



Nahuel Moreno

Theses of Leeds (Theses on the Revolutionary United Front)

Nahuel Moreno

Theses of Leeds (Theses on the Revolutionary United Front)

Paper presented to the Congress of the International Committee of the Fourth International, held in Leeds, Great Britain, 1958.

English translation: Daniel Iglesias

Cover and interior design: Daniel Iglesias

www.nahuelmoreno.org

www.uit-ci.org

www.izquierdasocialista.org.ar

Copyright by *CEHUS* Centro de Estudios Humanos y Sociales
Buenos Aires, 2016
cehus2014@gmail.com



Theses of Leeds

(Theses on the Revolutionary United Front)

I

The world revolutionary rise as well as the intensification of the class and colonial masses struggles started around 1943 with the European revolution and the great mass movements in Asia and has followed an upward general course. The most important victories of the world revolution have been:

- The liquidation of capitalism and the feudal relics in Eastern Europe;
- The great revolutions in China, North of Indochina and Korea, which swept the imperialists, feudal and capitalist regimes in those countries;
- The achievement of political independence by India and Indonesia, Tunisia, Morocco, and the establishment of the republican regime in Egypt liquidating the monarchy of Farouk;
- The nationalisation of the mines, the right to vote for the entire population and the formation of workers' militias in Bolivia;
- The nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the creation of the United Arab Republic.

To these triumphs achieved by the global revolution in an uninterrupted rise, albeit with ups and downs, we should add:

- The quick restoration and development of the economy in the non-capitalist countries, namely the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and its satellites, despite the plunder of the bureaucracy;

¶ The colossal technological triumph achieved in the field of artificial satellites by the USSR, triumph that should be credited to the virtues of nationalisation and planning of the Soviet economy.

World imperialism faces this revolutionary upsurge in the midst of a chronic crisis of the European empires, combined with an economic boom that cushioned or hid completely, according to the empires in question, the chronic nature of this crisis. In this regard, US imperialism is the one that best endured or managed to cushion the crisis through a massive boom of its capitalist economy.

Both, the revolutionary upsurge in the world and the situation of imperialism have begun to change in character or already have changed it. The most important fact of the revolutionary upsurge is that it has spread to the area of influence of the Soviet bureaucracy, by the beginning of the revolutionary process of the masses in this area. Today it is Hungarian, Polish, Czechoslovakian, and Russian masses, etc., which, along with the Algerian masses — vanguard of the Arab revolution — are leading the world revolutionary process. This new phenomenon in the course of the world revolution is accompanied, from a year ago, by the beginning of an economic recession in the big capitalist countries and mainly in the United States. The decisive factor of all of this is that with the beginning of the revolution of the Soviet masses the character of the worldwide revolutionary

upsurge changes qualitatively. We can say that until the Arab revolution the world revolution extends and gets important, but quantitative wins; from its extension to the area dominated by the Russian bureaucracy it gives an important qualitative leap.

II

The decade from 1943 to 1953, when Stalin dies, has been characterised by a contradictory combination of objective and subjective factors of the workers' and the colonial masses movements or, rather, by a curious unity of the structures and superstructures of the mass movement. This synthesis was given by the unity, highly contradictory in power, of the great struggles of the workers' and mass movement with the leading apparatuses consolidated in the two decades of the retreat of the revolution (from 1923-1943). The contradictory unity of the revolutionary upsurge with the old counter-revolutionary apparatuses — Stalinist, socialist and bourgeois — has now lasted for a decade.

It is a phenomenon that confirms the theoretical characterisation that all the masters of Marxism have made when referring to the most general relationships existing between structures and superstructures — the most enduring, most reactionary factor, the one that most reflects the weight of inertia is always the superstructure. The development of the world revolutionary upsurge in the decade from 1943 to 1953 has not been more than the particular refraction of this general law. The past always survives, in all spheres of a class — however revolutionary it may be — until all possibilities have been exhausted.

The apparatuses of Stalinism, socialism and the colonial bourgeoisies could remain and control the mass movement as an immediate consequence of two factors:

- First, that the masses in rising found as immediate enemy the imperialist colonial metropolises in the colonial countries, and the occupying powers with their native allies in the European countries;

- Second, that the two previous decades of retreat had not allowed to organise and form, in any country crossed by a revolutionary situation, a consciously revolutionary party, a section of the Fourth International, with roots in the working class and the colonial masses. The objective situation had prevented the formation of revolutionary parties, and the non-formation of these revolutionary parties allowed the traditional and counter-revolutionary parties to monopolise, control, curb and divert the masses when the new rise took place.

