

## On the class nature of the Castro regime

## Two letters on Cuba and a reply

24 March 1998

Recently the *World Socialist Web Site* received the following e-mail letter inquiring about our analysis of the Cuban revolution and the Castro regime:

*Hello SEP!*

*I'm a 17-year-old Swedish Trotskyist who's interested to hear your opinion about Cuba, because I'm writing about it in school. Me myself thinks that it's a degenerated workers state, but many others don't agree with that. It would be nice to hear what you think.*

*Revolutionary greetings from ML*

Similar questions were raised in a more extensive correspondence from last spring and summer. The following is excerpted from an e-mail letter sent by BB of Boston, Massachusetts:

*My difference with the ISO on the Cuba issue is simple: there is no "state capitalism" in Cuba. While some features of capitalism have been introduced in recent years (the "special period"), such as foreign investment in the tourist industry, I think those policies were developed out of desperation. The U.S. has strangled Cuba for nearly 40 years now, and since 1989, there has been no aid from Russia or other Stalinist regimes. So Castro has had to make the choice between (a) attracting foreign investment, thus coexisting with the capitalist world, or (b) allowing Cuba to simply become totally capitalist again. I feel he has done what he has had to do, given the circumstances. And the people there still widely support him and the Revolution. (But like I said, there is dissent, and a need for democratic reforms to give workers in Cuba full power over their lives. Perhaps even a second Cuban revolution is necessary.) I am, personally, an admirer of Castro and Che Guevara, though. Imagine the talent of these people, who organized—against all odds—a guerrilla army which totally smashed a US-backed dictatorship. As far as I'm concerned, anyone who smashes a US-backed regime has to be commended for that particular action. (I've read "Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War," a collection of Che's writings from the war, and was totally impressed.)*

*My differences with the SWP on this issue come from the opposite side. The SWP considers Cuba a fully socialist, workers state, completely democratic and with full liberation for everyone. They are uncritical supporters of just about everything Cuba does, and they deny the human rights abuses that occur there. That is the reason why I never actually joined them (though I was active in the Young Socialists briefly last year, organizing around U.S. bombings in Iraq, and I did go to an SWP conference in D.C. which I thought was well-organized and had some great debates.).*

*I think the Cuban economy is essentially "socialism from above," as it were. This is distinct from "state capitalism" in the sense that the economy is managed centrally, and is organized in such a way as to meet the basic needs of the population (though U.S. economic strangulation has meant shortages). For a "third world" nation, Cuba has an amazing health care system, one that even puts the US to shame. And everyone has a home there; there is no homelessness in Cuba (I work for a homeless shelter agency so that issue is personal to me...) Cuban houses really*

*suck, to be sure, but at least everyone there has a home.*

*State capitalist theory asserts that the economy is managed centrally with the objective of military competition with market-capitalist countries. That is a thing of the past; there is no more U.S.S.R. and Eastern Bloc to compete with. And—aside from the continued occupation of Guantanamo Bay by the US—Cuba has no real military strife with the US at the moment (not since the Bay of Pigs invasion anyway). Military competition between Cuba and the U.S. does not exist. Cuba has no nukes pointed at us, and there is no situation of "détente." That is why I think state capitalist theory is inappropriate in the case of Cuba.*

*Also, state-capitalist theory, to me, is problematic in itself. It ignores any real understanding of what capitalism is, and how it functions. Capitalism is a dynamic system consisting of a myriad of competing corporate entities, functioning in an endless wave of booms and slumps. I don't think that is what happened in Russia, even once Stalinism took effect. The argument that state capitalism's "competition" is military in nature, vis-a-vis capitalist countries, is incorrect if one is to try to understand what capitalist competition is.*

*I also am not comfortable with the SWP's politics, specifically the "degenerated workers' state" theory. The SWP still claims that Russia is a workers' state, even though capitalism has completely overrun the country since 1991. They have this fixation on the "irreversibility" of the mode of production; they think that once you smash capitalism it can never come back. At least that's how I interpreted their ideas; maybe I'm wrong? In any case, it is clear that Russia is no workers' state of any sort. If ever there was an example of class differentiation in the world, Russia takes the cake. Yuppie capitalists drive BMW's around Moscow, while most of the population is being forced to act illegally just to eat. Russia has become the world's largest Third World nation, rife with poverty, crime, oppression. Not this socialist's idea of a workers' state.*

In response to these letters, the WSWS is publishing, with only minor deletions, the reply that was sent to BB last July:

Dear BB,

We read your e-mail message of May 30 with interest. It is certainly important to take the time to carefully work through the issues before deciding on a particular political course of action. But in grappling with the class character of Cuba, it seems that you are somewhat at sea. You appear to be trying to determine your attitude by focusing rather narrowly on this or that aspect of contemporary Cuban society without considering the issues more fully in their broader international and historical context. The problem is that the categories you employ—"fully socialist workers state," "socialism from above," etc.—need to be examined critically. They can only be properly understood in the light of the political struggles within the Fourth International.

