



# Nahuel Moreno

## Capitulation to “Eurocommunism”

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Letter to the United Secretariat, 11 February 1977

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# Capitulation to “Eurocommunism”

Bogota

11 February 1977

To the Comrades of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

Dear Comrades,

In my capacity as a member of the United Secretariat, Trotskyist leader for 35 years and militant for 37, as the leader of the Bolshevik Tendency and the *Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores* [Socialist Workers Party] of Argentina, I have resolved to take on the responsibility of personally addressing the United Secretariat, the three existing tendencies in the International, all responsible leaders and members to request them that we make an urgent public disavowal of the statements — revisionists in my view — by Comrade Ernest Mandel to the Barcelona magazine *Topo Viejo* [Old Mole], published in issues 2 and 3 of this magazine in November and December 1976, respectively.

## I. The statements by Comrade Mandel

1. In the statements we are referring to, Comrade Mandel holds that the European communist parties have ceased to be counterrevolutionary and treacherous, and now are in a transition stage, the “Eurocommunism”, of which is not yet possible to predict its goal nor its final trajectory. A few quotes illustrate this adequately:

“The French extreme left — despite its limitations, its weakness, its organisational division — has today a real political weight and has the potential capacity to impose a revolutionary turn to the reformist leadership of the CP.”

“The comrades leading the (Spanish) Communist Party, especially its working-class cadres, must take it up and solve it, and I hope and trust they will prove capable of positively resolving it, in the sense that they will return to the path of revolutionary Marxism.”

“Eurocommunism is a politics of transition, although no one knows where or towards what. Perhaps it represents a transition to the reabsorption of the Communist parties by social democracy, which in my opinion is unlikely, but which cannot be excluded totally. It may be a transition towards a new Stalinism. And it can also be — why not? — a transition by the working-class cadres of the party towards a reunion with revolutionary Marxism, with Leninism. The political struggle and practical experience will tell us what is going to happen.”

“It will also be difficult — I will not say impossible, but it is difficult — for the Spanish CP to adopt a clear strikebreaking attitude, as have the Italian CP and the Spanish CP itself at certain times of their existence. This is so because the balance of power in the Spanish worker’s movement is very different.”

2. For Comrade Mandel the future of the European communist parties is uncertain and he does not rule out their conversion to revolutionary Marxists. In that sense, he states that

“Eurocommunism is a politics of transition, although no one knows where or towards what. [...] it can also be a transition [...] towards a reunion with revolutionary Marxism, with Leninism.” “The comrades leading the (Spanish) Communist Party, [...] I hope and trust they will prove capable of positively resolving it, in the sense that they will return to the path of revolutionary Marxism.” “The reformist leadership of the (French) CP” can be forced to have “a revolutionary turn”.

To hide his revisionism, his capitulation, Comrade Mandel combines these predictions with expressions such as “by the working-class cadres of the party”, “especially its working-class cadres”, “comrades leading the (Spanish) Communist Party” and “the French extreme left” in each of these respective quotes. In the same line of reasoning, he says that “the balance of power in the Spanish worker’s movement” is the main reason why the Spanish CP cannot be outright scabs.

But such circumstances compound his revisionism and do not conceal it as Comrade Mandel believes since that means that the communist parties can become revolutionary by the pressure of its working-class cadres in Spain and the “far left” in France. In other words, the creation of the Fourth International has been a tragic historical mistake, since Communist parties are recoverable for the revolution, as long as the “working-class cadres”, the “far left” or the “balance of power” exerts strong pressure on them.

### To err is human...but no so much!

3. Comrade Mandel commits an error: he confuses the role of strikebreakers in economic struggles with the political counterrevolutionary role. For us, however, and for every true revolutionary Marxist, political betrayals are much more serious than the role played in the union struggles of the worker’s movement.

