

## SLL Revision of the Theory of Permanent Revolution -- the Case of Cuba

But the logic of subjectivism, of extreme factionalism, is merciless. Having begun on this course out of need to find self-justification for their sectarianism, of need to distinguish themselves at any cost and on all issues from the world Trotskyist movement on which they put the label, "revisionist," and having reduced the Marxist method from an instrument for analysing objective reality in order to be able to change it in a revolutionary way, into an instrument for justifying their own existence, the Healyite leaders of the SLL themselves fell into genuine revision of some of the basic principles of revolutionary Marxism. Their false consciousness became caught up in the dialectics of world reality—and at the end of their journey, the SLL theoreticians landed precisely in the position they wanted to "denounce" no matter what: the position of revisionism, of rejecting some of the basic tenets of Marxist theory and of Trotsky's specific contributions to that theory.

The theory of permanent revolution states that in the epoch of imperialism the two basic problems of the backward countries, the agrarian and national questions— together with all the other classical objectives of the bourgeois-democratic revolution— can be solved only by the proletariat, leading a workers and peasants alliance, conquering power and thereby establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat:

"Under the conditions of the imperialist epoch the national democratic revolution can be carried through to a victorious end only when the social and political relationships of the country are mature for putting the proletariat in power as the leader of the masses of the people." (L. Trotsky: *The Permanent Revolution*. 1962 edition, p. 132.)

But having conquered power, the proletariat cannot stop at solving only the historical tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution; it must also *start* to solve the tasks of the socialist revolution:

"The dictatorship of the proletariat which has risen to power as the leader of the democratic revolution is inevitably and very quickly confronted with tasks, the fulfillment of which is bound up with deep inroads into the rights of bourgeois property. The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a *permanent* revolution." (Ibid., p. 154.)

Having thereby started on the road of socialist revolution, the victorious proletariat of a backward country is confronted with tasks of social and political upheaval and economic construction which cannot be achieved within national boundaries, and which lead to constant explosions of the class struggle, on a national and international scale, which can only be brought to an end by the victory of the proletariat in the most important countries of the world:

"The conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the revolution, but only opens it. Socialist construction is conceivable only on the foundation of the class struggle, on a national and international scale. This struggle, under the conditions of an overwhelming predominance of capitalist relationships on the world arena, must inevitably lead to explosions, that is, internally to civil wars and externally to revolutionary wars. . . . The completion of the socialist revolution within national limits is unthinkable. . . . The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena." (Ibid., pp. 154-5.)

This whole process depends in the backward countries upon two basic preconditions, as has been completely confirmed by fifty years of contemporary history; i.e., the inability of the national bourgeoisie of colonial and semicolonial countries to solve either the agrarian or the national questions; that is, to radically eliminate all remnants of semifeudal or imperialist landed property and to achieve genuine national independence.

Now let us look at the balance sheet of the Cuban revolution from this point of view. Two forms of landed property existed in Cuba which had to be ended in order to solve the historical tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution: cattle-raising *latifundia*, privately owned since Spanish colonial times, and the sugar plantations, owned almost entirely by U.S. companies or the Cuban bourgeoisie. The Cuban revolution totally destroyed both these forms of ownership of landed estates as early as May 1959. Out of a total of 9,000,000 hectares of disposable land in the country, nearly 4,000,000 hectares became collectively owned (2,800,000 hectares of the old *latifundia* became people's farms; 170,000 hectares expropriated from counterrevolutionaries became state farms; and 900,000 hectares of sugar plantations became sugar plantation workers cooperatives). Since out of the 9,000,000 hectares, 1,200,000 hectares consist of forests in the public domain, *the major part of the land had become collectively owned in Cuba as early as May 1959.*

The first agrarian reform set a limit of 30 *caballerias* (400 hectares) on all land holdings. One should not forget that Cuban agriculture was largely *extensive* (cattle raising was practised on the basis of one animal. . . per hectare!) and that while holdings of 400 hectares appear large in densely populated countries where intensive agriculture is practised, they are quite moderate in countries practising extensive agriculture. But the second agrarian reform of October 3, 1963, further radically limited the private domain. All farms larger than 5 *caballerias* (67 hectares) were nationalized. The private domain is now reduced to 160,000 private farms (with their families, the owners of these farms represent around 10% of the Cuban population!), owning 32% of the arable land. Publicly owned land covers 68% of the arable land, and, taking into account the forests, 72% of the total disposable area for Cuban agriculture.