Let us say from the outset that the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), while always politically defending Cuba against imperialist aggression, has never considered it in any sense a workers state. The Castro regime was not formed on the basis of a struggle by the working class. Castro was himself a member of a bourgeois political party, who undertook guerrilla

warfare as a tactic to overthrow the US-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. He found a base of support not among the workers, but rather within the urban petty bourgeoisie and a section of the peasantry.

The political outlook of Castro and his followers was that of Cuban nationalism, not socialist internationalism. This was true in 1959 and remains so to this day. Castro's policies, while sometimes appearing very radical, were dictated by his need to maneuver internationally between imperialism and Stalinism, and to balance internally between the working class and various petty-bourgeois layers.

But it would be wrong to leave the matter there. The question of Cuba, and more generally, of what constitutes a workers state, raises important theoretical and political issues which go to the heart of Marxism. Is the proletariat, as Marx explained, the only consistently revolutionary class within capitalist society? How is the working class to seize power and what sort of state must it build? Is it possible, as Bukharin and Stalin maintained, to build socialism in one country? Or is it necessary, as Leon Trotsky insisted, for the working class to base itself upon an international strategy in its struggle against capitalism?

As soon as one starts to consider these basic questions, it is clear that establishing a scientifically correct sociological definition for Cuba is bound up with far broader political issues. If it were possible to build socialism in isolation on the basis of nonproletarian forces and without Marxist leadership, then Trotsky's struggle to establish the Fourth International to resolve the crisis of working class leadership would be meaningless. Yet exactly these conclusions were drawn by an opportunist trend which emerged within the ranks of the Fourth International after World War II.

The question of the class nature of Cuba came to play a pivotal role in the postwar development of the Fourth International. An opportunist tendency led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel emerged which abandoned Marx's basic conception that the liberation of the working class was the task of the working class itself. The Pabloites claimed that the building of socialism could be carried out by other class forces—the Stalinist bureaucracy and social democrats, as well as bourgeois nationalists in countries like Cuba.

Pablo and Mandel began by rejecting Trotsky's assessment of the Soviet bureaucracy as a counterrevolutionary agency, claiming instead that, under the pressure of the masses, it would be compelled to play a progressive historic role. But the Third International had been destroyed by Stalinism, which in the 1920s and 1930s inflicted terrible defeats on the working class. Trotsky had founded the Fourth International not to pressure the Stalinist bureaucracy, but as the world party of socialist revolution, that is, the new revolutionary leadership of the working class. The International Committee of the Fourth International, with which the Socialist Equality Party in the US is in political solidarity, was formed in 1953 to defend the fundamental principles of the Trotskyist movement against the liquidationism of the Pabloites.

### **The controversy over the buffer states**

The perspective of Pablo and Mandel was based on an impressionistic response to the postwar situation: the apparent strength of Stalinism and economic expansion of world capitalism. Trotsky had predicted that World War II would produce revolutionary movements of the working class which would see the sections of the Fourth International emerge as mass parties of the working class. History turned out to be somewhat more complex (although to be fair to Trotsky, he always insisted that the more concrete the prognosis, the more provisional its character). Despite its lengthy history of betrayal in the 1920s and 1930s, Stalinism emerged

from the war strengthened. The role of the Red Army in defeating the forces of fascism enhanced the prestige of the Soviet bureaucracy in the eyes of workers around the world.

But the counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism had not changed. At the end of the war, the imperialist powers were confronted with a profound economic and political crisis and relied on the Moscow bureaucrats to suppress the independent struggles of the working class. The postwar restabilization of capitalism was based on a series of deals struck between Stalin, Roosevelt (and later Truman) and Churchill at Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam. In return for political control in Eastern Europe, the Stalinists agreed to disarm the resistance movements in Europe and support the restoration of bourgeois governments. The defusing of potentially revolutionary situations in France and Italy, the victory of right-wing US-backed forces in the Greek civil war, the division of Germany and the crushing of rebellions in Asia and elsewhere—all made possible through the political handiwork of the Stalinists—enabled the imperialist powers to establish a new postwar order resting on the economic strength of US imperialism.