Comrade Pierre Frank, years ago, explained how the French Communist Party combines some daily defence, every day, of the workers in factories, the certain role of leadership and of the vanguard in the economic struggles in order to thus keep the prestige that allows it to commit horrendous political betrayals. Comrade Mandel has not understood this dialectic of the communist parties. What is at issue is the role of political scabs, of traitors and counterrevolutionaries of the CP, leaving aside the small or large concessions they gain for the rank and file in the economic struggles of the worker’s movement. During 1976, the Spanish CP did not tire of politically betraying the proletariat and the oppressed Spanish nationalities, of playing in favour of the regime. However, Comrade Mandel has not taken notice or has been obliged to denounce them. For example, Basque comrades have to tell the whole International whether Comrade Mandel has acted correctly or not, whether the Spanish CP is becoming better or worse in the political fights against the regime.

4. As serious as what Comrade Mandel says, is what he does not say in his interview. At no time did he say that European communist parties, especially the Spanish, are betraying and will continue betraying increasingly as long as the revolutionary upsurge continues, because that is the function that communist parties are historically conditioned to fill since 1935, since they adopted the strategy of class collaboration and popular front with the bourgeoisie.

Nowhere does Mandel speak of the irreversible crisis of the communist parties, brought about by the insoluble contradiction between their politics and counterrevolutionary leadership and the rise of the mass movement. On the contrary, he insists systematically it is not ruled out any possible change of the communist parties in a revolutionary sense, without excluding their leaderships.

Nor does he denounce the existing counterrevolutionary united front between the Kremlin, the Communist parties, imperialism and the socialist parties; and within that counterrevolutionary united front, the role the CP plays.

## II. The counterrevolutionary and treacherous character of Eurocommunism

1. Only an impressionist can talk about the three variants accepted by Eurocommunism: social democracy, Stalinism, and revolutionary Marxism. Eurocommunism is a double adaptation by the communist parties, both to the rise of European masses and to imperialism itself. The adaptation to the rise of the masses has a single goal: to better serve the imperialist counterrevolution. For a Trotskyist, the discussion on Eurocommunism has a limit: the impossibility of the communist parties with their leaderships of becoming genuinely revolutionary. In other words: the discussion can only be around the formal changes that communist parties are making to better serve the Stalinist–imperialist counterrevolution during the rise of the European revolution.

With the problem posed this way, there is just one question to be answered: are European Communist parties already social democrats or do they remain Stalinists? According to our opinion, they are Stalinists because they continue their close relationship with the USSR. If there were a war between imperialism and the USSR, we believe they would be on the side of the worker's state, not of imperialism. But it happens that today the conflict is not between the USSR and imperialism, but between the revolutionary upsurge and the (imperialist–bureaucratic) European counterrevolution; in this way, the CPs, like the socialist parties, are parts of the counterrevolutionary front. Therefore, the CPs adopt social democratic positions for the workers and mass movement to better play their counterrevolutionary role: they are increasingly closer to their own imperialism without reaching the point of being their direct agents, which would immediately convert them into social democratic parties. However, the difference now is minimal and secondary since, before the revolutionary upsurge, both the social democrats and the European communist parties have a similar policy. The social democracy, meanwhile, fills this role closely and directly linked to its imperialism, while the CPs, on the other hand, do so through the Kremlin, but the policy is the same: to serve the counterrevolution through class collaboration.

### Treachery is part of them...

2. One of the reasons for being of Trotskyism is the relentless fight against the Socialist and Communist parties, which have gone over to the camp of the imperialist counterrevolution and increasingly betray the working class. For Trotskyism, this passing of the reformist parties to the camp of the imperialist counterrevolution is a decisive and irreversible fact, which led to the founding of the Fourth International. If it had been possible to change the Socialist and Communist parties and transform them into revolutionaries, the Third International, first, and the Fourth International later would not have founded. For the Trotskyists, Communist parties around the world, especially in Europe, have a clear traitorous policy, of popular fronts, of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Can Eurocommunism mean that the CPs are abandoning their popular-frontist politics as suggested by Comrade Mandel? We categorically deny this possibility.

The degeneration of both Internationals was due to deep social causes — the bureaucratisation of these parties, which provided a solid economic and social base for their reformism and which tied them for life, for economic and social reasons, to the camp of imperialist counterrevolution. Although the process of degeneration of the Third International was different from the process of the Second International, going from the centre to the periphery — from the bureaucratisation of the Communist Party of the USSR to the national parties — it was still a process of bureaucratisation and degeneration which marked all Communist parties. All of them are based on a political and trade union bureaucracy.