The sugar plantation workers cooperatives were also transformed into nationalized people's farms. This was a correct solution, since, as Fidel Castro indicated, if cooperatives are a step forward for independent farmers compared to private agriculture, they are a step backward for agricultural wage earners, and 99% of the members of these cooperatives consisted precisely of agricultural wage earners,

of landed proletariat! As a result, by the end of 1963, the social structure of Cuban agriculture was *much more advanced than the social structure of Soviet agriculture ten years after the October revolution*, the bulk of the agricultural land in the USSR at that time still being held by individual peasants as private holdings. *And the nationally owned sector of Cuban agriculture is proportionately much bigger than the state sector in Soviet agriculture even today, 49 years after the October revolution*, as the state sector covers some 25% of the total land in the Soviet Union, whereas it covers more than two-thirds of the land in Cuba.

It is true that in contrast to the Soviet Union—but in conformity with a situation which still exists in most of the deformed workers states of Eastern Europe—there is still an important private sector in Cuban agriculture, consisting mainly of small and middle peasants growing sugar cane or vegetables, and of a few rich peasants growing tobacco and coffee. Fidel Castro has given a solemn guarantee that these private peasants will not be deprived of their holdings against their will. Private agriculture is there to stay in Cuba for a rather long period—until the sons or grandsons of the peasants decide to sell their land to the state because they prefer to work as workers, technicians, engineers or doctors instead of remaining peasants, or until the peasants (or their sons or grandsons) voluntarily give up private ownership to go over to cooperative farming, after they have learned from experience that income is higher, work easier and life better in the publicly owned sector of the economy. This is the classical position of Marxism on the question of the attitude of the socialist revolution towards the small and middle peasant, as explained in particular by Engels.

The idea of forced collectivisation of small and middle peasants against their will has always been considered by revolutionary Marxists as a form of bureaucratic despotism and madness, the disastrous effects of which are still felt by the Soviet economy and the Soviet workers to this very day.

But at the same time Fidel Castro has made it crystal clear, and said so publicly (e.g., in his speech of October 21, 1963, published in *Cuba Socialista*, No. 27, p. 60), that private agriculture will disappear one day, although no one can predict whether this will be in 10, 20, 30 or 40 years. The essential problem is of course to understand that this 10% of the Cuban population still represented by private peasants does not involve any *burning social conflict* comparable to that of the Russian peasants during the NEP, or the Polish or Hungarian peasants today, affecting more than half, or nearly half of the country's population.

It is obvious in any case that to close out the private property of the small and middle peasants—or even of kulaks, if it comes to that!—is not at all a historical task of the *bourgeois-democratic* revolution, but a historical task of the *socialist* revolution, and a task which cannot be accomplished completely in any case immediately after the proletariat comes to power. So it is absolutely impermissible to cite the existence of this small private sector in agriculture as proof . . . that the bourgeois-democratic task of carrying out a thoroughgoing reform has not been "completely" achieved in Cuba. The truth is that one can well say that

in no revolution of the twentieth century was the agrarian problem solved as radically, as completely and as quickly as in the Cuban revolution under the leadership of Fidel Castro.