In this context, a controversy erupted within the Fourth International on the class nature of the so-called buffer states in Eastern Europe. There were fundamental differences between the Soviet Union and these newly formed regimes. The USSR had issued from a proletarian revolution. In October 1917, the working class, led by a mass proletarian party, had seized power and established a workers government based on its own democratic institutions—Soviets, or workers councils. While the Stalinist bureaucracy had usurped power from the working class, the essential gains of the revolution—nationalized property relations and basic elements of a planned economy—remained. The Fourth International characterized the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers state, expressing both its contradictory character and the tasks of the working class. A political revolution was necessary to purge the Soviet state of this bureaucratic excrescence, revitalize the workers state and return to the road of socialist internationalism.

Unlike the Soviet Union, none of the buffer states had emerged through the self-action of the working class. In fact, the first task of the Red Army in Eastern Europe had been to suppress the operation of local anti-fascist committees and attempt to resurrect an alliance with the remnants of bourgeois parties. The nationalization of private industry and finance only took place later, after the implementation of the Marshall Plan, and then bureaucratically, from above.

The complex political issues involved in assessing these developments were summed up by Socialist Workers Party leader James P. Cannon: "I don't think that you can change the class character of a state by manipulation at the top. It can only be done by revolution which is followed by [a] fundamental change in property relations. That is what I understand by a change of the class character of [the] state. That is what happened in the Soviet Union. The workers first took power and began the transformation of property relations...."

"If you once begin to play with the idea that class character of a state can be changed by manipulations in top circles, you open the door to all kinds of revision of basic theory. I believe the buffer countries not only can return to the capitalist orbit but the chances are they will, unless the situation is altered by a revolutionary movement in Europe." (Quoted from David North, *The Heritage We Defend*, Labor Publications, Detroit, p. 165)

The Fourth International finally devised the term "deformed workers states" in order to identify the political tasks facing the working class in Eastern Europe. While recognizing the necessity of opposing imperialist intervention, the term "deformed" emphasized the distorted and abnormal origins of these states and the necessity of mobilizing workers in a political revolution against the ruling bureaucracy.

The characterization "deformed workers states" always had a temporary

or provisional character, reflecting the hybrid nature of these regimes which had emerged as a result of the peculiar conditions of the postwar settlement. For Pablo and Mandel, however, mesmerized by the apparent strength of Stalinism, the term was the starting point for an entirely new perspective—"centuries of deformed workers states," as a historically necessary stage in the transition from capitalism to socialism.

The controversy initially erupted over Eastern Europe, but it soon became clear that more comprehensive issues of perspective were involved. Behind the rush to characterize Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia as "deformed workers states" lay an abandonment of the central task of the Marxist movement—the independent mobilization of the working class for the overthrow of capitalism. Pablo and Mandel ceded to the Stalinist bureaucracy, and more broadly to reformist parties and to bourgeois nationalists in other countries, the tasks that the working class itself had to carry out.

### **The basis of state capitalism**

Superficially the state capitalists appear to be the polar opposite of the Pabloites. Groupings such as the International Socialist Organization have always insisted that there was nothing progressive to be defended by the working class in the former Soviet Union. The Stalinist bureaucracy, they claimed, was a new ruling class presiding over a new type of social formation.

In reality, state capitalism and Pabloism are opposite sides of the same coin. Both attributed to the Stalinist bureaucracies a new epochal role—in the case of the Pabloites, a socially progressive one; in the case of the state capitalists, a reactionary one. Rather than being the temporary product of particular political circumstances, Stalinism was given permanent historic validity. This shared outlook stemmed from a deep-seated skepticism in the revolutionary capacity of the working class to change the world. Trotsky deals with these questions in his book *In Defense of Marxism* in the article "The USSR and War" (pp. 6-9 of the New Park edition).

The progenitors of the ISO are to be found in a tendency led by Max Shachtman and James Burnham, which emerged in 1939-1940 within the Fourth International. On the eve of the imperialist war, Shachtman and Burnham renounced the defense of the Soviet Union. Based on various conjunctural events—the Hitler-Stalin pact and the Soviet invasion of Finland and eastern Poland—they declared that the Soviet Union could no longer be considered a workers state.