Thus, where these parties achieve a large mass support, this bureaucratisation is accentuated, but with "national" traits, since this privileged bureaucracy begins to have its own "domestic market" as the main source of its income, with its unions, parliamentary posts, and party apparatus positions. For example, this is the current situation of the European CPs, such as the Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese. This bureaucracy, this privileged stratum, is what prevents for social reasons the revolutionary regeneration of the national Communist Parties.

3. The fact that some Communist parties have taken power or have led a revolution does not mean they have changed historically and structurally, ceasing to be counterrevolutionary. Precisely by taking power, the bureaucratisation expands as its source becomes all the national state. The same is true when a privileged union bureaucracy leads a strike to victory. This does not mean that it ceases to be a bureaucracy, full of privileges, counterrevolutionary, ultimately an agent of the imperialist bourgeoisie and of the counterrevolution in the ranks of the workers. That is, because of their bureaucratic nature, these parties, although they have seized power and led a revolution, they continue opposing and fighting against all domestic and international development of the permanent revolution. In other words, even though they have led a victorious national revolution they remain true enemies of the international socialist revolution.

When this happens, it is because of very concrete and specific objective causes that Trotsky himself foresaw in the *Transitional Program*: “However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.), the petty-bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie” (L. Trotsky, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 95).

However, Trotsky did not conclude from this that the national bureaucracy of the Stalinist parties would stop being a privileged layer, or that they would not to continue fulfilling their role as traitors and counterrevolutionaries; or much less did he conclude we should abandon criticism and the fierce ideological struggle.

The defeat of the exploiters of a country carried out by Stalinism in these “completely exceptional circumstances” took place while they were betraying the workers of the entire world. Thus the defeat of imperialism in China, North Korea, Vietnam and Eastern Europe was the price paid by imperialism for Stalinism to domesticate and crush the worker’s revolution in Western Europe.

Moreover, most of those victories took place in the colonial world, in peripheral countries; this means that although imperialism weakened, it was allowed to recover and survive with the help of Stalinism and the CPs. At the same time, the victories allowed Stalinism to vindicate their concepts of revolutions by stages and socialism in one country, and in this way to further consolidate in the mass movement of the entire world as the ultimate reinsurance for the imperialist counterrevolution itself.

This treacherous role of world Stalinism — of all the Communist parties of the world without exception, whether or not they have broken with Moscow, whether or not they have taken power — is crystallised in the pernicious role they have had in the domestication, for more than two decades, of the industrial proletariat of the world. This role has been direct and indirect. It has been direct when the CP has been the dominant political force, and indirect, because the CPs’ bureaucratic politics stifles the revolution where they have influence, thus aiding the trade union and social democratic bureaucracies in countries where they do not have influence for these to continue controlling the working class.

4. Despite the Stalinist betrayals, the proletariat in the metropolitan countries began to raise its head in Western Europe. This historic event, which has only one meaning — the beginning of the end of the imperialist capitalist system on a global scale —, will take to unsuspected dimensions the treacherous role of the Communist parties around the world, especially in Western Europe.

Having fought and denounced the Communist parties for decades as counterrevolutionaries, and precisely now — when the revolutionary upsurge that will expose the increasingly traitorous role of those parties is upon us — to assert that European communist parties have “a politics of transition, although no one knows where or towards what”, as Comrade Mandel says, is like using an umbrella on sunny days. The time has come for the final and relentless struggle against the Communist and Socialist parties, for stripping them naked before the masses, before millions and millions of workers, as treacherous and counterrevolutionary parties. The time has come to

intensify and expand the relentless and systematic denunciation by Trotskyism of the traditional Communist and Socialist parties. It is therefore not possible at this time to turn a blind eye, ignoring their sad past, much less to assert that we do not know what their policy will be. As Trotskyists, we know what they will do a thousand times — to betray the working class more than ever.

