



Nahuel Moreno

**Latin American
Theses**

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Foreword to the 2020 edition

Accompanying the “Agrarian Thesis” and the “Industrial Thesis” of Argentina (included in *Argentina’s Economic Structure* and available at www.nahuelmoreno.org), Moreno prepared the “Latin American Thesis”. In it, he pointed out the semi-colonial and backward character of all Latin America and its role as producer of raw materials and of little industrial development. He highlighted the preponderant role of US imperialism, followed by England, with unevenness in the different Latin American countries. Moreno explains how to apply the theory of permanent revolution and the transitional program to the processes of the struggle of the proletariat and the masses. In 1954, Nahuel Moreno resumed and updated his definitions of this Thesis, in his work on the colonising offensive of Yankee imperialism towards Latin America and Argentina in particular in “1954, a key year of Peronism” (included in *The Gorilla Coup of 1955* and available at www.nahuelmoreno.org).

The Editors

June 2020

Latin American Theses

As studied by the *Partido Obrero Revolucionario* (POR)
Ediciones Sociales

Warning

We republish the Latin American Theses of our Party, first edited in November 1948, with some modifications and additions.

Many of the points it deals with have aged and would need to be revised, updating them. Unfortunately, the haste to print the old out of print theses has prevented us from making all the necessary corrections.

Of the few corrections we have made, the one referring to Latin American Political Parties stands out for its importance because it is a modification of our old analysis.

When we wrote the named Thesis, we had not discovered that the struggle between exporters and importers, and also between national producers and direct agents of foreign financial capital, had been an important factor in the political life of our countries. In this reissue, we avoid this error. The other modifications are of form.

The Editors
Circa 1950

First Part

1. Definition and location of Latin America

a) What is a semi-colonial country?

Before defining Latin America, we must point out what are the distinctive features of a semi-colonial and backward country.

A boundary must be established between the countries that have a capitalist development such as Czechoslovakia and France and which at a certain moment become a political semi-colony from the countries that, on the contrary, having political independence, have a decisive economic dependence on imperialism.

All backward and semi-colonial countries have the following common characteristics:

1) In the world market and according to the world division of labour, controlled by imperialism, they are producers and sellers of a few and specific products that are always raw materials or semi-finished raw or agricultural products.

2) They have no machinery production. Its industrial development is twofold: for the world market, the elaboration or semi-elaboration of the goods required by it; for the internal market consumer products, mainly textiles and food.

3) The domestic market of countries selling agricultural products is substantially based on agricultural production. Hence the dependence of the domestic market on the world market. The industrial centres and the greatest capitalist development are in the agrarian zones and their commercial centres.

4) The low level of production originates a high rate of profit that foreign capitals take advantage of by importing industrial and financial capital, which capitalistically develops the backward country but superimposing or inaugurating the different types of pre-capitalist exploitation.

5) Consequently, the dependence of the backward country on imperialism is based on three factors: the lack of machinery, the dependence on the world market, and the influence of foreign financial capital on its capitalist development, resulting in a low level of production and a relationship favourable to agricultural production in terms of the employed population.

b) Latin American countries are backward and semi-colonial

1) All Latin American countries produce and sell a few products on the world market, which are raw materials or agricultural products. In Brazil, 40 per cent of its exports are represented by coffee and 75 per cent by five agricultural products. Argentina had 84 per cent of its exports based

on wheat, flax, corn and pastoral products. In Mexico, 79 per cent are minerals and in Chile 78 per cent. Venezuela has 90 per cent of its exports in oil, Colombia 61 per cent in coffee and 35 per cent in oil, gold and platinum, Cuba 80 per cent in sugar and derived products, Peru 50 per cent in copper and oil.¹

2) Machinery production in the four largest Latin American countries is unimportant. In Brazil, according to the latest statistics for the year 1940, the manufacture of machinery occupies 27,069, or 3.3 per cent of the total number of employed workers.

After the war, Argentina has 1.3 per cent of its workers engaged in the production of machinery of secondary importance, that is 11,000 workers out of 800,000.

Mexico in 1940 had far less than 1 per cent of its total industrial production (including extractive production) dedicated to machinery production.

