

A postscript on Trotsky conference in Cuba

By Bill Van Auken
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In its analysis of the conference convened in Havana, Cuba, in May under the title “International Academic Event Leon Trotsky,” the *World Socialist Web Site* noted the importance of providing a clear understanding to Cuban workers and youth of the role of Trotsky and Trotskyism in maintaining the historical continuity of socialist internationalism, embodied in the program and practice of the Fourth International.

We stated categorically that this was not the purpose of the conference in Havana, the character of which was determined by “who was invited to participate and who was barred from attending.”

In the first category was a collection of Pabloite revisionists who postured as academics or “independent researchers.” Their presentations were designed to suppress the revolutionary role of Trotsky and Trotskyism and not to offend the sensibilities of Cuba’s ruling elite.

Barred from the conference was the International Committee of the Fourth International, which led the struggle against Pabloite revisionism.

Frank García Hernández, the conference organizer, lied about the reasons for rejecting the ICFI’s participation prior to the event. In an email exchange with the WSWS, he claimed that the reason for rejecting the ICFI’s application was solely for reasons of available space. García Hernández wrote that the presence of representatives of the ICFI would decrease “the participation capacity of the Cuban public.”

Aside from the fact that the “Cuban public” was itself virtually excluded from the conference, it was self-evident that the grounds for barring the ICFI were political. The Cuban government was well aware that if they were allowed to participate, representatives of the ICFI would have raised the lessons of the protracted struggle against revisionism within the Fourth International and, in particular, the sharp differences over the nature of the Cuban Revolution.

This assessment has been confirmed by an interview with García Hernández conducted last month by *Socialist Action*, the publication of a US Pabloite group, which sent a representative to Havana.

Asked about what “obstacles” there had been to the holding of the conference, García Hernández stated that one of the principal issues was the “negative predisposition of certain [Cuban] officials towards Trotsky.”

He described such an attitude as “normal,” attributing it to the fact that “some Trotskyist groups have been extremely critical of the Revolution,” adding “it is feared by some people that some of these groups that I mentioned, came to try to create Trotskyist political organizations in Cuba. Something that has no chance because nobody in Cuba is interested in doing that.”

If “nobody” in Cuba is interested in Trotskyism, why did García Hernández organize the conference?

Significantly, the *Socialist Action* interviewer, Rob Lyon, described as the organization’s “international solidarity coordinator,” expressed no disagreement with this assessment.

García Hernández stressed that these “obstacles” had been overcome due to the “strictly academic nature” of the conference and because “those who came showed great respect for the country where they were.”

In plain language, those invited were vetted by the Cuban government. They came based on an explicit understanding that they would say nothing about the relationship of Trotsky or Trotskyism to the history of the Cuban Revolution, much less to the present conditions of crisis and deepening social inequality in Cuba itself.

García Hernández’s statement that “nobody in Cuba is interested” in building the Trotskyist movement in that country is a crude expression of the wishful thinking of the Cuban government itself, which fears the independent political mobilization of the working

class based upon a socialist and internationalist program.

Those who made presentations to the conference—for the most part, politically demoralized anti-Trotskyists (Ernie Tate, Suzie Weissman, Alex Steiner, et al.)—could be counted upon not to provoke the ire of the Cuban state.

Objective developments have vindicated the struggle waged by the ICFI against Pabloite revisionism and its attempt to portray the Cuban Revolution and petty-bourgeois-led guerrilla movements as some new road to socialism, and the government headed by Fidel Castro as a workers' state.

The efforts of the Cuban state and its Pabloite accomplices cannot wall off Cuban workers from the growing development of the class struggle on a world scale. The WSWS, despite the efforts of the regime to block its transmission, is read by a growing number of Cubans seeking a socialist alternative to the failed petty-bourgeois nationalist program of Castroism. The perspective of Trotskyism, realized in the struggle waged by the ICFI for the political independence and international unification of the working class in a common fight to put an end to capitalism and imperialism, will find a hearing on the island.

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