As for the national problem, this was solved in just as radical and complete manner. World imperialism—above all U.S. imperialism—does not hold a single plantation, a single power plant or a single factory in all of Cuba. All its properties—together with those of the Cuban bourgeoisie—have been nationalized, including plantations, industry, public utilities, credit, banking and transportation. It has lost its military bases and ties in the country, which it had maintained without interruption since the time Cuba became a formally "independent" country, with the exception of the Guantanamo naval base. It has lost all political, ideological and cultural influence in the country. It has lost the support of Cuban diplomacy in the international field. In fact, in every field of social activity, Cuba, which was to all intents and purposes a colony of U.S. capital for more than half a century, after having been a colony of the Spanish crown, has become a truly independent country, the only country really independent from the U.S. in all of Latin America.

So the record shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that the basic social tasks historically connected with the bourgeois-democratic revolution—the agrarian question, national unity, national independence—have been carried out in Cuba by the revolution led by Fidel Castro. One can add that this revolution has likewise solved in passing the problem of racial equality—a problem linked historically, at least by analogy, to the right of self-determination for national or racial minorities—which Trotsky also classifies among the basic historical tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

The conclusion is therefore inescapable: either one must characterize Cuba as a workers state and recognize the existence there of a dictatorship of the proletariat, be it in a somewhat distorted form, or one has to admit that the basic historical task of the bourgeois-democratic revolution can be realized today in a backward country under the leadership of other social formations than the proletariat; i.e., either under the leadership of the "national" bourgeoisie or under the leadership of the urban petty bourgeoisie at the head of the peasantry. But to maintain the latter alternative constitutes a revision of a basic thesis of the theory of the permanent revolution.

And this is not all. One must then either consider Fidel Castro to be a representative of the "national" bourgeoisie—and then the Cuban revolution basically confirms the correctness of the Menshevik (and Khrushchevist) line in the semicolonial world, delivering a crushing blow to the main assumption of the theory of the permanent revolution; or it must be held that Fidel Castro is a "petty bourgeois urban leader" coming to power at the crest of a "peasant war"—in which case another basic assumption of the theory of the permanent revolution must be revised: the inability of the petty bourgeoisie not only to lead a successful bourgeois-democratic revolution in a backward country, under conditions of imperialism, but also (and this is especially important) its inability to follow a course independent from that of either a bourgeois or proletarian dictatorship.<sup>6</sup>

The leaders of the SLL, by their purely subjectivist approach to the Cuban revolution, inspired by factional and sectarian motives, have been caught inextricably in a web of revisionism as regards the theory of the permanent revolution. And with each attempt to extricate themselves, the SLL's "theoreticians" become entangled in more contradictions and more and more revisions of Marxism in general and Trotskyism in particular.

The SLL leaders have no clear-cut position on Cuba. Sometimes they characterize Castro's government as a "bonapartist regime resting on capitalist state foundations." ("Trotskyism Betrayed" in the summer 1965 issue of the Healyite magazine *Fourth International*, p. 16.) Sometimes they say that Castro's is a "petty-bourgeois" leadership which "starting from the traditional programme of the democratic revolution . . . conquered power." ("Cuba: Marxism and the Revolution," in the SLL's *Fourth international*, August 1965, p. 72.) The SLL "theoreticians" do not seem to see the contradiction between these two positions. We shall return to this later. But let us first of all assume that this nonsense is valid and examine these "characterizations" on their own merits.

"...Castro's is a Bonapartist regime still resting on bourgeois state foundations," we read in "Opportunism and Empiricism," (SLL's *Fourth International*, summer 1965, p. 28); "...the old state machine was not smashed but was staffed with personnel from Castro's own movement, later supplemented by the Stalinist bureaucrats." (Ibid.) The state, Engels used to say, is above all "men in arms." The question of the army is the supreme key to the nature of the state. Is it true that "the old bourgeois army was not smashed," but just "staffed with personnel from Castro's own movement, later supplemented by the Stalinist bureaucrats"? This is completely *untrue!*

The Cuban army of Batista, the Cuban army before the revolution, was a professional standing army. Of that army, not an atom remains today. It was utterly, completely and totally smashed by the revolution. Its reactionary generals and colonels were killed or fled to foreign lands; its cadre was dissolved; its barracks were turned into schools. Not a single one of its representatives can be found today in any position of responsibility in the state apparatus, let alone the army. Those officers who stayed in the country and who were not put on trial for counterrevolutionary crimes have become what many Tsarist officers became after the October revolution: taxi drivers.