Chile, like Mexico, does not have a special item in its statistics dedicated to the production of machinery but if we calculate 15 per cent of the production of metal products (the main metal workshops and the main steel factories but no other metallurgical establishments) it gives us approximately 1 per cent of all personnel engaged in the production of machinery.²

Manufacturing in Latin America has been limited mainly to the production of consumer goods as noted by the United States Tariff Commission in a study on Latin America. It is necessary to add there are important industrial branches not dedicated to consumer goods but raw materials but they are always for export.

Brazil in 1942-had 28.2 per cent of the workers engaged in the production of textiles and 16.6 per cent engaged in food production, making a total of 44.8 per cent.³

In the Argentine Republic, the two main industrial branches are the same as in Brazil and makeup 35 per cent of the employed workers, with construction and metalworkers 60 per cent.⁴

In Mexico, in 1940, four industrial branches totalled 70 per cent of all employed workers, two branches worked for export, mines and metallurgical plants (41,310 and 18,298 workers respectively) and two branches for domestic consumption, textiles and food products (97,537 and 60,804 workers respectively).⁵

Chile is in the same situation, it has 80,000 workers in the mining and metallurgical companies that work for export and 40,000 workers in the textile and food companies. As in the other countries already considered, these are the four most important items and represent 60 per cent of all the workers who work in the Chilean industry.

3) The domestic market of Latin American countries is based mainly on the agrarian class, which is the majority of the determining one. The world market, by opening regions to the production of special merchandise, works on the domestic market, enlarging it and sometimes creating it. The link between the world market and the domestic market is therefore completely close in those countries that mainly produce agricultural products,

The Paulista region in Brazil and the Buenos Aires region in the Argentine Republic are two examples. The first one with 1/6 of the extension of the whole of Brazil, produces 85 per cent of the agricultural production of the whole country and they have 74 per cent of all railways, 67 per cent

1 US Tariff Commission, "Latin American Foreign Trade".

2 Statistics Census and Brazilian Statistical Yearbooks, years 1939-40-41-46. Report of the Central Bank of Argentina. Chilean Industrial Statistics. "Mexican Manufacturing Statistics".

3 Statistical Yearbook 1939-40-45-46. Regarding the total value "Panamerican Commercial" gives the following relationships: 39 per cent food and 19.8 per cent textile. From 1940 to 1942 there was a significant increase in the two branches: from 195,702 to 238,728 workers the first, from 107,685 to 140,332 the second. As we can see, the war fundamentally accelerated the growth of the typical branches of the backward countries.

4 Industrial Statistics year 1941.

5 These data are not taken from the original, for this reason it is necessary to recognize that there is a contradiction with the General Mexican census of 1940, since this in the item "Mines, Petroleum, and Natural Gas" records 106,706 people working. However, if we discount the employees and accurately separate the items, it seems to us that the figure quoted in the Thesis is the right one.

of their roads, 87 per cent of their vehicles, 90 per cent of its electrical energy, and 89 per cent of its factories. The second, if we compute the Federal Capital that is within its territory, with 40 per cent of the agricultural production of the entire country, has 60 per cent of all production and 40 per cent of the population.

4) The inflow of foreign capital into Latin America has been constant from 1913 to 1929. The capital of the USA and England invested in Latin America increased between those dates from US\$ 6.225 billion to US\$ 11.476 billion. During the war, the US placed several million dollars. To this, we must add the capitalised surplus-value. Later statistics are partial and contradictory but it can be attested that the penetration of industries accelerated from 1930 and 1939.

5) As we see, the Latin American countries are countries with low productive development, which do not produce machinery on a significant scale, that are divided by the world market into specific producers of certain agricultural or mining products, that financial capital has invested and invests astronomical quantities, and that capitalist production develops. This low level of the productive forces carries as a counterbalance the decisive importance of the production and agrarian population of the Latin American countries.

c) Agricultural production

1) Capitalist private property limits Latin American production to raw materials, agricultural and consumer products, leaving them at a low level of productive force but at the same time, it is a true scourge for its development.

Rational and concentrated production needs to have complete freedom to use the land. Private land ownership by landowners and small farmers prevents the development of Latin American agricultural production. Thus, the disproportion between the development of industrial and agrarian production also manifests itself in the backward Latin American countries. We have that while the industry has increased by 100 per cent since the war of 1914 to date in Latin America wheat had an average of 8.7 hundredweights for the years 1921-1930 and 8.1 for the year 1940, compared to corn which increased on the same dates by 3 per cent only.⁶

2) The landowners, holders of agricultural income, are enemies of the technical progress of agriculture, which does not benefit them at all since income is based on the monopoly of the value added by labour and not on the relationship with the capital used.

