

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, No. 2, March 21, 1969

Present: Breitman, Dobbs, Hansen, Novack, Shaw, Halstead, Ring

Visitor: Camejo

Chairman: Breitman

AGENDA: 1. Internal Information Bulletin
 2. International
 3. Cuba

1. INTERNAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

Dobbs reported.

Motion: In addition to Dobbs' report on Administrative Committee at the February 1969 plenum of the National Committee, to include in an internal information bulletin entitled, "Problems of Leadership Selection and Leadership Structure," the following: (1) 1944 letter by Cannon on selection of the National Committee; (2) Political Committee report by Dobbs and discussion at June 1962 plenum on the National Committee question; (3) Report by Dobbs to February 1966 plenum on the shift from a resident to an elected Political Committee; (4) Report by Dobbs to May 1968 plenum on new administrative problems.

Carried.

2. INTERNATIONAL

Hansen reported receipt of a copy of a letter from Livio to Chilean co-thinkers (attached).

3. CUBA

Camejo reported (summary attached).

Meeting adjourned.

FOR NC INFORMATION ONLY

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Rome, March 12, 1969

To the Chilean Comrades

Dear Comrades,

By chance you received the text of the article by Comrade Joe before the draft resolution of the U.S. I hope anyhow that there will not be any more difficulties with the mail and that you will have the draft before you at the time of your national conference.

In any case I would like to give you my personal opinion of Comrade Joe's article, which is important in itself and which has still more important implications. I don't have the time to do this in detail for the bulletin before the congress and I will have something to say at the congress, but I consider it necessary so far as I am concerned to raise some considerations now in order to clarify my position.

(1) Joe's article, in place of replying to analyses by other analyses and still more to precise conclusions by other precise conclusions, widens the debate, introduces subjects, the only result of which will be to provoke sterile sidetracking, resorts to strongly debatable amalgams, not hesitating to utilize, to use an effective French expression, à faire flèche de tout bois /to drag in anything to make a point/. Take, for example, the reference in the final part of my document on the draft theses on the world situation: it is clear that I pose the problem with a precise aim, to clarify a point; in my opinion, an essential one (moreover, I explicitly wrote: "permit me to express myself a little paradoxically..."). The reference to a concentrated effort on Bolivia cannot at all imply that the orientation to be adopted for Bolivia should be considered a fundamental orientation for the whole International, which would be completely absurd. Another example of the way in which the author of the article proceeds. On page 12 -- last line -- in the mimeographed copy, reference is made to point 21 of the draft indicating that "the integration" into the "historic revolutionary current represented by the Cuban revolution and the OLAS (and not by the Fourth International?) involves...working as an integral part of the OLAS." The parenthesis is Joe's and its only meaning is to reproach us with forgetting that the Fourth International is a historic current.... Unfortunately, J. not only takes excessive liberties towards the authors of the document, but also lacks respect for the most elementary logic. If you reread point 21 in the draft, you will see that the problem that is posed is exactly that of integrating the Trotskyist current -- which is naturally a historic revolutionary current (do we need to repeat this in a text of the U.S. of the Fourth International?) -- with the Fidelista current and J.'s remark thus lacks any sense. But what is worse, it allows a doubt to be planted: this so-called omission, isn't this a first indication of slipping toward liquidationism?

(2) J., in centering his polemic against our concept of rural guerrilla war, slides over the fact that we sought to introduce into the document a concept that takes into consideration all the possible and inevitable variants and that we place rural guerrilla war itself in a precise framework (we even go so far in the case of Uruguay to speak of a fundamentally urban armed struggle). He seems to be unaware, moreover, that the document to a large degree is a polemic against all the simplistic concepts of which Debray can be considered the theoretician. He poses, finally, a false problem when he seeks to oppose political strategy and military technique. It is elementary that a strategy such as we propose is above all the result of a political analysis and method and it would be a pure and simple loss of time to split hairs over which comes first, politics or the military: let others devote themselves to such absolutely scholastic exercises.

