic." (IIDE, No. 5 in 1978, p. 9) This seems to imply that Cuban policy was correct on the Ogaden.

The United Secretariat Latin American <sup>draft</sup> resolution, however, fails to praise the Cuban leadership for its role in Ethiopia, only noting, correctly, <sup>that in the mid-1970s</sup> ~~that~~ "Imperialist threats against Cuba were raised once again in opposition to Cuba's role in the Horn of Africa," without characterizing this Cuban role.

The Latin America resolution, while acknowledging that a discussion <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>in order</sup> ~~necessary~~ on Cuba, does not give a firm



answer to the question of what the nature of the Cuban regime is today. It does not provide a clear line to guide the world movement <sup>after</sup> ~~from~~ the next world congress, ~~to the following one.~~

It places an excessive burden on those who might wish to change the Fourth International's position on Cuba by demanding, seeming<sup>ly</sup> as a precondition, that it "would have to be shown how this qualitative change took place" putting a crystallized caste in power in Cuba. (IIDE, No. 6 in 1978, p. 19.)

To change a policy, all that is necessary is for a majority to agree on what new policy is needed. It is not necessary to agree on an analysis of history.

The United Secretariat <sup>draft</sup> resolution acknowledges, to its credit, that at the Havana conference of Latin American CPs held in 1975, "a common document, compatible with the Communist parties' traditional class-collaborationist positions towards Latin America, was adopted." (p. 17)

In addition to Cuba, another question on which

the United Secretariat draft resolutions are unclear is the nature of the Chinese Communist Party. Is it a counter-revolutionary party which we must oppose, or is it a centrist party? The last <sup>at the</sup> resolution approved on China, passed ~~at the~~ 1969 ~~Cuba Congress~~, stated that it was a bureaucratic centrist party.

A high priority for our world movement is to have an objective discussion without delay on such questions as China, ~~Cuba~~ Cuba, and Cuba's role in Africa. It should lead to a vote on a clear line.

#### Possible Impediments to Discussion

There is no reason why this sort of democratic discussion cannot take place. But for that to happen, some dangers must be avoided and some errors corrected.

It is necessary throughout that all views be made available to all members without undue delay. This did not occur in the case of the document just published,

"For A Change in Our Position on Cuba: An Introduction to the Discussion."

This document was submitted to the United Secretariat for publication by the leadership of the OST of Costa Rica on January 18, 1978. Instead of moving toward publication in order to advance the Cuba discussion, the United Secretariat, in a letter signed by Stateman, April 16, 1978, proposed to the OST comrades that they hold back the document until publication of the United Secretariat draft resolution on Latin America.

The document was finally published in French in a bulletin dated September 1978. It was published in English at the end of January 1979. To date it is not out in Spanish.

What happened? Did the web press at West Street break down for a year?

The United Secretariat is responsible for seeing that documents submitted by national leaderships are published. The SWP leadership is responsible for publishing them in English as a fraternal courtesy. These collective responsibilities were not met.

It is not a technical question — the technical quality of the bulletin is high, as usual — but a question of will and priorities.

Almost everything was given more priority, for a year, than publishing this two-page document for the members to read. Among what was given priority was an introduction by Joseph Hansen to the book Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution, published by IP/I and the Militant, ~~which~~ polemicizing directly against the idea that Cuba needs a political revolution -- the same idea defended in the sidetracked document.

Neither is this document the only case; the other document published in the same IIDE, a call for formation of

an international tendency signed by a member of the International Executive Committee, among others, <sup>also</sup> is dated December 1977. ~~1977~~

This way of proceeding tends to discourage leaderships around the world from submitting discussion articles to the IIDE -- unless they can be sure that for some reason there is a special will to publish them.

The IIDE should follow the same publishing schedule as the SWP Discussion Bulletin -- no delays.

Translation of articles for the IIDE must <sup>be</sup> a top priority for ~~the~~ <sup>organizations,</sup> the ~~responsible~~ responsible. No one will object if this sometimes means limits on the length of articles.