Individual and family farms (in Argentina 1,200,000 agricultural workers are family members of working producers and in Chile, there are 107,901 tenants, with 106,731 family members, according to an Argentine-Chilean agrarian census) are common in Latin America and this is reflected in the atomised and poorly rationalised method of work. In Argentina, which is, in relation, the country with the highest capitalist development, of 700,000 ploughs, approximately half are ploughshare type and only 5,000 for tractors.

In Brazil, according to the 1940 General Census, of 1,904,589 farms, 433,914 have agricultural machinery and equipment; of the ploughs, over 60 per cent are ploughshare type.

In Chile, of 86,316 farms that use ploughs, only 6,324 have wheeled ploughs (Chilean Agricultural Census 1935-36). In Mexico, the backwardness reaches such a degree that 70 or 80 of the population lives largely or entirely outside the commercial framework typified in the cities.⁷

Along with these small productions working with a technical deficiency, which are the vast majority, we find model capitalist farms such as the Argentine *cabañas* [sheep breeding farms] or the American fruit plantations in Central America and Colombia.

⁶ Institut Agraire International. "Statistique Mondiale 1939", statistical bulletins from the United Nations and the League of Nations.

⁷ Argentine Agrarian Census, Year 1937, Chilean General Census 1930, and Agrarian Census 1936. Brazilian Statistics. "An American economist comments regarding Chile that traditional systems and tools, such as threshing with horsemen and the use of the ox cart and the plough pulled by the same animals, continue to predominate."

d) Latin American industry, their combined development

1) The development of Latin American industrial production, its slowness, its limitation, is the clearest proof of the inability of the capitalist regime to significantly raise the level of production of backward countries according to the needs of modern life. During the war, with completely favourable conditions, the Latin American countries have increased their industry from 20 to 30 per cent

We have already pointed out how the base of Latin American industrial development is the semi-elaboration or elaboration of raw materials, cereals, and meats for export and consumer products for the domestic market. These are the limits that the capitalist world, controlled by imperialism, places on the economic development of backward countries.

The domestic market closely depends on the world market. Thus, the biggest crises in the world market have helped the emergence of small companies; in the same way that the distances to the metropolises have allowed these small companies to survive and develop as the domestic market developed. The world market, therefore, works in two ways: by requiring products from the backward country it creates and expands the domestic market and therefore small businesses; in its crises (including the two great wars), by closing or narrowing trade or shipping manufactured products from the metropolises, it brings up a multitude of small companies for the most urgent needs and enlarges those that already exist.

2) This is how in Latin America there are countless small industrial and craft companies; so many that they exceed the number of industrial workers as we will show in the chapter on social classes.

The small industrial companies are numerous, having increased during the war. In Argentina, the proportion of workers per company decreased from 14 to 10 from 1941 to 1948. In Brazil in 1938, only 29 per cent of industrial companies employed over 12 workers and in Argentina 84.8 per cent of establishments have up to 10 workers and 22.7 per cent have no workers, that is: they are small factories or manufactures worked by families.

3) The trend of concentration and centralisation of all these small capitalist companies is not violently driven by the assimilation of technology and foreign capital, thus, as opposed to the atomisation and backwardness, we find a great concentration and rationalisation of work at the other pole,

In Argentina, 0.6 per cent of all establishments occupy 32.7 per cent of the workers. In Brazil, 7 per cent of the establishments occupy 50 per cent of the industrial workers, an average of 75 workers per establishment, and in São Paulo, establishments with over 1,000 workers represent 1.1 per cent of all establishments.

e) Foreign financial capital and its influence on Latin American economic development, especially on its industry

1) In general terms, the foreign capital invested in Latin America has followed the line of trade and economic development of the countries. Thus, the major areas of capital investment by an imperialist country are generally in direct relationship with the commercial relations of that country or area with the metropolis.