I will add that neither do I see any contradiction between the strategic conception which we outline for Latin America and the idea according to which the Fourth International should seek to gain the new revolutionary generation. It is a matter of two distinct problems and I think that the strategy which we support for Latin America is the most apt to facilitate our link with the most revolutionary layers of the youth.

(3) J.'s document gives the impression of a rather deformed concept of guerrilla war, particularly the concept of the Cubans. The expression: "It banked on winning by pitting very small contingents in skirmishes remote from the cities" is genuinely revealing, showing an astonishing lack of comprehension on the part of a comrade who nevertheless closely follows what is happening in the world. It is astonishing also that one would express reservations on the affirmation in the document stating that the Cuban leadership has contributed in a decisive way to the maturing of a new vanguard. How can one contest or minimize such an evident fact?

(4) The document is a polemic against the spontaneist conceptions that deny or underestimate the role of the party. But for J. this is not sufficient...For our part we believe that in his article there is a tendency to conceive the party abstractly and not to understand that, in the given historical context, it is inevitable that, at least in a whole series of countries, the party will be born during the course of the revolutionary struggle and will not exist all set up in advance (along what line our efforts should be centered is stated quite clearly in the document and I do not believe that there can be any mistake on this).

(5) The fundamental point that I would like to stress is, in any case, the following: the draft on Latin America was the result of an elaboration developed in contact with our Latin-American movement and particularly with the strongest sections. The line that is expressed corresponds with experiences and deep reflection in a series of countries and I believe moreover that it is shared by

currents that are not linked to the Fourth International. J.'s criticism is made from a conservative angle, forgetting the essential acquisitions of the last years in Latin America, and in opposition, moreover, even to what J. himself stated on other occasions (in my opinion, there is a very noticeable difference between his present document and the article he wrote on OLAS two years ago). I believe, in addition, that if J.'s present viewpoint is correct, then he must say much more than he has said and state, for example, quite explicitly that Che's Bolivian initiative was an error even in its concept.

(6) In conclusion, if the appeal is accepted that J. makes practically to reject the Latin-American draft, this would imply a radical rectification of the line adopted above all by the Latin-American organizations which have the broadest base and the most considerable organized forces, which would as a consequence create a very grave crisis in our ranks and probable isolation in relation to the revolutionary currents closest to our positions. We would be practically disarmed in a crucial phase of the political struggle in the continent.

I will have occasion, I think, to return to all this at the congress.

With best regards,

s/ Livio

ANTIWAR REPORT by Gus Horowitz, March 20, 1969

Indications are that the April 5-6 demonstrations may be considerably larger than we had originally anticipated. Reports from all areas of the country point to escalating support for the demonstrations.

The recent news about the war itself is undoubtedly a major factor jelling support for April 5-6. Among those previously involved in the antiwar coalition, there is fairly general agreement that "something must be done" in response to the clear indications of the war's intensification. And, for many, that something is April 5-6. Most sections of the antiwar movement now regard April 5-6 as a major activity of the entire antiwar movement.

Last week comrades who petitioned to get the party on the ballot in Philadelphia report that there was a significant increase in antiwar sentiment, even in comparison to last summer. Approaching people to get the SWP antiwar candidates on the ballot, the petitioners found tremendous receptivity. There was hardly any hostility, and those people who said they supported the war were few, and not at all bold in stating their views. Nor was there much feeling among opponents of the war that it was coming to an end. The 60 petitioners, many of them petitioning for the first time, averaged 113 apiece, far more than any previous large mobilization. That public opinion poll of sorts is one indication that we can expect a large turnout April 5-6, the numbers being a factor of how much publicity can be generated for the demonstrations.

On March 15 in San Francisco a demonstration against the war and in support of the Presidio 27 brought out 10-12,000 participants. We should also note that the Seattle demonstration on February 16 brought out 4,500 people, the largest ever for that city. These are further indications of what can be expected.