On the other hand, the new armed forces which have emerged from the revolution are, first of all, the revolutionary army that grew out of the revolution's combat against Batista's army and state, in which there are no ranks higher than that of comandante (this is the first army since Trotsky's Red Army which has followed such egalitarian norms!), in which there are no insignia, in which the commanders and lower rank officers themselves are completely new, having nothing in common with the old bourgeois army or order, having arisen from the ranks of the revolution, the poor peasants, the workers and the coloured people. Besides the revolutionary army, the armed forces consist of the people's militia (workers and peasants militia) which are composed of the mass of the workers and peasants of the country, which

do not have any ranks whatsoever (not even the rank of comandante), where women serve on an equal basis with men, and which controls its own weapons. If the working people in arms is "the old bourgeois state machine" which "was not smashed," then of course the leadership of the SLL has made a valuable contribution to the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state!

Furthermore, in every bourgeois country there exists the state police, gendarmerie, secret police, etc., which supplement the regular army. These formations of "men in arms" have been completely smashed too—with not a few of their members killed because they were the persons most hated by the people, the ones who had committed the foulest crimes against the revolution.

The provincial and district prefects, the municipal councils and all the other organs through which the bourgeoisie controlled the people of the towns and countryside have been dissolved. Outside a few exceptions, all high functionaries, all top bureaucrats, heads of ministerial bureaucracies, heads of central banks and financial state institutions; in other words, all those people who embody the bourgeois character of the state through their "personal union" with the ruling class, have fled the country or are out of their jobs. What remains are the lower echelon petty functionaries of the ministries—and their analogues likewise remained in the Russian state administration after the victory of the October revolution. (Lenin commented on this fact innumerable times.)

So to say that "the old [bourgeois] state machine was not smashed," when precisely its army, its police, its prefects, its municipalities, its Parliament, its high functionaries and its upper rank bureaucrats were smashed, is either to take one's readers for a ride, or to share the crass anarchist confusion about any kind of "state machine" being bourgeois after the victory of the revolution. The fact that the ministries are called "ministries" and not "people's commissariats" is not essential. What is essential is to know who staffs them, in whose class interest they operate. To say that in Cuba they operate in the interests of the Cuban bourgeoisie, which has been completely destroyed, expropriated and physically dispersed as a class, is to replace historical materialism by mythology.

This is indeed the nub of the question. We can agree with the SLL leaders when they say that "nationalisation of the means of production" is in itself not a sufficient criterion to indicate the existence of a workers' state—provided that what is meant is nationalisation of a special kind. Engels visualised the possibility of a bourgeois state nationalising all capitalist property, and transforming the bourgeoisie into a class of state rentiers. This is what has happened, *mutatis mutandis*, in a country like Egypt. But nationalisation of all the means of production, plus destruction of the bourgeoisie as a class (and this through a revolution in which the overwhelming mass of the urban and agricultural proletariat played the leading role), equals a workers state, if one does not want to capitulate to the ludicrous idea of the "state capitalists" that "capitalism" can somehow "survive" the destruction of the whole bourgeois class and become "re-embodied" in other social layers, definitively and radically

opposed to private property. The least one could say is that this kind of "capitalism" has nothing in common with the capitalism analysed in Marx's *Capital*. And this applies to the kind of "capitalism" which the SLL sees today as "surviving" in Cuba.

"But can we not have a 'bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie'?" ask the SLL leaders. And without batting an eye they refer to Trotsky's formula about the Spanish popular front government in the early days of the July 1936 revolution being an "alliance with the shadow of the bourgeoisie." ("Opportunism and Empiricism," SLL's *Fourth International*, summer 1965, p. 27; "A Reply to Joseph Hansen," by Francisco Rodriguez, *ibid.*, pp. 32-33.) This very reference—which by the way throws a significant light upon the SLL's theoretical confusion—permits us once again to clarify the issue.