Another error that must be avoided if the discussion is to be democratic is the creation of a rally atmosphere favoring one side, ~~of the discussion.~~

The Cuba rally at the YSA convention, for example, with chants of "Viva Fidel," and the hailing of the Cuban leadership in speeches, did not contribute to setting an

objective tone. Just the opposite.

Would comrades be optimistic for a democratic discussion on Cuba in a Latin American section which held rallies at which chants for workers' political revolution in Cuba were raised?

One of the dangers of a rally atmosphere is that it stimulates speakers to say things they might not say if they were thinking about the task of carrying on an objective discussion within the movement. For instance, Jack Barnes said in his speech at the December 31, 1978, rally that in the mid-1960s "Uncle Sam knew the Cubans were not counter-revolutionary Stalinists -- even if some so-called socialists in this country couldn't figure that out."

This tends to raise the question of whether Jack Barnes would also label as "so-called socialists" those who today <sup>think</sup> ~~can't agree with him that~~ the Cuban leadership is ~~counter-revolutionary and~~ Stalinist. <sup>is</sup> It a debate among socialists, or between real socialists and so-called ones?

This kind of excess is a natural result of letting a rally atmosphere develop when the subject matter is a question in dispute.

We will have a democratic discussion on Cuba if all the different views are made available to every comrade quickly and if a rally atmosphere is avoided.

Two Interpretations of the Cuban Revolution

The most recent, and so far most important, contribution on Cuba in the SWF Discussion Bulletin is Joseph Hansen's "Two Interpretations of the Cuban Revolution" (SWF DE No. 16, July 1977), a reply to the position of Scott Cooper and myself expressed in the DE the same year. Now our movement has lost Joe Hansen.

This is a special loss to us as regards the Cuba discussion. Joseph Hansen would have had much to say. He defended the Marxist position that Cuba <sup>was</sup> a workers' state in the early 1960s against Healy, using the three criteria proved essential in, defining a workers' state which ~~emerged from~~ the Burnham-Shachtman

fight in 1939-40 and the Eastern Europe discussion of 1949-50: nationalized economy, state monopoly of foreign trade, and planned economy.

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Comrade Hansen's understanding of Marxist theory, especially the Marxist theory of the state, and his ability to educate comrades to it, will be very much missed.

There is <sup>a</sup> special unfairness in debating with someone who is not able to reply.)

But it would be more unfair to coyly skirt around a discussion article such as Comrade Hansen's as if it didn't exist, as if he were not the head architect of our Cuba policy and its most articulate defender, and as if some of his ideas had lost their weight now.

In <sup>reality</sup> ~~fact~~, his article and his opinions



are just as important now as they were in July 1977 and it is just as imperative to answer them now where they are in error, hoping that those who agree with them will do their best to try to respond as Comrade Hansen would have done.

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The article, "Two Interpretations of the Cuban Revolution," has two sides.

The tone is calm and serious. It is clear that Comrade Hansen wanted to discuss Cuba objectively in order to clarify the differences and convince comrades, including those who disagreed with <sup>him</sup> ~~party policy~~, on a political level, as was his custom.

Other comrades in the SWP reacted to the 1977 theses in a different way. For instance, Robin Maisel brushed them aside with a few wisecracks, ~~and~~ declining, for example, as he wrote, to "dignify such cavalier nonsense as Thesis 5

represents." (SWP DE No. 14 in 1977, p. 21. Thesis 5 stated:

"The support given by the Castroist leadership to guerrilla movements was not a break from Stalinism but an attempt to pressure capitalist regimes to grant diplomatic recognition and trade agreements.")

Peter Seidman, a member of the National Committee, in his extended-time presentation to the Bronx branch, characterized the dissenting position as "criminally light-minded" and "profoundly sectarian," reflecting "fear of a living revolution."

The tone of this article and oral contribution amounted to an invitation to any new member who was considering agreement with the dissenting view on Cuba to think about leaving the party. It was a poor start for the discussion.

The tone of Comrade Hansen's document is what would establish the best atmosphere for the present discussion.