As US trade progresses in Latin America, it expands its investments from the Caribbean region to all other South American countries. In 1913, Latin America bought from the USA 25 per cent of the total of its purchases; in 1918, 53 per cent; in 1929, 39 per cent and in 1938, 35 per cent. The USA has invested in Latin America US\$ 1.242 billion in 1913, US\$ 5.587 billion in 1929, and US\$ 4.052 billion in 1939. On the other hand, the USA, which almost monopolises trade in the Caribbean region, also monopolises its investments in Latin America.⁸

⁸ Between Senator Butler and the Government of the United States, a Parliamentary question arose in 1942 about Yankee capital investments. The first claimed that there were several billions of dollars invested since the war. The

The USA has in Latin America half of its immediate direct investments, which shows its dominance over our continent. This is how Wall Street loans are not distributed according to the different commercial zones of the USA.

Argentina, with close trade relations with Europe, has been and is the bulwark of European investments. As the US has been evicting European countries from the Argentine trade, it has moved them away from the place they occupied in the investments. In 1929, almost half of the foreign investments in Latin America were in Argentina.

Loan investments are not closely linked to trade as direct investments are. Rather than an instrument of direct domination and exploitation, loan investments are a means of getting concessions and an aid for the commercial or financial penetration of the United States.

The periods and types of investments accompany the process of the Latin American economies.

Before 1913 and especially at the end of the last century, when it was a question of opening Latin American countries to the world market, foreign capital built railways and, to get commercial concessions, gave loans to governments. Since the beginning of this century, and in an accelerated way after the next war, foreign investments have been placed in the direct exploitations that interest foreign capitalism and in the companies of products for internal consumption, the latter when the domestic market has achieved some importance. This is how imperialist control of the industry is directly related to the importance the country is achieving and not the other way around.

The nature of the periods differentiates the two most important investor imperialisms. In 1939, England, the oldest, had 72 per cent of its investments in official securities and railways. On the same date, the US had 66 per cent of their direct investments in Latin America engaged in mining, oil, agricultural and industrial exploitations.

2) The US Department of Commerce, in a study dedicated to Argentina, lets this confession slip out, which should be generalised to all of Latin America, "Argentina is an extraordinary example of the difficulty of distinguishing between domestic and foreign companies and especially among those referring to the industry." Indeed, the bond of foreign financial capital has been and is so intimate with the largest industrial companies that it is difficult to find in Latin America a large industrial company that is not foreign or does not have a participation of the same type.

Imperialist control over the main industrial companies is a conclusive fact in the two most important countries in Latin America.

Brazil, of its two most important branches —textiles and food— has only four major rayon factories, two of which are foreign subsidiaries, we do not know whether the Matarazzo factory continues to keep the close relations it once had with English banks, and we do not know the affiliation of the fourth. Of the other textile companies, one of the most important belongs to the English consortium that dominates the most important textile company in Argentina. From the food industry, we can say the main mills belong to English companies or to the trust that also dominates Argentina and is under Belgian dependency.

Of the six most important meat-packing plants, three are Yankees, two English and the sixth belongs to Matarazzo. Fifty-nine per cent of blast furnace production is done by a Belgian company, Belgo Mineira, and the company under construction in Volta Redonda, the Companhia Siderurgica Nacional (National Steel Company) is dominated by the Yankees, as is the Fabrica Nacional de Motores (automobile engines manufacturers).⁹

In Argentina, as in Brazil, the most important branch is food production. Industrial companies are important in Argentina, especially meat-packing plants, which account for 5 per cent of the total number of industrial workers in the country and are all foreign-owned. In the sugar industry, the two most important mills belong to English and Belgian capitals. The Argentine beer trust belongs to the French company Brasserie Argentine Quilmes. In the textile industry, the five largest companies

Government maintained that they were only 300,000,000. The difference is possibly because Senator Butler computed private investments and the Government did not.

⁹ The case of this company is interesting since it shows how imperialist capital industrialises Latin American countries.

belong to or are closely linked to foreign capital. The industrial company that has bigger annual profits and more capital is CADE that belongs to SOFINA. Of the five most important metallurgical companies, four are direct subsidiaries of foreign capital, the CATITA, SOFINA, the Austrian-German government-controlled IMPA trust, TAMET of Belgian capital, ARMCO a subsidiary of the American Rolling Mill Co. The other, the “independent” SIAM Di Tella is closely linked to Westinghouse as of 1941. If we summarise, we find that over 70 per cent of Argentine industrial capital is foreign.