Only the "shadow of the bourgeoisie" was present in the July 1936 government—because the majority of the bourgeoisie had physically fled into Franco's camp. But what about the factories, the mines, the banks, the property deeds of the great estates behind the lines of the Republican army? We know that the workers and poor peasants spontaneously seized them; but what did the government do with them? Trotsky has a clear answer to the question! "No longer representing in the slightest degree the Spanish bourgeoisie, the left Republicans still less represented the workers and the peasants. They represented no one but themselves. However, thanks to their allies the Socialists, Stalinists and Anarchists, these political phantoms played the decisive role in the revolution. How? Very simply: in the capacity of incarnating the principle of the 'democratic revolution,' i.e., *the inviolability of private property.*" (Trotsky: *The Lesson of Spain*, Spark Syndicate edition, p. 8. Emphasis added.)

Can anyone suppose that if a Spanish government of say November 1936, instead of handing the factories back to the owners, had nationalised them; if the same government had nationalised all the banks and all the landed estates; if, instead of licking the boots of the London City and the Paris Exchange it had cut off all ties with international capitalism, and openly and publicly appealed to the French, Italian and German workers to arm themselves and carry out a revolution against their capitalist rulers—can anyone suppose that such a government would have been called "bourgeois" by Trotsky, especially if, instead of bringing back the old bourgeois officers into the army, it constructed a new army, without ranks, and with commanders exclusively chosen from among the best *milicianos*? The idea that Fidel Castro is following in the footsteps of Azana, Negrin and Miaja, and ruling in Havana in order to . . . bring back the Cuban bourgeoisie through a back door is too ludicrous to be examined. Haven't the SLL leaders yet grasped the simple fact that *contrary* to Azana, Largo Caballero and Negrin, Fidel Castro has not been "incarnating the inviolability of private property," has not given the banks, factories and landed estates back to the bourgeoisie, *but expropriated them instead?*

What kind of "bourgeois" state is it that allegedly governing as a "shadow of the bourgeoisie" expropriates the prop-

ertied classes instead of protecting their property? If "Marxism" means an incapacity to understand the slight difference between restoration and destruction of bourgeois power and capitalist property—then we can only sigh with Marx, when he met up with such "disciples." "If that is Marxism, I am not a Marxist."

So much for the key argument of the SLL's "Cuban thesis," that in Cuba is to be found a "bourgeois state machine" which somehow "represents" the smashed bourgeoisie. . .by expropriating them! There remain three other arguments to be disposed of.

The SLL leaders argue at length that Cuba is no workers state. . .because of its peculiar relation to the world market. Cuba is wholly dependent upon the export of sugar. Today the Soviet bureaucracy has replaced the U.S. as main buyer of that sugar. Tomorrow, says Ed Stillwell (*The Newsletter*, July 18, 1964), and John Castle (the SLL's *Fourth International*, August 1965, pp. 65-67), the Soviet bureaucracy could "sell out" Cuba to American imperialism. "There is every danger that Cuba's withdrawal from direct imperialist domination and her modest economic development plans will be scuttled as the price the USSR would be more than willing to pay for some more direct agreement with the imperialists." (Ibid., p. 67.)

Suppose this is so. What has this to do with the question whether there is a workers state in Cuba? The Soviet bureaucracy has blockaded China, consciously trying to throw that country back towards trade with imperialism. This caused terrible hardships for the Chinese people, coinciding as it did with three years of agricultural shortages. China's trade with imperialist countries significantly increased afterwards. The Kremlin's policy certainly proves its counter-revolutionary role; it doesn't prove that China is not a workers state.