The SMC reports that its local offices are becoming viable centers for the youth activists building the demonstrations. High school youth, especially, have been most receptive to building April 5-6. The perspective of building the SMC into the viable national youth organization in the antiwar movement is being realized, and should be one of our foremost tasks in building the demonstrations. The building of the SMC will be central to rebuilding the national antiwar coalition. In New York plans are underway for a local SMC conference on April 6 to draw the antiwar youth into the SMC organizationally. Other areas should consider similar meetings.

Although predictions about the size of the demonstrations would be hazardous to make, we have good cause to be highly optimistic and should translate that perspective into action in the final push needed to build the demonstrations and in preparations for our own socialist propaganda intervention on April 5-6.

Enclosed are two reprints of articles from the Daily World. This information about the Communist Party's support to the demonstrations may be useful in some areas in drawing in support from various groups into the antiwar coalitions.

April 5 peace action building wide support

By MICHAEL JAY

NEW YORK, March 18—Organizers for the mass peace demonstration in this city April 5 are expressing optimism that the march and rally will bring tens of thousands into the streets of New York to call for an end to the war in Vietnam.

The optimism is based on the response so far to the call for action on the part of individuals and groups in this city and in other East Coast cities. Despite the fact that the list of speakers for the rally—to be held at the bandshell in Central Park—has still not been finalized, over 50,000 leaflets have been distributed, according to a spokesman for the Fifth Ave. Vietnam Peace Parade Committee.

"We are capable of producing and distributing two million before the demonstrations," said Michael Kapler, a Parade Committee staffer. He said that people have been coming to the Committee's office at 17 East 17 St. to

pick up leaflets from Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. "We can't print them fast enough."

Another member of the Parade Committee staff explained that special leaflets were being printed in relation issues.

Twelve thousand leaflets, for example, were brought to Albany Tuesday for distribution at the student rally protesting the cutting of funds for the City University. The leaflet links the lack of funds for education with money spent for the war.

Other special leaflets will relate to the anti-ballistic missile system, college students' activity, and Puerto Rican draft resistance.

Organizers said they expected many trade unionists to participate in the march and rally, but that official endorsements have yet to come from the unions.

Response was also reported to be enthusiastic from reform Democratic groupings in the city. A

letter calling for prominent Democrats to support the mobilization is currently being circulated by one Democratic leader.

A special quality of this mobilization, as well as those in at least five other cities the weekend of April 4-6, will be its emphasis on GIs.

Communist clubs back peace march

NEW YORK, March 17—Citing the rising death toll in Vietnam, the threat posed by the anti-ballistic missile program, rising taxes and racism, the Communist Party of New York State has called on all clubs and leadership bodies to mobilize for the April 5 peace demonstration.

A memo from the State Secretariat and Peace Commission, addressed to the Party membership, was issued last week, declaring, "The demonstration on April 5 must see a minimum of 100,000 people in the streets of New York calling for an end to the Vietnam war, for withdrawal of U.S. troops, an end to the ABM program, cutting the military budget and using the funds for the people's social needs."

The memo calls on every Party club to distribute leaflets for the action, as well as to "rebuild or initiate" local, block or community committees to set up local points for mobilization Saturday, April 5.

The party statement goes on to call on local organizations to prepare banners and placards for dis-

play at the parade. Demonstrators will assemble at Bryant Park at 2 p.m. Saturday, April 5, and will march up Sixth Ave. for a rally at the Central Park Bandshell. Participants are expected from the entire East Coast. Buses are already scheduled from Philadelphia.

The N.Y. action will coincide with actions in five other cities—Atlanta, Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles and San Francisco, the Easter weekend of April 4-6.

The New York CP statement concludes, "ALL OUT FOR APRIL 5. PUT THE NIX ON NIXON and force him and his administration to quit playing around with his phony Paris negotiations and End the War—Withdraw the Troops."

Attachment to PC Minutes, No. 2, March 21, 1969

CUBA REPORT
by Peter Camejo

What bureaucratic deformations exist in Cuba? Are there any forms of workers democracy? Is Cuba moving towards workers democracy or towards a deformed workers state? These are among the most important questions about Cuba on the minds of comrades.