3) It is a serious mistake to believe the war has helped to make the large industrial companies independent of foreign capital.

During the war, especially in the three most industrialised countries of Latin America, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, two common phenomena were observed: the inflow of huge amounts of foreign capital and the capitalisation of the profits of foreign companies. Consulting specialised magazines clears up the picture.

“Brazil was the country that received the most European capital during the war.”

Argentina. *The Review of the River Plate*, January and September 1941, mentions the decisive importance of incoming European capital that is transforming the country’s economy. Report of the Ministry of Finance for the year 1941-1942 on the unexpected inflow of European capital that removed the danger of a brutal crisis and made it unnecessary to resort to loans from the Export-Import Bank.

“In addition, the investment capital increased rapidly. Those funds originated partly within Argentina’s own manufacturing and livestock industry and partly in Europe, capitals seeking refuge and investment opportunities in Argentina itself.” Shorthand interview to [illegible], Sofina’s representative in Argentina, where he reports that the earnings of [illegible] are remitted and centralised, forming four financial companies to take in the production.

Mexico. *Revista Panamericana Comercial* [Panamerican Commercial Magazine], “National economy of Mexico”, a magazine of Banco de Mexico. “The industrialisation process continued advancing with foundations of Mexican and mixed capital.” “The retention in the country of most of the foreign profits that in other years were remitted abroad... and amounts of funds that have entered the republic for investment purposes also influenced the balance of payments.”

The monetary reserve registered a further increase in 1945, reflecting the same phenomenon that took place in the war years, retention of part of the interest and dividends that were normally remitted abroad and that in many cases have been reinvested, and capital inflows attracted due to the high-interest rates in the local market, etc., etc.”

f) Latin America, an appendix to the USA

1) We have already pointed out the brutal rise of Yankee penetration in Latin America from the end of the last war to 1929. From then on, the protectionism initiated by England bears some small fruit and the United States is forced to withdraw commercially and financially from some countries, especially Argentina.

During the war, the previous phenomenon has been repeated. The USA has been drastically evicting its British rival from almost all of Latin America. The US Export-Import Bank has played a fundamentally important role; there is almost no company of importance started during the war that this Bank has not financed. The USA wants to use Latin America as a producer of raw materials and consumer goods, which Yankee imperialism needs. However, it encountered the problem that agricultural products, especially from Argentina and Uruguay, are not assimilated to the Yankee market; from there arises a great antagonism between the Argentine, Uruguayan, and southern Brazilian landowners with Yankee imperialism.

America tries to obviate this drawback for its benefit, becoming the wholesale merchant of these products. Its efforts to focus agricultural products on a World or Pan-American body have this meaning. On the other hand, during the war, as we have already pointed out, enormous amounts

of European capital have entered Brazil and Argentina which, added to what already exists, form a strong block for the Yankees.

2) The servility of national governments and exploiting classes in the face of Yankee imperialism is innate but does not prevent friction, which is inevitable. Certain sectors of landowners and industrialists have problems with this imperialism regarding the placement of goods, the former, and competition in the domestic market, the latter. This is reflected in the small matters and diplomatic discussions that arose at the Latin American Conference. However, the case of the Argentine opposition is a special one. Argentina has had serious friction with Yankee imperialism not since the new Peronist government arrived but for decades, since the very emergence of the Pan American Union, it is so because in Argentina all the factors are given to resist the pressure of the Yankee imperialism better than in any other Latin American country; of pendency of the European market and direct influence of English imperialism. Despite everything, Argentina has been forced to give in on many occasions, and the same dependency on England will force it to give way to the rival imperialism.

g) The proletariat and mass movements in the post-war period

In general, in Latin America, the war has not caused a violent revolutionary rise. This was because of several reasons. The first, the inexistence in this post-war for Latin America of a deep economic crisis. The second, the lack of a decisive victory for the proletariat in Europe, a victory that would surely have caused a revolutionary crisis in the main countries of Latin America, as a consequence of the rapid ideological assimilation of the proletariat.

The Octoberist and GCIist¹⁰ criterion that starting from a just premise —the post-war period opens the epoch of the deepest revolutionary crisis in history— concludes that this revolutionary crisis occurs in all countries and regions of the world, it is completely false.