Unfortunately, the differences have become sharper and the discussion will unavoidably be hotter now as a result

of events in <sup>(Ethiopia)</sup> ~~Africa~~ and the Militant's policy on them.

The other side of Comrade Hansen's article is that it represented a deepening of the party's errors on Cuba rather than a step toward correcting them. This deepening of the errors was expressed publicly in the Militant's campaign on behalf of Castro this year.

*W/ It was the only way for*  
Should Castro Not ~~Be~~ Painted Up the Kremlin?

Comrade Hansen acknowledged a very important fact: that Castro met Moscow's demand for ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
 concessions of political line in exchange for material aid:

"...for the arms and other commodities required to defend the Cuban revolution, the Kremlin demanded propaganda painting up the rule of the bureaucracy in the USSR and its policy of 'peaceful coexistence' (class collaboration) with capitalism.

"Castro accepted these conditions, although with

some reservations." ("Two Interpretations of the Cuban Revolution," ~~SWP~~ p. 7.)

Comrade Hansen could not bring himself to condemn or even differentiate himself from Castro's policy of paying the price. "It can be argued," he wrote, "that this was an incorrect decision, and that it would have been preferable to reject the onerous terms." Nevertheless, Comrade Hansen continued, if the Castroists had followed a policy of refusing to meet the Kremlin's demands, Washington would have ~~crushed~~ assaulted a virtually defenseless Cuba. ~~He concluded~~ He concluded that "their martyrdom would have signified a defeat for the Cuban revolution bearing very grave consequences for the world revolution as a whole."

Jack Barnes said the same in his speech to the December 31, 1978, YSA rally: "It was inevitable, given the relationship of forces, that the Cubans would be forced to pay a political price. Some price would have to have been paid by the best and most conscious revolutionary leadership."

(International Socialist Review, February 1979, p. 7.)

The point of view of Comrades Hansen and Earnes seems to be posed straightforwardly: it was correct and necessary to meet some of the Kremlin's demands that the Cuban leadership adapt its political line to Moscow's. We would have done essentially the same, they seem to say.

It is hard to believe.

But then, if Comrade Earnes really means it and is correct, we should prepare to meet our responsibilities. Certainly we will be asked to paint up the rule of the bureaucracy in the USSR and its policy of "peaceful coexistence" and "detente" or some other equally repugnant political line.

We will be asked to paint up trade-union bureaucrats and their policies in exchange for aid to strikes we take part in.

Has the paint-up job Castro has done for the Kremlin helped the revolution or hurt it?

Should our comrades in the Socialist Workers Party of Iran get ready to paint up the Kremlin so as better to pay the price of Soviet aid which may become essential to their revolution?

If a revolution can be helped by painting up a Stalinist bureaucracy, then we, who are professionals, ~~must~~ learn the technique well.

Of course, another possibility is that it is never correct to paint up counter-revolutionary forces; that to do so is a betrayal of revolutionary politics; that the revolutionary program is more materially precious than all the wheat, steel and guns in the Soviet Union; and that a revolutionary policy in Cuba could have forced the Moscow bureaucrats to send aid to avoid being branded everywhere as traitors.

But who in the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party has considered that?

A more plausible view than those of Comrades Hansen and Barnes is that the Cuban workers' state was born deformed in 1960, due to the lack of workers' democracy and due to the unchecked rule by a privileged bureaucracy -- a caste -- and that the Castro movement joined the Stalinist movement in 1961 when it fused with the Cuban Stalinist party, the Popular

Socialist Party (PSP).

That assessment would explain why Castro painted up the Kremlin and why the Cuban Trotskyists, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] were

deprived of the right to express their ideas. (Comrade Earnes

in his speech ~~correctly~~ <sup>as did the U. S. in the early 1960s</sup> calls the Cuban Posadists Trotskyists,

they were Trotskyists in the sense that they belonged to the

International Secretariat, <sup>(as per the U. S. in the early 1960s)</sup>

Such an assessment would have the advantage of not leading us to try to excuse the painting-up of counter-revolutionary bureaucracies.