During the nine weeks I spent in Cuba I tried to find out as much as possible along these lines. This was quite difficult. Reliable information on most social questions is the by-product of conflicts, debates, contending viewpoints each probing the weak points of the other's arguments. We are so used to this, both within our own movement and under bourgeois democracy, that it is hard to grasp the difficulty of checking impressions where there is no open debate, no competing arguments. This difficulty in answering the question already gives us part of the answer.

Also, one must be careful not to generalize from a few impressions. This is especially true since our study of the history of the Russian Revolution has taught us the inter-connections between international and national policy, bureaucratic privileges and workers democracy.

From the history of the Russian Revolution we have noted how the rise of a privileged bureaucracy leads to the abolition of workers democracy and internationalism. Material incentives, individualism, and anarchy in economic planning were some of the other by-products in Russia of the rise of the privileged bureaucracy. With this model in our minds it is easy to begin extrapolating from partial information.

In this report I will attempt to outline some of the information which I feel is relatively accurate.

Internationalism

Internationalism permeates the whole society. The emphasis is on the colonial world and especially the struggle in Vietnam. Cubans are very proud of their material support for revolutionary struggles in other lands. Under the morality of the Cuban revolution the highest honor is to go fight outside of Cuba's borders. There is no indication to my knowledge of a change in Cuba's internationalism since Che's death. There may be some rethinking of their general strategy for revolution in Latin America.

Coupled with their internationalism is a somewhat rigid concept of revolutionary struggles. Generally speaking an amalgam is made between armed struggle and revolutionary politics, and reformism and non-armed political activity. There are two important conclusions to be drawn from Cuba's differentiation between reformism

and revolutionary struggles in terms of tactical questions. One is that they favor a revolutionary line. The other is that they turn a tactic into a principle which leads to a one-sidedness and therefore incorrect strategy throughout the world.

The only comparable historic situation to my knowledge was the Bolshevik line in 1905. Accepting the same analysis of the Mensheviks (bourgeois revolution) Lenin attempted to differentiate between the two tendencies (reformism and revolution) by tactical differences. Lenin stressed the preparation for armed insurrection by the Party to such an extent that this tactical question literally became a principle resulting in some serious errors. Among these errors were such positions as opposition to the formation of Soviets, refusal to participate in Duma elections in the post-1905 period. Looking back at the Bolsheviks of the 1905 period Trotsky said that it wasn't that they were wrong but incomplete, one-sided. Our attitude towards Cuba's international strategy, I think, should be the same. It is not that it is wrong but insufficient.

Egalitarianism

The prevailing morality in Cuba is that all people should have equal material wealth. Cuba is attempting moral incentives rather than material incentives in order to carry out the necessary socialist accumulation. They are attempting to increase the number of social benefits provided by society rather than increasing individual pay. Thus they are moving away from the individualist (capitalist) concept of pay and wealth relating to the individual's job and work. The revolutionary government is attempting to make more and more social benefits free.

The above in no way means that differences do not exist. But I think it is fair to say that they exist in spite of the efforts of the revolutionary government not because of its policies.

The concept being practiced to develop equality is one of raising the bottom up, not lowering those who have a higher standard of living. All differences which exist reflect remnants of capitalist society. Housing is one of the more obvious cases. Some people are living in nice apartments while others live in mud huts. The government does not build any luxury apartments nor spend any substantial amount in repairing the better homes. Instead it concentrates on building good but cheap apartments which are for those living in the poorest housing. Undoubtedly there are abuses in carrying out this policy but the intent appears to be clear.

Minimum pay is \$85 for a full time (44 hours a week) job. Maximum pay in industry is \$250. Some very special categories such as doctors with a certain number of years behind them get \$350. However, if one was earning more pay before the revolution an adjustment or bonus is added called "historic" pay. Thus some earn

\$800 or even more per month.