In this regard, we must not forget that the Russian Revolution and the Third International were the results of 40 years of the rise of the world workers' movement, which had allowed the crystallisation of strong revolutionary — consciously or unconsciously — tendencies or organisations in the most important sectors the world workers' movement. Among the unconsciously revolutionary were the French revolutionary trade unionists, the International Workers of the World in the US, Spanish and Latin American anarchists. And conscious revolutionaries were the Germans Spartacists and, fundamentally, the Russian Bolsheviks.

The unity or synthesis between the mass movement rising and the counter-revolutionary apparatuses hid a latent revolution that now begins to come into crisis, and it is expressed as a clear contradiction since the death of Stalin.

III

A colossal indirect confirmation of the analysis of Trotsky and of our International on the character of the USSR and the Stalinist government has taken place at the beginning of the revolution of the Russian masses, which qualitatively changes the character of the revolutionary upsurge.

For Trotskyism, the USSR has always been a fundamental part of the world workers' movement and its ruling caste is a part, decisive and fundamental as well, of the counter-revolutionary apparatuses that control the mass movement on a global scale, since they prevailed as a result of the counter-revolutionary course.

Stalinism not only controlled the best sectors of the vanguard of the workers and colonial movement in the entire world, but with its sinister policy it threw into the arms of the bourgeois, or socialist, or other union bureaucracies apparatuses, the other sectors the workers' and colonial masses movement. That is to say, directly or indirectly, Stalinism was and is the main subjective factor of the world counter-revolution, just as Yankee imperialism it is objectively so.

This means that on a worldwide scale, the robustness of the apparatuses that hinder, betray and divert the revolutionary movements of the masses — be they social democratic, nationalist, bourgeois, bureaucratic or Stalinist parties — is directly related to the strength of Kremlin's Stalinism.

At the beginning of the process of revolution in Russia and the glacis (the satellite countries of Eastern Europe), the Soviet masses find as their immediate, direct enemy, not an enemy class or an imperialist metropolis, but its own superstructure. This superstructure is, at the same time, the support base of all bureaucratic apparatuses in the world. This is why the fight of the Soviet masses shakes and begins the crisis of all counter-revolutionary apparatuses of the mass movement and qualitatively changes the character of the worldwide revolutionary upsurge. This does not mean that the counter-revolutionary apparatuses will immediately disappear or be swept away by the masses, but it means the crisis has begun and it will be accelerating. The conclusion is that we have entered a new stage of world revolution that will last, at least, more than a decade.

IV

It is necessary to pause to better clarify the phenomenon that characterises the new stage: the crisis of traditional apparatuses. Our characterisation is that the crisis is revolutionary, not reformist. We do not believe the old apparatuses will be reformed, neither will they peacefully change their programs and leaders, nor will they modify without upheaval their right-wing or counter-revolutionary course of stifling and totalitarian control of the mass movement.

We understand that the revolutionary crisis of the traditional apparatuses is the red-hot manifestation of all the contradictions existing in the workers' movement and the colonial masses, controlled in a totalitarian way by counter-revolutionary organisations. These contradictions when at fever pitch will involve terrible struggles, with the use of revolutionary methods to liquidate the apparatuses. The objective process of the crisis points towards the rupture and liquidation of old counter-revolutionary apparatuses and, logically, our policy will adjust to this interpretation. This does not rule out the possibility of reforms and mutual concessions between the apparatuses and the uprising masses, until the final confrontation.

More concretely and immediately, we believe that the crisis of the traditional apparatuses will be manifested in the emergence of tendencies that will outline and formulate different political lines within the traditional apparatuses, or of sectors that break with them openly. That is, the character of the crisis will be given by the clear emergence of different tendencies and sectors within the apparatuses that control the workers' movement and the colonial masses. This will acquire a centrifugal dynamic, of increasingly sharper ideological or political contradictions until its violent eruption. The centrifugal tendencies in all directions and the search for alternatives express the pressure of the revolutionary upsurge, which promotes the formulation of the most urgent political needs of the workers and mass movement. On the other hand, this also means the rebirth of democracy and self-determination of the revolutionary movement in opposition to the totalitarian control over the mass movement by the traditional apparatuses.

This is a general, global crisis, which will acquire a different character from country to country, depending on the violence of the revolutionary upsurge and the strength of the traditional apparatuses. As the intensity of the rise increases in a given country, the crisis will tend to acquire a massive and explosive character. Conversely, the less the rise is, the crisis will tend to acquire a more intellectual character and to be expressed only in the vanguard elements. Hungary and the United States are the best examples of two extreme cases. In Hungary the crisis of Stalinism acquired a massive character, total, covering all of the workers' and student movement, whether Stalinist or not. In the United States instead, the crisis manifests itself only between the forward elements of the intelligentsia or the revolutionary militancy.