### Three interpretations of the Angolan civil war

Angola is a case, among others, where the Cuban leadership's friendship with the Soviet bureaucracy pushed it over into becoming a military obstacle along the way to socialist revolution.

In 1975-76, a civil war among Angolan nationalist groups, known by their initials, MPLA, FNLA and UNITA, in

which Portugal played a role for a time on the side of the MPLA, became further internationalized with interventions by Cuba and South Africa. In the spring of 1975 Cuba sent 230 military technicians to aid the MPLA. Months later South Africa sent thousands of troops. Cuba then sent troops, whose presence ~~was a major factor in~~ helping<sup>ed</sup> persuade the South Africans to leave.

The Cuban presence was progressive after the South African invasion; but the Cuban policy of supporting the program of the bourgeois-nationalist MPLA, including the MPLA's fratricidal war against the other two groups, was reactionary. This fratricidal policy had helped open up Angola to the South African imperialists in the first place. Behind them was the U.S.

The only progressive policy for Cuba would have been to propose a united front with the three Angolan liberation groups against the imperialists. But the Cuban leadership blocked the way to this for narrow factional



reasons.

The presence of South African troops on Angolan soil did not by itself transform the fratricidal civil war into an anti-imperialist war. It did not transform the FNLA and UNITA into puppets of imperialism any more than the MPLA's collaboration with the Portuguese military in a coalition regime ~~"Angolan" government~~ for a period, after the FNLA and UNITA walked out (see IP, October 27, 1975, p. 1445) transformed the MPLA into a puppet of Portugal.

by Tony Thomas

A report approved by the National Committee of the party in January 1976 noted that the war had not lost its fratricidal character ~~of the war and~~ with the South African invasion, and remarked, "The intervention of Cuba, which is reported to have as many as 5,000 troops in Angola, is subsidiary to the involvement of the Soviet Union. For diplomatic reasons, Moscow prefers not to send Soviet troops." (IP, January 26, 1976, p. 94.)

The 1977 Keil-Cooper theses agreed with these positions, noting the reactionary side of the Cuban leadership's

policy.

~~but~~ (differing with the 1976 NC position, Joseph Hansen wrote: "It is doubtful that Castro's policy in sending troops to Angola was either identical to Brezhnev's policy or subordinated to it." (SWP DE, No. 16 in 1977, p. 16.) His evidence was that Castro ~~does~~ <sup>(11)</sup> not appear to have been ordered into Angola by Brezhnev.

David Frankel, no doubt reflecting the thinking of the whole party leadership, has also revised the previous analysis adopted at the January 1976 plenum, but from a different angle. He argues: "This imperialist [South African] invasion of Angola altered the character of the conflict. It was no longer primarily a civil war." (Upsurge in Africa, ~~p.~~ <sup>11-7-</sup> 8.)

He failed to differentiate the Havana policy from the Moscow one, even admitting, "From the Kremlin's point of view, Cuban aid to the African liberation struggle is quite useful. Havana runs the risks, while the threat of further anti-imperialist success <sup>1975</sup> gives Moscow greater leverage in

bargaining with Washington." (p. 14)

A question raised by David Frankel's glowing description of the Cuban role in Angola is: if the overall Cuban role favored the African revolution, and Moscow's policy was similar, has Moscow turned toward a revolutionary policy in Africa?

The two revisions of our January 1976 position on Angola, by Comrade Hansen and by Comrade Frankel, were not justified. They both tended to give too much credit to the Cuban policy and misconstrue the character of the Angolan civil war.

Erezhnev may not have commanded Castro to send troops, but Havana's policy was indeed consistent with Moscow's and followed the same line -- with a division of labor. No one has yet presented evidence that South Africa dominated the war or controlled the FNLA and UNITA forces, transforming the civil war into an imperialist war. (See Fourth International, May 1941, April 1942, and August 1942 for appli-

cation of the Marxist criteria for a change in the character of a war, in the case of China faced with Japanese and U.S. intervention.)