What this money means in terms of a standard of living is not the same as under a capitalist economy. An individual's food ration adds up to about \$15-20 a month. Rent is about 10%, to be abolished next year. Medicine and education are free. Thus any worker has more money available than he can spend. This is especially true for families with more than one person working. The result is that those with a higher income can eat out at expensive restaurants more often and at most a few other things.

Vacation time is one month for everyone equally. Cheap (\$5 a day) resort places are provided with room and board. Many of these are places taken from the bourgeoisie. Some luxury hotels are more expensive.

Volunteer Work

There is no doubt that huge amounts of volunteer work are being done. But it is hard to determine exactly what this means. For instance, large numbers of workers do a little overtime, possibly to only cover themselves from the moral pressure. Likewise it is unknown if some work centers after increasing work hours drop in labor productivity thus minimizing the advantage of overtime.

The daily papers endlessly report the factories which vote to do overtime without pay. This overtime is voluntary as far as I could ascertain. I found at least two cases (Sugar Mill Venezuela employing 1,712 workers and Victoria de Giron ship-building center employing 660 workers) where the workers voted against overtime without pay. At the sugar mill the workers are in a lower pay category and simply rejected the proposals of the Party and management. At the Victoria de Giron ship-building center they agreed to work a ten-hour day until certain projects were finished but with pay. In each case the more revolutionary workers do overtime without pay on their own. I never saw a daily paper report a factory where the workers do not vote for the plans nor mention any opposition to the proposals. I was quite pleased to find factories where the workers had rejected the proposals.

I found that many people, if not the majority, like to go out to do volunteer work in the fields. It is a way of escaping from the routinism of life in a city job. Few, however, want to do agricultural work permanently. The government's plans to move people out of Havana, to move peasants into small urbanized centers, to bring all land under state control are carried out on the basis of voluntary choice. Some indirect methods are used to facilitate these plans such as only building new homes where the government wants people to go.

Internal Organizational Structures

First on the formal structural set up.

Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR): The CDR now has a membership of over 2,500,000. This is about 50% of the adult population. There are dues of 5-25¢ per month, plus once a month guard duty which defines membership for borderline cases. The CDR has continued to grow. This may possibly be a barometer of support for the regime.

The CDR is organized block by block. The base committee elects democratically a steering committee. Each post on the steering committee has a functional role.

Various base committees form a Zone Committee, Zone Committees a Region, Regions a Province, six Provinces the Nation. For each level there is a committee of the CDR. However, the whole structure is by appointment from the top down. To become a member of a Zone Committee you have to be a member of a Base steering committee. Then generally speaking you have to belong to a lower committee to be appointed to the next committee. Thus to be appointed to a Provincial committee you have to have been functioning on a Regional committee.

Cuban Workers Central (trade unions -- CTC): The CTC has a formal democratic structure. A mass meeting of all workers is held once a month in each work center. (Membership in CTC is voluntary but very few workers are not members). Elections are held for a steering committee. In the elections there is a post called President. The President is automatically the representative to the next higher body. The next body then elects within itself a president, etc. The structure is the same as the CDR except there are no Zone Committees. National conventions are held with delegates elected at the base and local Presidents being delegates. The national convention is structured both by regions and industry. All votes are by secret ballot.

At CTC elections each factory also elects a Justice Committee to handle complaints.

There is a great deal of discussion and plans for restructuring the CTC. A planned national convention in 1970 will probably institute new forms. This should not imply either movement away from or towards more democracy.

The national committee of the CTC participates with the Ministry of Labor in formulating all labor laws. Proposed laws are discussed at mass meetings and voted on. The changes are passed back up to the ministry which then makes the final decision. There's no indication that the ministry is not responsive to the suggestions.

Cuban Communist Party (PCC or in English CCP): To become a member of the Party you have to be an advanced or "exemplary" worker. These are workers elected by each work center on the basis of their social attitude, morals, and work. From the advanced workers the base Party committees pick their members. The Party's decision must then be presented at a mass meeting where the workers can challenge the decision. The final decision is in the hands of the Party. From the base committees on up the Party is structured through appointments from the top down.