### United front without capitulating or lowering the guard

5. Holding the systematic denunciation against the treacherous character of the Communist parties does not mean ignoring the tactics of the united front and the crisis in which they are immersed. Is that precisely this tactic — to be authentically communist, revolutionary and Trotskyist — must be accompanied by a clear delineation and denunciation of the mass reformist parties to which it is addressed. This is how Lenin and Trotsky acted towards the SRs and Mensheviks in 1917. Later this was the policy of the Third International when it oriented towards the united front with the social democratic parties — at no time did it stop denouncing them as traitors while at the same time were called to form a united front. If the most intransigent denunciation is not combined with the call for a united front, one ends capitulating to the reformist parties.

A variation — although of fundamental importance — of this tactic of united front must be our call for unity of action with the reformist parties (including the CP) against the attacks of fascism or reactionary coups, which threaten both revolutionists and reformists. This permanent danger of the rising workers movement — i.e. fascist or reactionary putschs — must be fought with a consistent policy of united front but with a principled tactic, without neglecting to denounce for a single minute the Communists and Socialist parties as the true causes, because of their policies, of the strengthening of fascism and the reaction, as well as the attack that they can undertake. That is, more than ever we raise the banner of the united front with the reformist parties to defend those parties from the attack of the reactionaries; while more than ever we also continue denouncing these parties as the main causes of the existence and progress of the reaction.

6. The same happens with the inevitable crisis of the Communist parties in every great rise of the mass movement. We must carefully distinguish between the characterisation of the policy of a Communist party and the characterisation of its crises. The latter is a very positive phenomenon, to the extent that they allow the elimination of those counterrevolutionary parties. But if one confuses a crisis with the policy of the party, one can fall into the aberration of believing that because the party has entered into crisis it can stop being treacherous and therefore change its politics. Whoever thinks thus aids the counterrevolutionary bureaucratic leadership of those Communist parties to overcome or mitigate the crises, because he dampens the relentless denunciation that accelerates their collapse. A true Trotskyist, by contrast, uses the crisis of any bureaucratic leadership and of any Communist party to accelerate the crisis; pointing out that that leadership and that party cannot be recovered for the revolution.

Our goal is clear and categorical — to explain to the workers how this communist party and its leadership are definitely lost for the revolution since they are agents of imperialist counterrevolution in the ranks of the worker's movement. That is, its crisis seems important to us because it means the disappearance, destruction or annihilation of that party, a process we favour and want to achieve.

### They look like gravediggers... and they are

7. In the present reality of Italy, France, and Spain reality, everything that we have said is happening exactly so. The Italian Communist Party is today the maximum guarantee of the bourgeois order. In fact, it is cooperating fully with the Christian Democratic government and the great Italian bosses. The "democratic concessions" that it grants to the ranks of the Italian trade union movement have an obvious goal — to better develop its counterrevolutionary politics in the service of Italian imperialism.

The French CP, meanwhile, through the Union of the Left postulates itself as the gravedigger of the French worker's revolution. Events have also confirmed the sinister treacherous role of

the Spanish CP. It has been the safeguard of the post-Francoist regime and even of Francoism. It has been the party that has managed to prevent the organisation of a general strike to defeat the regime. It is the party that is liquidating the Workers Commissions in order to better serve Spanish imperialism and the regime. While saving the regime, Carrillo makes public statements considering the possibility to participate in a national unity government under the king. Not happy about it, the PCE diverts workers righteous indignation against the emergence of fascist gangs and converts the demonstrations in pillars of the policy of the Spanish government. Rarely have we seen a more abject and treacherous policy. And this is just the beginning! We will see worse betrayals by the PCE.

Portugal, in its way, foretells the future of all European Communist parties. There, the CP attempted to turn over the embryos of worker's and people's power to the MFA, a wing of the imperialist army; or it fought them directly with blood and fire. The CP sold out the fair strikes of the worker's' movement against the austerity plan of Vasco Goncalves and called to support this plan of the imperialist government.

This is what European Communist parties have done, but we will not tire of repeating that these are just samples of what they will do in the future — betrayals that will be much worse and catastrophic. Reality has shown that the combat of Trotskyism against Stalinism and the CPs was fully justified; also it has been verified their natural condition of traitors and counterrevolutionaries.

### III. The contradictions of Comrade Mandel

1. Comrade Mandel contradicts what he wrote or approved some time ago. The public document of the International on Spain entitled *The Death Agony of Francoism*, was written by the IMT [International Majority Tendency] oriented by Comrade Mandel.