Each, moreover, downplayed the counter-revolutionary character of the Cuban role after the MPLA victory, when Cuban-trained MPLA government forces broke strikes in Angola.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Cuban presence in Angola ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ stalled South Africa and thus encouraged South African Blacks to rise up against apartheid. Expectations that the U.S. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ including Cuba in the detente were in error.

The progressive side of the Cuban role was outweighed by the reactionary one, however. South African Blacks are not fighting just to live under a neocolonial government such as the MPLA's in Angola, as Castro would have them do. Nor do they want to be divided in their fight against apartheid along factional lines drawn without regard for the needs of their struggle.

A Caste in Power

The African policy of the Cuban leadership consists mainly in supporting capitalist governments which have differences with the U.S. The same is true of its Latin American policy. "For a Change in the Fourth International's Position on Cuba" points out Castro's support to the ~~Peruvian~~ <sup>military</sup> Peruvian and Panamanian governments and the popular-front ~~government~~ government of Allende 1970-73, in Chile.

This foreign policy is consistent with the domestic <sup>needs</sup> ~~policy~~ of the Cuban <sup>bureaucracy</sup>. Instead of supporting revolutions around the world, which would require a break with the Kremlin and a revolutionary mobilization of the Cuban masses, entailing setting an example for them and rejecting privileges, the bureaucratic layer in Cuba wants good relations with those capitalist governments which will <sup>deal</sup> ~~have relations~~ with Cuba and to that end supports them politically. It has done so since the beginning.

Even small material privileges are of great significance in the backward and rationed Cuban economy. Cuban privilege has gone so far as the institution of ranks in the military.

These bureaucratic privileges have existed continuously since ~~before~~ the creation of the Cuban workers state. Because of the absence of organs of workers' power and a revolutionary party, the privileged layer ruled absolutely <sup>from the start;</sup> ~~and~~ hence the workers' state was born deformed with a crystallized caste at the top.

The caste was represented politically by the Stalinist party, the PSP. Castro, independent of the Stalinists at first, held governmental power and could have opposed the Stalinists but did not. Instead he fused his weak July 26 Movement apparatus with the stronger PSP apparatus to form the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations in 1961.

This was a Stalinist organization. Its program was expressed best in the Second Declaration of Havana, which advocated "anti-feudal" revolutions in Latin American with participation of ~~the~~ "progressive sectors" of the national

bourgeoisies.

In 1962, Castro bureaucratically purged the Kremlin agent Anibal Escalante without granting any democratic reforms to the masses. The Kremlin applauded.

A more detailed account of the early history of the Cuban revolution can be found in an article by me in SWP DE No. 6 in 1976.

The position that Cuba is a deformed workers state was put forth by the Chilean Revolutionary Workers Party in a document published by the International Socialist Review, Summer 1961. The Robertsonite grouping in the SWP, which became the Spartacist League after preparing a wrecking operation and being expelled, also held this position. The way the Robertsonites saw fit to defend it was to join forces with Healy -- who called Cuba a capitalist state and waged a factional struggle to maintain the split in the world movement. The latest contribution by the Spartacists on Cuba is an article in Workers Vanguard attempting to intervene in our internal discussion by ~~publicly~~ siding with the supporters of the present official

SWP position. "For Jack Barnes et al. to declare Cuba a deformed workers state would be a major step toward mainstream social democracy," Workers Vanguard warns. The Spartacists, as comrades have noticed, are unique.

### A Question for Fidel Castro

Livio Maitan, a longtime defender of the present position of the Fourth International on Cuba, raised the question of the democratic rights of Trotskyists in Cuba in an article published in IP/I, January 16, 1978. This article asks some highly pertinent questions. Its publication admittedly calls into question some of the worst that has been said about Comrade Maitan.

He noted some falsifications of Trotsky's ideas by Jesús Orta Ruiz in Granma, such as the allegation that



Trotsky "denied the revolutionary potential of many millions of peasants." He asked point-blank: "Would it be possible for a reply to the assertions of Jesús Orta Ruiz -- even purely on the level of historical fact -- to be published in Granma?"

