

Cuba: Socialism in a ?special period??

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Just over forty years ago Fidel Castro and a handful of fighters landed in Cuba. This initial nucleus, during two years of guerrilla warfare, grew until they were able to overthrow the hated US-backed dictator General Batista. Castro and the great majority of the July 26 Movement leaders were no communists. Fidel sincerely hoped to steer a middle course for Cuba between US imperialism and the Communist bloc; he wanted an ?olive green? not a red revolution; a Cuba which had achieved ?national independence?, no longer exploited by US imperialism but still capitalist.

For this reason Castro tried to maintain an alliance with what were seen as ?patriotic? sections of Cuban capital for as long as he could. But over the next three years implacable US hostility and the defection of the bourgeois parties from the ruling coalition pressured Castro into transforming the nature of the Cuban revolution. Step by step the tightening US economic blockade forced the J26M to more and more radical measures against both foreign and indigenous capital till an abortive CIA sponsored invasion by Cuban exiles in April 1961 drove Castro to declare the ?socialist? character of the revolution. Castro was able to do this, ninety miles from the most powerful imperialist nation on earth only courtesy of security guarantees and economic aid from the Soviet Union.

Despite the active participation of the workers of Havana in the final ousting of Batista, this was no mass socialist revolution, consciously made by the workers of Cuba themselves. Castro in power bureaucratized a genuine anti-imperialist democratic revolution, creating a bonapartist regime, albeit one which retained popular support in the face of the US attacks, rather than leading the workers to the seizure of power and creating a democracy of workers? councils (soviets). Castro fused his petit-bourgeois political movement with the pre-existing Cuban Stalinist party creating a ruling a monolithic party and bureaucracy, complete with all the ideological trappings of Stalinism.

This regime completed the nationalisation?s and subordinated the means of production to a plan based on that of Czechoslovakia. For military-strategic reasons related to the Cold War, the Kremlin was willing to shoulder the cost of this attempt at Caribbean ?communism?. Thus the first workers? state in the western hemisphere was born. Unfortunately it was born with a privileged and parasitic ruling bureaucracy, with no workers? democracy and in need, immediately, of a political revolution to remove these obstacles to the construction of socialism and the international spread of the revolution. In short Cuba was from the outset, despite the undoubted mass popularity of the leadership figures like Castro and Che Guevara as anti-imperialist heroes, a degenerate workers? state like those of Eastern Europe, China, Vietnam etc.

Subject to an economic blockade, only the sale of its economic mainstay, its sugar crop, to the USSR at higher than world prices combined with massive aid from the USSR, including subsidised oil sales, enabled the tiny island economy of Cuba to survive and prosper as a ?socialist country?. The Kremlin did this not out of revolutionary solidarity but because Cuba was a valuable piece in the chess game of the Cold War. In the 1960s the USSR placed nuclear missiles on Cuba in an attempt to redress the balance of the USA?s superiority in nuclear forces. In the 1970s and early 1980s Cuban forces? interventions in

Africa greatly supported the extension of Soviet influence there.

With the accession of Gorbachev and his craven overtures to imperialism the days of the massive subsidies for Cuba were numbered. Gorbachev put Cuba on rations and the collapse of the USSR ended its support altogether. In September 1990 Castro announced that difficult times had given rise to a 'special period' in which Cuban socialism was to be saved by welcoming in foreign capitalist investment.

Today Castro is, despite his continued protestations of Marxist orthodoxy, engaged in running the film of the Cuban revolution backwards. As before the 1959 revolution, tourism and sugar are to dominate the economy. The old Stalinist industrialisation models are set aside and the historic founders of Cuban nationalism, such as José Martí, are upstaging Marx and Lenin. Castro hopes that his bonapartist dictatorship can shed its communist ideology piecemeal, gradually overseeing the restoration of a 'patriotic' capitalism, but without either provoking the Cuban workers into a political revolution or opening the doors to a US-controlled social counter-revolution.

No socialist can fail to be sickened by the hypocritical concern of the White House and the US Congress for democratic rights in Cuba. Workers will weep no tears for the Cuban Miami millionaires and gangsters prevented from battenning on their homeland. The US economic blockade aims to starve the Cuban people into submission, turn them against Castro and open the way for the Cuban bourgeoisie in Florida to return. These parasites would at once return Cuba to the wretched role of a US semi-colony. The intransigence of the US, even in the face of repeated attempts by the Cuban government to reach a compromise, is to teach the world's oppressed nations and peoples that throwing out Uncle Sam's puppets and seizing Uncle Sam's factories and plantations carries a high price—even thirty five years on.