But isn't Cuba much more dependent upon world trade than China? Undoubtedly it is (although the SLL exaggerates the degree of this dependence and seriously underestimates the efforts toward making the country self-sufficient at least in basic foodstuffs). Under these conditions isn't it more vulnerable to Stalinist and/or imperialist blackmail? Certainly! But, again, what does this mean? That revolutionary Cuba, tremendously weakened in case of a combined Moscow-Washington blockade, would become easy prey to a new counterrevolution? In our opinion, this view is exaggeratedly pessimistic. But let us grant the premise; surely the SLL leaders will not argue that only those states that cannot be overthrown any more by a counterrevolution are going to be recognized as workers states?

Doesn't the theory of the permanent revolution specifically state that *after* the victory of the socialist revolution in a backward country, and *after* the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, a period of continual national and international civil wars opens up? If, due to a betrayal by the Kremlin, the Cuban revolution is defeated tomorrow; i.e., the workers state in Cuba is smashed and power returned to the counterrevolutionists, one would have to say that a proletarian dictatorship was overthrown by a victorious counterrevolution—not that such a dictatorship never existed in Cuba. And the Cuban workers and peasants would see



the difference themselves, very clearly indeed.

But now the SLL revisionists are caught in a new trap: "In Cuba," states John Castle, "it would be possible for the imperialists to reintegrate production of sugar into the world market mechanism [?] without a counter-revolutionary overturn, i.e., through the existing bureaucratic [?] state, against [?] the workers and peasants." And even more clearly: "Thus Cuba can be completely re-absorbed into the capitalist market without so much as the de-nationalisation of a single industry." (Ibid., p. 66.) This is indeed remarkable! Since when is trading with capitalist countries a form of "exploiting its own workers and peasants" for a workers state? Are the SLL leaders against such trade? Have they thrown overboard all the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky on the subject? Don't they know the basic difference between exploitation through trade and exploitation through the purchase of labor power in the process of production? Have the imperialists become philanthropists? Haven't even the imperialist countries of Western Europe—not to mention the semicolonial countries!—learned the hard lesson that when you become dependent upon trade with Washington, this also means that Washington starts buying up shares, factories, plants, banks, establishing subsidiaries of its own corporations, buying up newspapers, politicians, radio stations; i.e., "pieces" of political power? And if the imperialists do not do any of these nasty things; if they don't use this economic "dependence" in order to bring their own stooges back into power; in short, if they don't stage any "counter-revolutionary overturn"—in what qualitative way would the Cuban situation then be different from that of the Soviet Union before 1945, a period during which that country also traded only with capitalist countries, for the good reason that no other workers states existed? What has all this to do with Cuba being a workers state?

Comrade Joseph Hansen, in his excellent article "Cuba—the Acid Test" <sup>7</sup> posed a very concrete question to the SLL: What would you do if you were in power in Cuba? John Castle answers that he would institute direct rule by the workers; that he would not rely upon the "perfidious allies" of the so-called nonaligned countries, nor would he trust the Soviet bureaucracy. He would call for a revolution in all countries. (Ibid., p. 69.) So far, so good. But all this evades Hansen's question. Because Hansen asked specifically what the SLL leaders would do *in the field of the economy, of trade, of international commerce.*

Surely, even a soviet in every Cuban home will not change the immediate dependence of Cuba upon selling its sugar on the world market. To whom would a classical democratic workers state in Cuba sell its sugar? The choice would remain: either to the Soviet bureaucracy (the Chinese bureaucracy, the Rumanian bureaucracy, etc.) or to the imperialists, or doing a balancing act between the two camps. An SLL "council of people's commissars" would, in other words, be in exactly the same trade position as Fidel Castro. Of course it would *try* to further world revolution as Lenin and Trotsky did in their days; but, unfortunately, between these attempts and positive results there is always a time lag, as Lenin and Trotsky learned through sad experience. Revolutionary action and propaganda do not guarantee

speedy victories; and only speedy victories will create new buyers of sugar. So in itself this activity does not at all modify Cuba's trade situation.