The crisis is at a qualitatively higher stage in the USSR, the glaxis and the world Stalinist movement, for two reasons. One reason, objective, is that the revolutionary movement is attacking and carries its offensive against the bastion of the world Stalinist apparatus. The other reason, subjective, is that despite its degeneration and prostitution the world Stalinist movement does not cease to be linked to the tradition of Leninism. For this reason, the sectors that break with Stalinism quickly orient themselves towards a Leninist interpretation of the world Stalinist phenomenon.

The social democracy, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois apparatuses in the movement of the colonial masses and the trade union bureaucracies suffer an indirect crisis which is at a lower stage than the crisis of Stalinism, as a consequence precisely that for the moment they do not suffer the direct brunt of the workers' movement and that the level and ideological tradition of the movement they control is much lower than the Stalinist. For the moment the crisis is expressed in the own interior of the apparatus, with an increase in the militancy of worker activists, a greater tension between the tendencies or the hint of previously non-existent tendencies.

V

The historic stage of the crisis of the traditional superstructures of the mass movement will be accompanied by the overcoming of the historic crisis of the leadership of the workers' movement. In turn, overcoming the crisis of leadership cannot mean anything other than the transformation of Trotskyism, our sections and our world party, in revolutionary parties with great influence on the mass movement. Specifically, the stage that has opened with the death of Stalin is not only the crisis of the traditional superstructures of the workers' and mass movement but also the overcoming of the crisis of leadership of the workers' movement and the transformation of our movement, forming mass parties.

These three phenomena will eventually join when finally the old superstructures are liquidated and Trotskyism becomes the only real leadership of the mass movement, and they are closely linked together, but this does not mean they are the same. On the contrary, they are different phenomena that will take place together and in a process of uneven and combined development.

The crisis of the traditional apparatuses conditions and makes possible the overcoming of the crisis of leadership of the workers' movement. In turn, the objectives steps that will be taken towards the overcoming of the crisis of revolutionary leadership will accelerate the crisis of traditional apparatuses. But in any case, the crisis will release forces in all directions; forces which will not be fully assimilated from the outset when addressing the stage of overcoming the crisis of leadership of the workers' movement. That is, the crisis will have initially a faster dynamics than the overcoming of the crisis of revolutionary workers' leadership. On the contrary, as the crisis of revolutionary leadership begins to be overcome, the speed of this process will be accelerated to match the initially higher dynamics of the crisis of the traditional apparatuses. We can say, therefore, that the crisis of the counter-revolutionary apparatuses will have a faster speed than the beginning of overcoming the crisis of revolutionary workers' leadership, but the speed of the latter process will increase at each new stage of the process.

There will also be a process of uneven and combined development between the beginning of overcoming the crisis of leadership and the strengthening our world party and its sections. The

crisis of the apparatuses releases unconscious revolutionary tendencies, of centre-left or ultra-left. With all their errors and limitations these revolutionary tendencies will lead the mass movement to revolutionary positions, mainly responding to the most urgent, concrete and pressing issues. We call these tendencies “unconsciously revolutionary” because they have not risen to the understanding of the need for our program and global organisation. But their emergence has profound objective significance — it is the beginning of a new revolutionary leadership of the mass movement because they show the first objective steps of the workers’ vanguard or the left movement aimed at giving themselves and the masses a revolutionary policy. Our Trotskyist movement is the consciously revolutionary factor which has to understand these first steps and, instead of panicking before them, must develop and accelerate them.

Our own development in principle will be slower than what these left tendencies will have when they appear. Let us think of the fabulous development of the Hungarian and Polish communist youth, with their revolutionary arguments and slogans or sketches of a policy aimed at the workers taking power. Can we compare this massive development with our ability to grow from 50 to 500 during the revolutionary process? Let us think of the enormous possibilities that would open up the development of a powerful and broad anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist left within the British Labour Party, or of a future American Labour Party. Let us compare this possibility with the possibility posed by reality to our sections with their ability to capitalise on the most part on such processes, and we will see that this is not possible, precisely because they are not nor can they be identical phenomena. The amplitude of the unconscious revolutionary left tendencies at the beginning of the crisis and in the early stages is much higher than ours and has or acquires the power to act objectively on the masses as a leadership or a powerful movement. A qualitative advancement of our Trotskyist movement will allow us to reverse this inequality between growth and relative strength of leftist tendencies and the relative growth and strengthening of our national parties.