Everyone who calls themselves a socialist must fight to prevent this happening. The workers' movement around the world, especially in the imperialist countries trying to strangle Cuba, must campaign with renewed determination to break the economic blockade, to pressurise their governments to open up trade and travel links with Cuba. It must mobilise aid and support for Cuba's workers. But this does not mean lying about the character of Castro's regime for one simple reason. Without the replacement of this regime with one based on workers' councils the eventual downfall of the workers' state itself is inevitable.

Many leftists throughout the Americas have seen in Castro's Cuba a model of socialism for small countries at the mercy of US imperialism. Still more applaud the sacrifice of Cuban soldiers and doctors in providing assistance to Angola against racist South Africa. For the youth of much of the world Che Guevara still symbolises internationalism and anti-imperialism. In the Caribbean and South America many millions of poor workers and peasants rightly admire Cuba's health care and education system — something which in their super-exploited semi-colonies they can only dream of.

Nor is the fascination with Castro's Cuba confined to Latin America. In Britain at the founding conference of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, a speaker from the Cuban embassy was the guest of honour. The loudest catcalls were reserved for those on the left who dared to criticise the lack of workers' democracy in Cuba. Even the 14th World Congress (July 1995) of the supposedly 'Trotskyist' United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) saw majority and opposition come together in a rare display of unity to affirm that Cuba was most definitely not a bureaucratic state in need of a political revolution.

The Cuban regime's propaganda attempts to reassure its party cadres and the Cuban masses that the gains of the revolution are safe in its hands. Carlos Lage, Cuba's chief economic minister, said in November 1993, 'the model that we want and are defending is the socialist model.' The Cuban Economy and Planning Minister has described its current project as 'a socialist system with elements of the market'.

But this justification of the current policy of the Cuban government, accepted and peddled by many on the left, is a gross self-deception, even if it is born out of a genuine desire to defend Cuba against imperialism. Castro is not building or defending socialism. His concessions to the market are not secondary or peripheral; on the contrary, they have sanctioned exploitation and magnified social inequality. They are not the actions of a state playing for time, manipulating the market in order to strengthen the socialist elements of the economy such as large scale industry. The present policies of the Cuban regime can only strengthen the forces which will push for the restoration of capitalism in Cuba. Indeed as in the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s, a significant section of the Cuban bureaucracy is already looking to transform itself into the new technocratic capitalist class within the new Cuba.

The absence of proletarian democracy embodied in sovereign workers' councils, prevents the Cuban working people from fighting against this as well as against the alternative of US subordination. Until and unless Castro's bonapartism is overthrown by the councils of action, rooted in the factories, farms and offices, until all the remaining levers of economic planning are in the hands of the workers themselves, then Cuba will be incapable of moving towards socialism. The important social gains, health care and education, which are products of Cuba's thirty five years as a degenerate workers state, but which many have mistaken for socialism, will not long survive in their present form.

The crisis of Cuban society

Cuba's present economic plight did not start with the withdrawal of Kremlin aid, though the latter event greatly magnified and accelerated the decline. Rather, the remorseless fall in Cuba's growth rate stems from 1984 when Soviet assistance was at its height. The causes of this were the same as beset other degenerate workers' states: a system of bureaucratic economic planning that operated without reference to the needs and wishes of the people the system claimed to serve. The consequences too were identical: falling productivity of labour and stagnating output. Already by 1988 social spending in key areas such as housing were down to 60-75% of their 1981-83 levels.

The impact of the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the USSR in 1989-91, however, was immediate and catastrophic for Cuba. The end of bi-lateral aid and favourable terms of trade pushed the economy into a tailspin. Exports fell by 70% and imports by 75% between 1989 and 1993. Subsidies amounting to \$5bn in 1990/91 were lost.

GDP collapsed by nearly half between 1990-95. In the worst year of 1993 some 80% of all factories were idle. The mainstay of the economy and chief foreign revenue earner—sugar—declined dramatically; sugar comprised 75% of Cuba's exports by value in 1989. The 1994/95 sugar harvest was down to 3.3 million tonnes, the lowest for 50 years and 40% of the 1990 output. Cuba's 156 sugar mills were working at only 59% capacity.