We need only add that judging from the specimen under examination, it can seriously be doubted that the SLL's propaganda for revolution will be more effective than Fidel's—at least in Latin America. So the dilemma would remain—just as much for a revolution headed by the SLL as for one headed by Fidel Castro! "There is no solution purely *within Cuba* to the problems confronting the Cuban revolution," concludes John Castle. (*Ibid.*, p. 69. Emphasis in original.) Either this is a long-range historical statement—and then of course it is true, although rather commonplace and without implications for the question to whom Cuba is to sell its sugar in the coming years. Or, it is meant as an immediate "guide to action"; then it just means running away from the necessity of concretely defending the Cuban revolution, even through trade, towards general face-saving formulas. In that case it amounts to desertion of the revolution, capitulation and liquidationism.

Let us take up the two remaining arguments. The SLL leaders raise a big hue and cry about the deficiencies of proletarian democracy in Cuba. Some of their statements are quite exaggerated; but there is no doubt that various grave shortcomings as regards proletarian democracy do exist in Cuba. There is no reason for us to deny this. The absence of a clear power structure of the workers' state, based upon democratically elected committees of workers and peasants, is the main deficiency. We certainly advocate and are in favor of such committees being established, just as we are in favor of workers self-management in the factories within the framework of a centralized plan. But all this is beside the point. It only proves that Cuba is a workers state with bureaucratic deformations—as incidentally the Soviet Union likewise was even under Lenin and Trotsky. It certainly does not prove that Cuba is. . . a bourgeois state!

But this is precisely what the leadership of the SLL maintains. To try to prove its contention, it has to fall back upon all the stale arguments of the petty-bourgeois revisionists on the Russian question: "The relation of these nationalized industries to the world economy [?], the nature of the state apparatus, and the role of the working class, are completely ignored in this approach. 'Socialism', it appears, is asserting its historical destiny over the heads of and even against the working class!" (John Castle, *ibid.*, p. 70). To drag "socialism" into the picture is completely incongruous; nobody calls Cuba a "socialist" society. To say that the workers state is "asserting its historical destiny over the heads of the working class" is even more incongruous, because the Cuban working class has fought more heroically and more consciously for socialism during the last six years than any other working class during that period with the exception of the Vietnamese proletariat; if there is a workers state today in Cuba, it is thanks to the constant revolutionary mobilization and activity of the Cuban urban and agricultural working class. But to regard it as impossible for a workers state to act against the working class<sup>8</sup>—what does that make of the Soviet state for at least the last thirty-five years?

Isn't that exactly the same argument as the one advanced

by the petty-bourgeois revisionist muddleheads concerning the "impossibility of a counterrevolutionary workers state," on which Trotsky poured such sarcasm?

But the difference between the Soviet bureaucracy and "Castro's Bonapartism," shout Slaughter and Co., is that "Stalin's was a bureaucratic regime resting on the proletarian state foundations conquered by the Soviet workers in 1917; Castro's is a Bonapartist regime still resting on bourgeois state foundations." The "bourgeois state foundations" of the Castro regime we have already disposed of. The argument that "Castro's state" was not born, like the Russian, the Yugoslav and the Chinese states, out of a proletarian revolution and the setting up of a proletarian dictatorship with various degrees of bureaucratic deformation, is in complete contradiction both to facts and to the theory of permanent revolution. <sup>9</sup>

But the main weakness of the SLL formula lies somewhere else: and what do you make of Hungary, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, not to mention the so-called German Democratic Republic, comrades of the SLL? Where were the "proletarian state foundations" conquered by the workers of these countries? Did any "proletarian revolution" occur in these countries—except the antibureaucratic political revolution of 1956 in Hungary, which was crushed in blood by the bureaucrats? Yet these very same counterrevolutionary bureaucrats are endorsed with the capacity and the ability to set up workers states "behind the backs and even against" the workers of their own country—whereas Fidel Castro, marching at the head of all the toiling masses of his country, mobilising them continually, crushing the bourgeois state machine through class action, arming the workers and peasants and expropriating the bourgeoisie and breaking the grip of world imperialism, is said to be unable to build a workers state. . . because he didn't create soviets!