As Trotsky was to point out, Burnham and Shachtman were unable to explain when and how such a social transformation had occurred or to make any class characterization of the Soviet Union. Trotsky explained that despite all of its crimes against the international proletariat, the Moscow bureaucracy still rested upon and was compelled to defend the basic gains of the October Revolution. In the event of a successful invasion by any of the imperialist powers, the nationalized property relations would inevitably be broken up and destroyed. Thus it was necessary for the international working class to defend the Soviet Union. Such a defense, however, did not signify any political support for the Stalinist bureaucracy and was indissolubly bound up with a political struggle to overthrow it.

The sociological inventions of Burnham and Shachtman reflected the pressure of bourgeois public opinion upon the Fourth International. They were adapting to liberal layers who had previously defended the Soviet Union while the Stalinists subordinated the working class to the democratic imperialist powers, but were enraged by Stalin's alliance with Hitler and the Soviet invasion of Poland and then Finland. As politically depraved as the Stalin-Hitler pact was, it was the logical outcome of the

bureaucracy's nationalist and opportunist outlook.

The split of Burnham and Shachtman from the Fourth International was the preparation for their defense of imperialism during and after World War II. Burnham became a leading Cold War ideologue, who in 1983 was decorated with the Presidential Medal of Freedom by Reagan. Shachtman's state capitalism served as a mask for his rightward evolution into little more than a State Department "socialist." By 1950, Shachtman supported US imperialism in the Korean war. He later backed both the abortive US-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 and the US intervention in Vietnam.

Pabloism and state capitalism are different forms of petty-bourgeois radicalism which emerged in response to the postwar restabilization of capitalism. Both impressionistically embraced the view that the only players on the world stage were the US-led and Soviet-led blocs, thus reducing the working class to a passive bystander in the flow of history and subordinating it politically to other class forces.

### **The class nature of the Cuban Revolution**

That brings us to the issue of Cuba, Castro and Guevara. First, it should be said that it is dangerous to base political estimations or sociological definitions on subjectively determined characteristics. Bravery, courage, determination, audacity are not the sole province of revolutionary Marxists—although our movement does attract to its banner the best and most self-sacrificing layers of the working class, youth and intelligentsia. All sorts of other political parties and figures, including those of the extreme right, can also exhibit such traits. It is necessary to base oneself on a more objective assessment of the class character of the Cuban regime.

Castro began as a Cuban nationalist. Initially he was not viewed by US imperialism as an irreconcilable opponent. Sections of the American ruling class tacitly supported his struggle against the Batista dictatorship. The latter, it might be added, ruled for a time in coalition with the Cuban Communist Party. Only after coming to power did the nationalist orientation of Castro lead him into a conflict with the American administration and a close alliance with the Moscow bureaucracy.

The newly formed Castro regime's confrontation with Washington developed over its agrarian reform, which decreed the nationalization of Cuba's largest landed estates, including American holdings. This action was not in and of itself socialist in character, nor was it by any means a novelty during this period. A number of other nationalist regimes, including those in Burma, Algeria, Egypt and elsewhere, had carried out more extensive nationalizations in the name of developing the national economy.

Only under US pressure, culminating in the economic blockade and the Bay of Pigs, did Castro implement more radical policies, including the nationalization of the country's oil refineries, as well as its limited financial institutions and industry.

At the same time, with Washington refusing any economic or political concessions, Castro turned to an alliance with the Soviet Union and the Stalinists inside Cuba, while proclaiming himself a Marxist. Whether he was sincere or not is not the issue. Undoubtedly Marxist phraseology provided him with a certain political rationalization for what he was doing and a means of mobilizing some popular support. Nevertheless Castro is no Marxist. His political outlook remains that of nationalism.

You refer to the absence of democratic rights in Cuba as if it were just a detail. But the lack of democracy in Cuba, either now or before, is not a small question. It demonstrates the artificial character of the so-called popular organs created by the regime and the absence of any significant

working class base. One of the first actions of Castro was to imprison left-wing opponents critical of his rule. Among those rounded up, imprisoned and shot were the Cuban Trotskyists, whose publications were banned.