In response to the massive shortfall in export revenues the government slashed spending. The pay roll of the state was immediately reduced. By early 1992, 52% of all those employed by the Ministry of Agriculture were sacked, followed by 46,000 employed in the Ministry of Construction. Loss of jobs and falling real pay meant that personal consumption fell by 15% each year between 1989-93. Since three quarters of Cubans work for the state the effect of holding down wages was immediate and generalised.

Prices rose due to shortages after 1990. The incentive to sell goods to the state at fixed prices was lost.

The cost of meat rose 29%, tobacco 52%, potatoes by 35%. A dual economy mushroomed; those Cubans whose peso wages were the only source of income saw their standard of living decline dramatically. The prevailing prices of early 1995 meant that all of the income of a worker on the average wage could have

been used up to buy 2-3 kilos of pork. The price of four apples, at \$4, would take up half a month's average wages at the current exchange rates.

One report suggested that the official state rations in the state stores were sufficient for about 12 days of each month¹. Survival was only possible through solidarity networks embracing family and friends.

On the other hand, the 44% of Cubans with access to dollars - remittances from families abroad or from those working in tourism - had ready access to most goods on the black market or in special shops. So the growth in poverty has been accompanied by growth in social inequality, itself an indication that Cuba is not moving in a socialist direction in the 'special period'. Foreign investment and differential access to dollars have combined to create new classes and castes in Cuba, with sharply differing standards of living and prospects for the future.

At the bottom of the pile, and with most to lose from the transition towards market driven access to goods and services, are the bulk of state employed urban workers in industry. Most are on below average wages and have little direct access to dollars. Already, by 1994, 20% of these were also working for themselves in some occupation to try and get enough to survive. Naturally they depend most on continued access to free health care and authorised rations.

This class of urban industrial workers is critical to the future of Cuba. Its collectivity and consciousness are a precious heritage. If socialism is ever to be realised in Cuba then this class must be the social force that carries it out. Yet Castro's policies are consciously aimed at dissolving this class into an amorphous mass of self-employed petit-bourgeois. In September 1993 the bureaucracy opened up over a hundred occupations for private non-state employment. Given that between 1995-97 the Cuban government aims to sack between 100,000-200,000 state sector workers the scope for many more self-employed is clearly going to enlarge.

Even those who are still employed by the state are increasingly being stratified by pay and bonuses. Convertible peso bonuses are given to workers in the power, mining and port industries, which in turn allows them access to dollars.

Working conditions, once fairly standardised, are now being changed for certain workers. The Council of State passed legislation outlining special working conditions for those Cubans in the tourist industry. In return for higher wages than others are allowed, they face longer probationary periods, are easier to sack, work longer hours and face stricter discipline on the job.

In a further reactionary turn, there is plenty of evidence that women workers are suffering most from the 'special period'. Many have been forced to give up their jobs in order to devote themselves to finding food and running households; many women have been sacked first from the factories.

If the wage-labouring workers are dwindling in number and being gradually stratified then the same cannot be said for the new class of technocrats, specialists and intermediaries that has grown in the last six years as the volume of foreign investment and the number of joint enterprises have increased.

Over 650 foreign firms (including a dozen banks) have invested \$2.1 bn. in Cuba since 1991. Most of the investments are joint ventures, with the Cuban government owning 51% of the equity. By far the bulk of this investment is in the tourist industry which is expanding rapidly. In 1995, 745,000 tourists visited the island and the government hopes for 2.5 million by the end of 2000. Hotel capacity is to be doubled. Castro's hope is that this industry will bring in sufficient foreign currency to help bridge the budget deficit. Whether or not this is successful in the short term, the problem is that this kind of investment has few

knock-on effects with the rest of the economy. Many supplies come from abroad, few advanced skills are learned and transmitted through society; meanwhile, a sharply divided society arises.

The most rapid social transformation taking place in Cuba over the last years has been in the countryside. In order to deal with the growing shortages of food which were driving prices higher, the government undertook radical land reform. In 1992, 75% of Cuba's cultivable land was run by state farms; three years later this was reduced to 25%. Most state farms were broken up into Basic Units of Co-operative Production (BUCPs), which now accounts for 90% of the country's cane fields and 42% of non-cane agricultural output.

This reform, like the law on self-employment in the cities, is partly an attempt to deal with the de-proletarianisation caused by the effect that the end of subsidies is having on state industry. Castro hopes to absorb thousands of those sacked from the factories into the new co-operatives so that they can boost food output and especially food for self-consumption, thereby reducing claims on the state budget.