Granma did not need to reply directly. An article in the June 18, 1978, issue made its point clearly enough:

"Trotskyism, an adventurist, anti-Soviet, anti-party, anti-communist ideological and political current, originates from the activities of Leon Eronstein (Trotsky) and his followers during the period of struggles within the old Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party and the period after the proletariat took power..." Any type of slander was good coin, *such as*  
"Trotsky did not comply with Lenin's instructions to sign the [Prest-Litovsk] peace treaty...."

Trotsky was taxed with failing to endorse Stalin's theory of socialism in one country: "Trotsky and his followers rejected the possibility of building socialism in the Soviet Union and did not believe in the worker-peasant alliance."

The article approved of the Trotskyists' expulsion

from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as counter-  
 revolutionists.

It labeled the work of Trotskyists today "ideological subversion within the ranks of revolutionaries."

The pack of lies contains one authentic fact: it notes that Fidel Castro described Trotskyism at the 1966 Tricontinental Conference as a "vulgar tool of imperialism and reaction."

Comrade Kaitan has gotten his answer.

Building a Cuban section

The Cuban CP's hatred for Trotskyism will be a factor to consider in our Cuba discussion.

The central issue is ~~whether~~ <sup>and how,</sup> whether, <sup>to</sup> build a Cuban section of the Fourth International.

- Should we try to recruit Castro, or should we begin elsewhere?

All comrades will formally agree that a Leninist

party is needed in Cuba. The position of the National Committee majority seems to be that the Cuban CP is revolutionary, but not Leninist.

This in itself raises strategic and principled problems for discussion. If a revolutionary party can stay in power for eighteen years without being Leninist, and maintain a revolutionary policy, then how indispensable is Leninism?

The illegality of our ideas and of all political organizations outside the Cuban CP raises more practical questions if we consider a hypothetical worker in Cuba who somehow finds out about and comes around to our ideas and decides to join the Fourth International. Let us assume that we establish contact with this Cuban Trotskyist and begin collaborating.

Do we suggest an open declaration of ideas and an open call for formation of a party of the Fourth International? But that is illegal in Cuba.

Shall we suggest that our new comrade work clandestinely? Do we advise anonymous recruitment letters from our Cuban

comrade to Fidel Castro?

If an anonymous letter from our comrade to Castro is intercepted and the author traced, will we suggest that the comrade try to recruit Fidel from a prison cell?

Should our new comrade begin by joining the Cuban CP? What would he or she do there? Lead workplace discussions on Granma articles about ideological issues such as <sup>social</sup> ~~the~~ history ~~of~~ <sup>and</sup> tendencies on the left?

This example <sup>leads</sup> ~~leads~~ toward the conclusion that the present policy of trying to recruit the Cuban leadership -- flowing from the analysis that its policies are revolutionary -- is in absolute contradiction to the perspective of building a Cuban section of the Fourth International.

party's  
Our policy today makes building a Cuban section of the Fourth International impossible because it is based on an incorrect analysis. The present political line and analysis must be replaced.

Even an inadequate position on Cuba would be better than that which the SWP presently holds if it pointed the way toward a Cuban section of the Fourth International. Such a position, which would deserve support as against the one put forth in Jack Barnes's speech in the ISR, might include the following points, as tasks of Trotskyists in relation to Cuba:

1. To defend Cuba against U.S. imperialism; to demand full diplomatic recognition of Cuba by all countries and full trade relations; to defend against imperialism Cuba's right to send its troops and other forms of aid anywhere in the world.
2. To defend the nationalized property forms, monopoly of foreign trade and planned economy established in Cuba in 1960, and other social gains of the Cuban revolution.
3. To oppose the reactionary foreign policy of the Cuban leadership exemplified by its support to the Ethiopian military dictatorship.

4. To call for the creation of organs of workers' democracy in Cuba to rule in place of the bureaucracy; legality for all parties recognizing the revolution; free <sup>form of expression</sup> ~~speech~~ for everyone.

5. To aid in building a party of the Fourth International in Cuba under the illegal conditions imposed by the Cuban Communist Party. This party will choose its own tactics but its aim will be to expose and replace the Cuban CP, an unreformable obstacle to the advance of the revolution.