The Cuban revolution proved to be a crucial turning point in the history of the Fourth International. The SWP, which had played the leading role in the political struggle against Pabloite opportunism in 1953, wholeheartedly supported Castro in 1959. In the intervening period the SWP had grown increasingly skeptical of the working class and impatient with the slow process of building a revolutionary party in the heartland of imperialism. The SWP leadership began to turn to other class forces, often embracing the opportunist political positions against which it had previously fought.

The SWP declared Cuba a “workers state” and hailed Castro as “a natural Marxist,” ignoring the protracted discussion over the class nature of the buffer states. Its embrace of Castro was sanctified by Mandel in Europe and became the basis for the thoroughly unprincipled reunification of the SWP with the Pabloite International Secretariat. The Workers League, the forerunner of the SEP, was formed by those Marxists within the SWP who supported the ICFI and opposed this historic betrayal of the Trotskyism.

The SWP’s infatuation with petty-bourgeois guerrillaism represented a repudiation of the lessons of the Russian Revolution and the fundamental tenets of Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. The latter demonstrated that the peasantry was incapable of playing an independent political role. According to the SWP, the leading role of the proletariat in backward countries, and of the Marxist party in raising the political consciousness of the working class, were to be replaced by bands of peasant fighters led by bourgeois nationalists, such as Castro and Guevara. The SWP declared that socialism could be achieved with the aid of “blunted instruments.”

A crucial issue which emerged in the struggle led by the British Trotskyists of the Socialist Labour League against the SWP’s opportunism was the question of method. In defending his party’s adulation of Cuba, SWP leader Joseph Hansen impressionistically cited the so-called facts. But as the SLL explained in its documents, Hansen’s reverence for the immediate “facts,” torn out of context and divorced from any historical and theoretical analysis, was based on the philosophy of empiricism, not on the dialectical method of Marxism. The class character of Cuba could not be determined by one-sidedly isolating one or another characteristic, but required an examination of Cuban developments in their historical and international context.

## **The nationalization of industry**

The key “fact” cited by Hansen as evidence for the creation of a workers state was the nationalization carried out by the Castro regime in Cuba. But the nationalization of banks and industry can never be the primary criterion for determining the class character of a state. Such measures were taken by a diverse array of bourgeois governments in the postwar period as the means of regulating the operation of capitalist economies.

Furthermore, even where such nationalizations have a certain progressive character, their impact can only be assessed within the context of the internationalist perspective of the Marxist movement. “Socialism in one country” was even less viable in Cuba, a tiny economy based on the export of sugar, than it was in the Soviet Union. As Leon Trotsky wrote in relation to the occupation of Poland by Soviet forces in 1939:

“The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be

in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution.” ( *In Defense of Marxism*, p.24, New Park)

What has been the outcome of Castroism? Castro was never an internationalist and never called for the United Socialist States of Central and South America. He was always particularly derisive of the possibility of socialist revolution in North America, writing off the US and Canadian working class.

Castro was one of the many bourgeois nationalist leaders who in the postwar period maneuvered between the imperialist and Soviet blocs and were promoted as “socialists” by the Stalinist bureaucracy. The collapse of Stalinism has produced a more and more open embrace of imperialism, the market economy and investment by transnational corporations by all these layers. Castro is no exception.

Your rather apologetic approach to the so-called economic reforms being introduced by Castro to permit the exploitation of Cuban workers by major corporations betrays a certain skepticism on your part towards the perspective of socialist internationalism. He did what he had to do, given the circumstances, you say.

Castro’s perspective has proven to be no way out of the impasse of imperialist domination for the Cuban masses. As corporate investment makes inroads into the Cuban economy, social polarization is growing. A recent article in the *Financial Times* noted the growing gap between the income of state sector workers and those who have access to US dollars through the growing private sector. “A wealthy class—millionaires by Cuban standards—is emerging. Their hard currency income can derive from a variety of non-state sources—remittances sent by family members, income from renting homes to foreigners or fees paid to artists and entertainers,” the article stated.

We are not putting ourselves forward as advisers to Castro on what he should or should not do. He is what he is and his politics have a definite class logic. That being said, however, his politics played a definite part in creating the circumstances of Cuba’s isolation. Certainly the survival of a genuine workers revolution in Cuba, or anywhere else for that matter, would depend in the final analysis on the development of the victory of socialist revolution elsewhere in this hemisphere and internationally. Castroism has contributed not to revolutionary victories, however, but rather to one defeat after another for the working class.