The BUCPs have the right to the indefinite use of the land, they own the output, and are free to sell it where they wish and buy all their inputs on credit. The workers are no longer employed by the state on a fixed wage but are members of a co-operative whose earnings are tied to the profitability of the unit. The more prosperous BUCPs are thus becoming the most important sources of accumulation of private wealth by Cubans. When restrictions on private land ownership and sale are lifted this wealth will be used to concentrate land ownership and create a class of impoverished workers on the land.

Social and political crisis, 1993-94

The first three to four years of the 'special period' were ones of growing poverty and deep inequality structured around a dual peso/dollar economy. The government's measures were by and large administrative and attempted to deal with the crisis through rationing, moral exhortation and repression. But by June 1994 black market prices for food were out of control; the peso/dollar rate was 100:1 and rising.

The scale of the problem was so big that no police force would have been big enough to suppress the black market. At last, resentment spilled over into open protest. In July 1993 there were the first riots in Cojimas and Regla. Then, on 5 August 1994, the largest protests in Cuba since 1959 took place. At Malcon, near Havana, a thousand Cubans gathered when it was heard that boats were being hijacked for sailing to the US. The police intervened and violent clashes took place.

Castro responded in two ways. First, he said all those who wanted to go should do so; by mid-August over 6,000 rafts had arrived in the USA. By the first week of September more than 30,000 Cubans had been picked up at sea before an agreement was reached between Castro and Clinton to stem the flow.

Secondly, Castro authorised further pro-market measures to try and stabilise the situation. Dollar holdings were legalised, as were the unauthorised agricultural markets and further reforms on self-employment were passed. With these measures the economic situation began to improve and prices levelled off. In addition, Cuba benefited in 1994 from a sharp change in the relative world price of oil and sugar, which finally moved in a favourable direction for Cuba. GDP grew 2.5% in 1995 - the first year of growth since 1989.

Castro - enlightened despot?

The Cuban people do not hold political power in their own country. When the 3,000 members of Castro's Rebel Army finally seized power, entering Havana in December 1958 they took over a crumbling edifice.

The old state machine of the Batista dictatorship, long rotting from within, had effectively collapsed. Castro did not promote or build institutions of accountability and power rooted in the mass of the population and reaching up to the highest national levels of the state.

Rather, Castro built a state based on paternalism and repression. For the first ten years after the revolution Cuban politics were dominated by an extreme form of personalised bonapartism around the figure of Fidel Castro, a sort of Stalinist 'enlightened despotism'. As one commentator pointed out it was a state structure in which 'the only institution of any permanence was Fidel himself.'²

Those who have christened Cuba socialist contrast the atomised character of the working class in the USSR and the absence of popular organisation with the 'direct democracy' that purportedly exists in Cuba.

They point to the organs of Popular Power, the popular tribunals, the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR), the 89,000 mass meetings that preceded the Fourth Party Congress in 1991.

Indeed they claim that, since the delegates to the National Assembly were elected for the first time in 1993 by direct popular vote, socialist democracy is actually being strengthened in Cuba, despite the hardships of the 'special period'.

There is clearly a difference between the old USSR and Cuba in the methods chosen by the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy to solicit consent for its policies. The Kremlin bureaucracy gutted the organs of workers' democracy and had to exterminate all political opposition in the purges and labour camps; Castro has sought to legitimise his rule with the passive but spontaneous support of the Cuban people against constant imperialist encirclement.

But so-called 'direct democracy' is not at all a system whereby the working class rules the state. Rather a bureaucracy uses it as a means to mobilise the masses to implement its policies and, at best, to sound-out the grievances of the people before these reach an explosive level. Che Guevara once revealed the nature and limits of Cuba's bonapartist form of rule:

'We are using the almost intuitive method of keeping our ears open to the general reaction in the face of the problems that are posed. Fidel Castro is a master at this: his particular mode of integration with the people can only be appreciated by seeing him in action. In the big public meetings, one can observe something like the dialogue of two tuning forks . . .'³

Over the following decades Castro merely added to and modified the forms of this 'dialogue', teasing out and bringing to the surface the preoccupations of the masses while at the same time allowing Castro to pass down the decisions taken elsewhere.

But not a single one of these institutions have authority to direct resources. Cuba's political structure is organised to solicit opinion, channel bureaucratic decisions back down the line and identify and control dissidence.