In that document, although deplorable in its analysis and concrete policies for Spain a principled position is held against the PC. Here are some excerpts of his ideas some time ago:

“For twenty years now, the Spanish CP and its various allies have deliberately pursued the strategy of putting pressure on the bourgeoisie (the ‘peaceful strike’) *and of offering big capital ever more sweeping guarantees of class collaboration and respect for the bourgeois order* in an effort to win the replacement of the dictatorship by a bourgeois democratic regime. The formation of the Junta Democrática is only the latest variant of a *single and permanent strategy: convincing the Spanish bourgeoisie that it can change its political system without its class power being seriously threatened.*

“The CP wants to assure the Spanish bourgeoisie that the regime can be changed under conditions that would leave intact not only its economic power and its private property but even its state and its instruments of repression against the workers; this is the real content of its treacherous policy.

“While the effects of this policy on the bourgeoisie remain weak today, this will not be the case immediately after the overthrow of the dictatorship. At that point, an alliance with Social Democratic reformists, the neo-Social Democrats, or Stalinist could appear to significant sectors of the bourgeoisie as a last resort in halting the revolutionary upsurge as a palliative that does not immediately threaten their class rule. But the ability of the reformists and Stalinist to carry out *this counterrevolutionary work* does not depend solely on their intentions political orientation, but also and above all on the scope of the social crisis and the mass movement, as well as on the level of the class consciousness of the masses, the degree of self-organisation and centralisation they have achieved, the relationship of forces between reformists and revolutionaries within the workers movement and the progress made on the road to the construction of the revolutionary party.” (Our emphasis.)

2. According to *The Death Agony of Francoism*, the policy of the PCE was and will continue being the same since it is “permanent” for the past “twenty years” — a “counterrevolutionary” and “treacherous” policy. Likewise in this document, it was recorded that while the revolution was rising,

to that extent the PC would be more useful to bourgeois counterrevolution. However, Mandel now tells us otherwise, thus opposing an official document of the International and his faction. Comrade Mandel must have held the same political position. Perhaps he could have updated his concepts, for example, quoting the betrayals of the PCE, and predicting future betrayals. Instead, he acted as a skilful defence counsel for the Spanish CP and the European CPs.

When acting thus Comrade Mandel commits two crimes. He does not help at all the relentless struggle of the Spanish, French and Italian Trotskyists against the current betrayals of the Communist Parties in these countries. Instead of denouncing them with exclamation marks, he merely poses a number of question marks over the future of their politics.

Likewise, his second crime has to do with the attitude of a vanguard worker who has begun to lambast the CP for its treacherous and counterrevolutionary politics, but who after reading the statements made by Comrade Mandel goes into a state of confusion — should he break with the Communist Party or, on the contrary, pressure it to change its policy?

Any worker with left-leaning positions in France, after learning of the current thinking of Mandel, is plunged into a state of total doubt. Isn't the best policy to increasingly pressure the CP to make "the revolutionary turn" predicted by Mandel? That is, the conclusions to be drawn from the statements made by Comrade Mandel reinforce the hopes and the trust, already diminished, of thousands of workers in the European Communist parties, instead of developing this crisis to the end so as to produce their break with these parties. In short, the statements by Comrade Mandel inevitably lead to a policy of capitulation to the European CPs.

Comrades, I think I have fully demonstrated the seriousness of the assertions by Comrade Mandel and the need to carry out a public delimitation with them. This delimitation should be the result of a fraternal exchange of views among all leaders, tendencies, factions and militants who continue supporting the classical, principled analysis of Trotskyism in regard to the Communist parties. We can change the tone, we can examine the different appropriate tactical variations in relation to that critical statement against the one made by Comrade Mandel. But it is necessary to do it to minimize the catastrophe inflicted to our European Trotskyist militants and to our International as a whole.

None of these proposals should be taken as a public or internal characterisation and attack on Comrade Mandel. In no way do we judge his historical trajectory, which deserves the highest praise as one of our top leaders for more than thirty years. However, we do judge his disastrous public statements to the extent they affect the future of our international. They must be received in this sense.

With orthodox Trotskyist greetings and awaiting your prompt reply,

**Nahuel Moreno**