The contradictions in which the SLL leaders twist and turn become even more striking if we look at their third argument:

"Castro is, in our opinion, a genuine advocate of petty-bourgeois-led peasant rebellion against the backward latifundist regimes in Latin America and elsewhere. He is thus an advocate of the *bourgeois* revolution which has been incomplete in so many of the underdeveloped countries of the world. It is his distinguishing thesis that the bourgeois revolution can be completed and economic development spurred ahead through an essentially peasant struggle which storms the cities from the outside. Castro is not now, nor has he ever been, an advocate of *proletarian revolution*." (John Castle, *ibid.*, p. 67. Emphasis in original.)

We don't know whether the man is ignorant or whether he is just an impudent liar. But here is what Fidel Castro, this archenemy of the proletarian revolution, this "genuine advocate of petty-bourgeois-led peasant rebellion" has to say on the matter himself, in the main theoretical charter the Cuban revolution has given to the world, the *Second Declaration of Havana*:

"The initial struggle of small fighting units is constantly nurtured by new forces; the mass movement begins to grow bold, the old order bit by bit breaks up into a thousand pieces and *that is when the working class and the urban masses decide the battle*. What is it that from the very beginning of the fight makes those units invincible, regardless of the number, strength and resources of their enemies? It is the people's support, and they can count on an ever-

increasing mass support.

*"But the peasantry is a class which, because of the ignorance in which it lives, requires the revolutionary and political leadership of the working class and the revolutionary intellectuals. Without that it cannot alone launch the struggle and achieve the victory.*

*"In the present historical conditions of Latin America, the national bourgeoisie cannot lead the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggle. . . . The present world relationship of forces and the universal movement to free colonial and dependent peoples establishes the real task of Latin America's working class and revolutionary intellectuals. It is to place themselves determinedly in the vanguard of the struggle against imperialism and feudalism". (Emphasis added.)*

A strange "peasant leader" indeed who, in the Trotskyist tradition, clearly and unequivocally states the *inability* of the peasantry to lead a victorious revolution against imperialism and the native ruling classes of backward countries. A strange "advocate of the bourgeois revolution" who proclaims the necessity of the proletariat to conquer power. A strange "opponent" of the proletarian revolution—who proclaims the necessity for the proletariat to conquer power in all of Latin America, and who successfully led a proletarian revolution in his own country!

A "bourgeois" state which expropriates the bourgeoisie; a "peasant leader" who accomplishes a proletarian revolution; an "advocate of bourgeois revolution" who proclaims that neither the national bourgeoisie nor the peasantry but only the proletariat can lead the revolution to victory; the "main hope for the re-entry of the bourgeoisie in Cuba"—hated and reviled by that very same bourgeoisie which has emigrated to the USA; and which is locked in mortal combat with him—this is Castro. Isn't it clear that we are in fact confronted with a monstrous hoax which the SLL leaders are seeking to perpetrate under the stolen banner of "Trotskyism"? Aren't their lucubrations only a puerile attempt to distort reality by means of a subjectivist "theory" degraded to the level of a self-serving instrument to justify the existence of a sect trapped in dead-end factionalism? The SLL's picture of Cuba comes under the well-known formula: any resemblance to reality, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

## 7

# An "Objectivist" Chicken Comes Home to Roost

But the SLL leaders, having succumbed to revision of the theory of permanent revolution in relation to the Cuban revolution, have not yet done with their contortions. In their twisting and turning to get out of the contradictions of their position, they knot themselves up still further.

The historical tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution can only be realised if the revolution in backward countries is led by the proletariat, says Trotsky (and, as we have seen, Fidel Castro). The revolution in Cuba was *not* led by the proletariat, answer Slaughter and Co. But