VI

Not forgetting for a single moment that this whole process takes place — and can only take place — in the frame of powerful struggles of the workers’ movement to reach the seizure of power and self-determination through a revolutionary process in permanence, the World Party of the Socialist Revolution must pursue two fundamental objectives in the face of the crisis of the traditional apparatuses: to accelerate it as much as possible and, for this, to accelerate the revolutionary upsurge of the mass movement. For this, we see as an objective need the organisation of revolutionary actions in common with the unconsciously revolutionary tendencies, which releases the crisis of the traditional apparatuses, with us. Of course, these common actions cannot have another recipient than the revolutionary movement of the masses.

We mean that we must organise actions in common with all the unconscious revolutionary tendencies emerging in the process of the crisis of the traditional apparatuses, to develop and deepen this crisis through the revolutionary mobilisation of the working class and the colonial masses. These common actions mean to begin to dispute the leadership of the mass movement to the counter-revolutionary apparatuses through the immediate revolutionary or potentially revolutionary unity of action. It is not a question of encouraging the unconscious revolutionary tendencies when breaking with the apparatuses to stay away from the masses, but exactly the opposite. We must strive for them to turn towards the mass movement, not to peel off of it, to give it or fight to give it a revolutionary leadership.

It is utopian to pretend that the unconscious revolutionary tendencies that happen and will continue to happen in the workers’ movement and the colonial masses of the world incorporate immediately or automatically to the Fourth International, given the weakness inherited from the past. On the contrary, it is perfectly possible to achieve common actions that respond to the most urgent revolutionary needs of the country, area or trade union, university or intellectual group

where we act. Therefore, our task in each country must be to specify the nature of the crisis of the superstructures of the workers' movement, and to establish what are the urgent revolutionary programmatic needs of the workers' movement and its vanguard, to launch the revolutionary slogans that will enable us to encourage a joint action with the unconscious revolutionary tendencies in the mass movement to raise the revolutionary action of these.

This task we call the Revolutionary United Front, to keep in the tradition of Marxism of our time, which has called the other two general strategies of the international communist movement United Front, the Proletarian and the Antiimperialist. Either way, the least important is the name. The important thing is to understand that the Revolutionary United Front means a whole new overall strategy which is summarised in the need for our national Trotskyist organisations to take the mandatory task of organising the joint action with the revolutionary tendencies arising from the crisis of the apparatuses in the mass movement to propose with redoubled strength the right and the need for a revolutionary leadership of the mass movement, and to help tendencies to actually rise and act as a revolutionary leadership.

VII

This strategy opens up tremendous prospects for our development, but as every new stage, it will also entail great dangers. The main one is the trend to dilute ourselves or to abandon the principles, to disappear, to capitulate to the deficiencies, gaps or errors of the unconscious revolutionary leaders or tendencies. Hence, we must warn that the only possibility that this strategy will fully serve the mass movement, elevate the new revolutionary tendencies to be a real conscious leadership of the mass movement and help to strengthen the Trotskyist movement, is that the Fourth International and its leadership have a stronger than ever presence to counter the inevitable opportunist or tail-ending deviations of our sections in the implementation of the Revolutionary United Front. At the national level, we say the same about the sections of the Fourth International as Bolshevik organisation: any "loosening" of our organisation would be fatal to the united front and to the mass movement, since it would eliminate the only conscious focus of the whole process and the only possibility of a conscious revolutionary leadership.

The fundamental reasons for the Trotskyist movement to create the strategy of the Revolutionary United Front are, on the one hand, to have a much more vigorous lever to reach the mass movement proposing our slogans for action, and on the other hand to make stronger our world movement and its sections. The ultimate goal is as important as the first and cannot be neglected even if their relationships can be contradictory.

Finally, all the alerts that we have made on the need to maintain our national parties more tightly organised than ever, do not mean to tie our hands regarding organisational forms or the tactics to adopt to develop the tactics of Revolutionary United Front in each country. These tactics can be any of the traditional ones, from the agreement for very limited and urgent actions with leftist tendencies, up to entryism in a broad left tendency that may emerge, or in an already existing centre-left party. Any of these variations can be legitimate, if it is the result of a careful study of the national reality, that leads us to the conclusion that the political and organisational tactic adopted is the best to start giving a vigorous new revolutionary leadership to the workers' and mass movement and at the same time to strengthen the only existing consciously revolutionary leadership in the country and the world: the Fourth International.