This was true of the people's courts in the 1960s, which covered the island and which were administered by lay people dispensing local justice. They offered a structure for discussion about local problems but their power was limited to dealing with minor criminal misdemeanours. The bureaucrats were totally immune from this justice system.

Today's organisations at barrio or municipal level in which grievances may be aired have no power to resolve their grievances. Meanwhile, organs like the CDRs are control agencies, administering ration

books; compliance is a condition of being fed.

When the paternalism and mass propaganda fails then the repressive apparatus swings into action. The 'rapid reaction squads', brought into being around the 1980 Mariel crisis are now permanent features of political life. They were used to great effect in the 1980s against emerging human rights groups, as they were in the riots and protests of 1993/94.

Where next?

Cuba is no socialist country. Judged by the most basic of indicators - economic growth (especially industry), productivity, social inequality, the position of women in society, paternalism and repression in the state - Cuba is not moving towards socialism.

But many will say that Cuba had no choice, given the end of Soviet aid. To this there are two answers.

First, a small island, subject to the blockade of a powerful neighbour, would necessarily have to seek to gain access to the world economy on the most favourable economic terms that it can reach, utilising whatever contradictions and rivalries exist among both imperialist and semi-colonial countries.

Undoubtedly, even the most revolutionary state in the world might, like the Bolshevik government in 1921, be forced to retreat and make concessions. But to prevent a tactical retreat becoming a strategic betrayal requires a firm grasp on political power by the proletariat.

But the Cuban workers do not control their own government and until they have the kind of democracy in which the workers have power they can take no responsibility for the measures of a ruling bureaucracy. That bureaucracy is more concerned to defend its own position and wealth, as an intermediary for foreign investors, than the working class.

While there are agents of the CDR on every bloc and while dissidents are locked up, there is no democracy for the working class, no matter how many times Castro puts himself before the electorate.

Despite the reforms of the last three years Cuba, while not socialist, is still a degenerate workers' state: that is, it is a post-capitalist society ruled by a repressive bureaucracy. For the moment, state enterprises, while idle are kept open; the state continues to dictate inputs and prices to the private farms. The state retains its monopoly of foreign trade in key areas of the economy. Past reforms have, as in Eastern Europe, cut the budget deficit, stabilised the currency and liberalised many prices. But the central plan and banking system still co-ordinates the economy.

In this sense, Cuba, having broken its dependency on the USSR has adopted many of the economic reforms of Chinese Stalinism. At the same time it has mimicked China's political autocracy, but with a considerable degree of plebiscitary and paternalistic bonapartism.

But having been welcomed into Cuba, the market and capital will not rest content with the limits currently imposed on their further development. To date Castro has decreed that there can be no sale/purchase of land; nor can there be any private ownership of property for Cubans and thereby no right to exploit others. Meanwhile, the state guarantees a minimum allowance of food; the right to free education and health provision.

But the present situation is not a lasting solution. More closures and lay offs will come as will greater foreign investment and less Cuban control over it. Castro's plans for a convertible currency to attract loans and investment will sooner or later mean further cuts in social provision as Castro seeks to defend

convertibility by budget cuts.

Unlike China, Cuba cannot count on a massive reservoir of savings for future investment drawn from the countryside as new peasant farmers prosper under private agriculture. He will be dependent on external investment which will only come if labour and financial conditions are in place.

The greatest danger is that the current strategy of the Cuban leadership leads to the dissolution of the Cuban working class (farms and industry) and 'releases' them into petit-bourgeois, petty commodity enterprises, while foreign and state capital gobble up the reduced industrial means of production. Even if de-industrialisation is reversed it is likely under the current regime to lead only to the growth of 'special economic zones', as in China or in Mexico's maquiladores - with the formation of super-exploited sweatshops.

If food production continues to improve, the currency strengthens and foreign investment comes in to bridge deficits, then the regime could experience short-term stabilisation. But only at the cost of growing social inequality and growing demands for an end to the restrictions on ownership of the means of production by Cubans. Imperialism increases its leverage day by day and as Cuba's dependency increases so Castro or his successors will not resist its claims indefinitely.

Defending past gains

Cuba's workers must defend the remaining social gains from attack. The first priority of the state should be to guarantee the health service and food provisions for the population. There must be no sacrifices for the Cuban people while privileges exist for the elite. Rationing must be planned democratically and controlled by committees of producers and consumers.