In 1973, Castro went to Chile to support Allende, praising his peaceful “Chilean road to socialism” and telling workers that they could trust the military. He helped the Stalinists and Social Democrats politically disarm the working class in the period leading up to the Pinochet coup. As a result what was a potentially revolutionary situation became a bloodbath for the Chilean working class.

In Guevara’s own Argentina, petty-bourgeois guerrillaism, supported by the Pabloites, served to divert a section of workers and youth away from the crucial struggle to build a revolutionary leadership in the powerful Argentine working class. As a result, the Peronists were able to maintain their political domination of the workers movement, paving the way to dictatorship. In Uruguay, the Tupamaros played a similar role, deflecting militant opposition to the popular front policies of the Stalinists.

The promotion of guerrillaism has led to an unbroken chain of political catastrophes. Che Guevara met his own tragic fate in Bolivia. He had always been explicit in his rejection of the working class as a revolutionary force and his insistence that small bands of peasant-based guerrillas constituted the only road to power. In Bolivia, he pursued his ill-fated attempts to form a guerrilla *foco* oblivious to the political developments within the working class which were to create a revolutionary situation in the cities only a few years after his death.

The SWP and other petty-bourgeois radicals lionize Guevara precisely because they share his class orientation. He held out to the radicalized sections of the middle class the possibility that they, and not the working class, would play the decisive role in any revolutionary movement. Any new promotion of the myths of Castroism will only lead to new disasters for the working class, particularly in Latin America. What is required is a critical evaluation of the strategic experiences of the postwar period and the role of all of those leaderships—Stalinist, Social Democratic and bourgeois nationalist—who have blocked the road to proletarian revolution.

### The political role of the radicals

In concluding, let us refer briefly to the middle class radical milieu with which you have been involved. It is perfectly understandable that you find the bickering between the ISO, Spartacist and the SWP repugnant. But like any social phenomenon, it must be understood objectively. These squabbles do not involve issues of political principle. A careful analysis would reveal that each of these groups is competing to forge a relationship with one or another section of the labor bureaucracy in the US or elsewhere. To be blunt, this jostling is a fight over political turf.

Such unprincipled feuding should not be confused with the necessary struggle of Marxists against such tendencies in order to clarify questions of political perspective in the working class. The party needed by the working class is not going to be created out of a broad “live and let live” alliance of the left. Of course, a mass working class party is needed. But history has vindicated again and again the basic lesson of Lenin’s *What is to be Done?*—that the political education of the working class, and thus the growth of the revolutionary party, takes place through a relentless political struggle against all forms of opportunism and petty-bourgeois radicalism.

All of the parties to which you refer—the International Socialist Organization, the Socialist Workers Party, Spartacist—are the descendants of groupings which broke from the Fourth International and abandoned the basic principles of socialist internationalism. The deep demoralization and cynicism which permeates these social layers is a product of the degeneration or outright collapse of the very political forces which they claimed were either socialist or could be pushed towards socialism—the Stalinists, various sections of the trade union bureaucracy, and bourgeois nationalist figures like Arafat, Mandela and Castro. Whatever their differences over Cuba, the former Soviet Union or China—and these are at times very bitter and subjective—all of them come together on the fundamental issues.

They all view the class character of a particular regime through the narrow prism of the nation state, as if it were possible to create a fully socialist workers state within the borders of a single nation. The Trotskyist movement was founded in a political struggle against the theory first enunciated by Stalin and Bukharin in 1924 that it was possible to create socialism in one country. The victory of the working class in one part of the globe always has a temporary and provisional character. The establishment of socialism is contingent on the further development of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat internationally. The global integration of production and the growth of huge transnational corporations now make it more imperative than ever that the working class adopt its own international strategy and perspective.

Moreover, their standpoint is not the political education and mobilization of the working class, but rather an adaptation to the existing rotten labor leaderships. In the United States, all of these groupings rally around the AFL-CIO ever more closely, attempting to provide it with a left cover, even as the union bureaucracy more and more openly imposes the dictates of the corporations on the working class.

This reply can do little more than touch on the key points of the analysis, history and program of the SEP and the International Committee of the Fourth International. We hope you find it useful in clarifying your ideas. There are many books that could assist you further. But in dealing with the issues you raise, one stands out: *The Heritage We Defend*. It provides a thorough exposition of the key political issues which have emerged in the long and protracted struggle of the Fourth International against opportunism.

Regards,

The Socialist Equality Party



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