There is no doubt that the base members are self-sacrificing workers with exemplary socialist morality. There is also no doubt whatever that, although not formally proscribed, no tendencies are permitted.

Government: Cuba has a government made up of 8 individuals. They are the ministers. All formal governmental decisions are in their hands, In practice the Party plays the role of the government.

Factory Management: Each factory is managed by a combination of the local CTC, work center Party base committee and management committee appointed through the structure of the ministry.

Tendencies

This question is crucial to understanding Cuba. All power is heavily centralized. Although there is no formal proscription, there is no right of tendency in any organization -- including the Party. It is true that any individual may stand up at a meeting or at an informal gathering and say anything, including speak for counter-revolution. But if a few people get together and try to put out their own paper they will be suppressed regardless of how revolutionary they may be. This suppression need not be violent. They may only be moved or their means for printing a paper taken away. But it also could be violent and include imprisonment. There is no way for the people to know. Arrests are not reported.

Thus police functioning against counter-revolutionary activity also spills over into checking for the existence of groupings within revolutionary organizations. There is a tendency to make an amalgam between disloyalty, counter-revolution, and opposition to the line of the Party.

The lack of tendencies, of organized criticism, limits the meaning of all formal democracy which does exist at work centers and within the CDRs. It turns all organizations including the Party into organs of implementation only. Thus most mass meetings discuss how to implement matters already decided. The press likewise concentrates on discussing how to implement, not the merits or problems regarding decisions.

Privileges

It is very difficult to ascertain whether and to what degree privileges exist. This fact alone indicates that privileges are neither institutionalized nor very widespread. There is no doubt in my mind that privileges of a minor nature (more accurately abuse of authority) exist throughout the various administrative and other organizational apparatuses. This does not mean that there is a privileged bureaucracy entrenched in power. On the contrary, all indications are that the self-sacrificing administrator or Party member is not likely to be shut off or pushed aside but promoted. A very critical administrator or Party member is another thing.

I cannot say whether leaders eat differently from the masses. I suspect they do a little. They certainly may have better housing than the masses. But this does not imply real abuse. There are no special houses built. The highest standard of living is provided for foreign technicians, especially from the Soviet bloc.

However, the inter-relationship between the Party and government and the lack of democratic control over functionaries lends itself to bureaucratic abuses. There is a general faith in the central leadership, specifically Fidel Castro's determination not to permit a privileged bureaucracy to develop.

Direction

It was literally impossible for me to sense any general movement towards workers democracy or towards a privileged bureaucracy. On the contrary, I had the impression that the present contradictory situation could remain for a substantial period. In any case, I think it would be wrong to conclude that any variant is closed.

Future Cuba Trips

There are indications that the Cubans are taking an increased interest in the advanced countries. There seems to be a desire to increase contact with the SWP but still at a cautious pace and at a minimal level. Several problems exist which complicate matters. The Cubans are heavily dependant on their relations with the Soviet Union. Also, there are substantial differences between the SWP and the Cuban CP. Czechoslovakia, workers democracy and the strategy for revolution in Latin America are three major examples of the existing differences.

At this point the Cubans are considering the possibilities of substantial student trips but no decision has been made nor can one realistically be expected in the near future. However, in all likelihood we can repeat the Cuba trip of January and continue to have individual representatives or reporters visit Cuba.

Presenting Our Position on Cuba

There are many facets to a correct presentation of our position on the Cuban revolution. Here I only want to mention the importance of making clear that we do have differences with the Cubans. The lack of workers democracy and their position on Czechoslovakia involve questions of principles for us. For those comrades who wish to see an example of how to present our criticisms in a positive manner I would suggest you re-read Harry Ring's articles from last year's (1968) Militant (Sept. 13, 20 and 27) which deal with workers democracy and Joe Hansen's recent article on Castro and Czechoslovakia.