The special shops for the ruling elite should be opened to all under the control of workers' committees. Workers should be in control of all industries and the whole economy. All the accounts of the administration of the economy should be opened up to workers' inspection. Managers should be elected and recallable by workers' assemblies and the planned economy should be placed under workers' democracy; only the workers should decide, how, what, and how much to produce and to distribute. Only the workers should decide on wage levels, labour allocation and what sacrifices are unavoidable.

Full employment must be defended and all sackings and forced 'self-employment' opposed. Trade unions and popular organisations independent of the bureaucracy and the imperialists will be essential to pursue these goals.

The Cuban proletariat desperately needs the oxygen of freedom of expression; freedom of the press, of assembly. Cuban workers need a truly free, truly democratic media under workers' management and control. Above all it needs the freedom to create political parties, first and foremost a revolutionary Trotskyist party, which means demanding an end to monopoly of political life by one ruling party.

Nevertheless the banning of actively counter-revolutionary parties is fully justified and made necessary now by the economic, and potentially military, war the Cuban bourgeoisie in Miami and Washington is waging against the workers' state. Thus it is necessary to restrict 'democratic' rights for them; for example, neither they nor anybody must be able to buy access to or control of the media, the press radio and TV. The workers themselves should decide which parties to make legal and which represent a real threat of counterrevolution.

Such proletarian democracy is part of the dictatorship of the proletariat against the campaigns, machinations and attacks of the bourgeois counter-revolution.

What kind of government do the Cuban people need? Castro has said he will retire before the next elections. So pivotal is the personal bonapartism of Castro that his retirement or death will focus not only the grievances of the people upon the bureaucracy but the hopes for change on some force beyond the lider maximo. No longer will Castro be able to be, in the words of one writer, 'both prime minister and opposition leader' as he is at present.

And it is at this point that the long tradition of popular participation, a cultural tradition of dialogue within the barrio about the fate of the revolution, could begin to play a positive role. Here the Cuban masses have some advantages over the masses of Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR; they possess a degree of politicisation unequalled in other degenerate workers' states.

But if Castro's bonapartism were to give way to a parliamentary regime and the market economy then the Cuban workers will not win real political freedom, let alone social emancipation. They will have gained only a millionaires' democracy. The key task is to facilitate the creation of a workers' council democracy through the creation of organs of workers power.

Yet for now, the contradictory illusions in both Castro and bourgeois democracy tend to predominate in the masses. In order to cut through their bourgeois democratic illusions without at the same time sharing them or bolstering them - and in the absence of a fully fledged system of workers' councils - the demand for elections to a sovereign revolutionary National Assembly should be raised against the neutered assembly granted by the Castroites.

Elections to the National Assembly took place in 1993. As in previous elections only one list of approved candidates was allowed to be voted upon. But as a result of new reforms around 35% of the candidates for the assembly were nominated by the municipal assemblies while the rest were approved directly by Castro.

Like the whole process of popular consultation the reform was designed to allow the letting off of steam by the masses, allowing the bureaucracy to identify pressures and grievances building up and thereby defuse or repress them. Meanwhile, political power before and after the electoral reform remains firmly in the hands of the bureaucracy.

In any future elections the Assembly should be elected by universal, equal, secret and direct suffrage by all those over sixteen and others below this age in full time work.

The only Cuban citizens recognised as such with the right to vote should be those who have uninterrupted residence in Cuba. Anyone who has the right to vote should be allowed to stand for election. Mass election meetings must be held in every constituency and in the factories, the offices and the farms.

The new, revolutionary assembly must be allowed to completely overhaul the Constitution that Castro happily modifies to suit the needs of private capital, yet preserves from the pressure of the Cuban people. All the functionaries and members of the government and National Assembly should receive no more than the wage of a skilled worker. A new, revolutionary National Assembly must express the will of the people and above all the overwhelming majority of the people the urban and rural workers.

A revolutionary party would fight in the election campaign and in the Assembly itself to prove that only a democracy of workers' councils of recallable delegates and a democratically planned economy can lay the basis of a free Cuba, free of imperialist domination and free of exploitation and poverty.

Only an Assembly that accepted such a line, the preservation of their past gains and the guaranteeing of a new political freedom for the workers, could be genuinely called a revolutionary body.

Footnotes

- 1 See NACLA report 'Cuba: adapting to a post-soviet world?' (NACLA Vol 29 No 2 September/October 1995)
- 2 K Karol, Guerrillas in Power, New York 1970.
- 3 Che Guevara, Man and Socialism in Cuba, Havana, 1967

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