This mechanistic criterion must be violently rejected because it can lead to terrifying defeats. The general characterisation of the epoch does not nullify the contradictions and precise analysis of the periods and countries. The general characterisation that the victory of Hitler consolidated the world bourgeoisie and imperialism is still fair despite the offensive of the Spanish proletariat and the Spanish Revolution.

For the main Latin American countries, the decade 1930-1940 meant a violent revolutionary rise, a product of the world crisis of capitalism and of the dead-end in which these countries and their working classes found themselves.

The overcoming by halves of the world crisis and the war afterwards allowed the Latin American governments and the exploiting classes to go on the offensive and establish more or less stable regimes.

The date of the revolutionary crisis or the extreme antagonism of the classes varies from Latin American country to country, as does the liquidation of this crisis. Brazil precedes all other countries. In 1930 a revolutionary stage was opened and in 1937 it closed with the *Estado Novo*.¹¹ In Mexico and Chile, the revolutionary crisis was more lasting and extensive as a result of the permanent economic crisis in these countries and the agrarian problem in Mexico. In Argentina, the revolutionary rise did not appear along with the crisis but later, as industrial production grew. The war liquidates this general revolutionary rise in Latin America.

The post-war period brings with it a process of not only economic but also political rearrangement in all Latin American countries. The proletariat plays an important role in this

¹⁰ The **October** group was led by Jorge Abelardo Ramos (1921-1994). Historian and politician, who had some connection with Trotskyism in the 1940s, as part of his conception focused on the tasks of national liberation. It supported Peronism from its emergence. In 1989, Menem named him ambassador to Mexico. The **Fourth International Group (GCI)**, was headed by J. Posadas, who responded unconditionally to the guidance of Pablo and Mandel, who ran the Fourth International and from whose ranks he left in the 1960s. [Editor]

¹¹ *Estado Novo* (New State): The period of 1937-1945 during the presidency of Getulio Vargas in Brazil, of bourgeois nationalist and dictatorial features. [Editor]

process of rearrangement. On the one hand, looking for economic improvements to compensate for general inflation; on the other hand, politically supporting some bourgeois sectors against others. In the post-war period, the action of the Latin American proletariat has not left the framework of the bourgeois political struggle. There was no revolutionary crisis: an antagonism between a country and imperialism (Cardenas type) or a serious political mobilisation of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie.

This does not mean that the proletariat is not gaining a colossal experience and that, under the apparent tranquillity, enormous revolutionary possibilities are not accumulating. The best cadres of the working class assimilate the experiences and tend to draw conclusions from them. The conditions are excellent for our work of penetration within the proletariat, provided we are consistent and do not become discouraged.

Within the economic field, the situation is similar. The privileged situation of Latin America as a product of the war and post-war periods will inevitably pass and, as in 1929, Latin American countries will be among the most affected by the world crisis. The possibilities for a crisis, with no way out through bourgeois routes, are today stronger than ever.

The economic and revolutionary crisis exists in Latin America not as a reality but as an immediate, short-term possibility. In this sense, this situation can be compared to that of 1912-1914 in Russia, that is, as a pre-revolutionary situation.

An exception to this case is Bolivia. Precisely this exception is a confirmation to our Thesis. The Bolivian revolutionary crisis is a product of the dead-end crisis of Bolivia's post-war mining.

Second Part

The Latin American social classes

a) The landowners

1) It is the ruling class and the strongest, except for imperialism, in the exploiters' sector. The monopoly it exercises over the land is almost absolute. In Chile, according to the 1936 Census, 52.4 per cent of the surveyed lands belong to 0.3 per cent of the registered owners. In Argentina, in the Province of Buenos Aires, 4,663,315 hectares belong to 50 families.

The landowner's agricultural income has two fundamental pillars, the work of the farmer and the world market.

2) Their dependence on the world market is decisive.

Their relations with imperialism emerge around the world market. As long as the world market absorbs the agricultural products that allow them to pocket agricultural income, the landowners will be the best agents and partners of imperialism. Something else happens with the crisis, the world market closes then for agricultural products, as happened after the crisis of 1929. So the landowners have more or less violent friction with imperialism and demand compliance with two measures: fiscal protectionism to charge the rescue of agricultural income on imperialist manufacturing and the workers and preferential treatment for comprador imperialism, in any case, protectionism. This is how the so-called industrial protectionism began in Latin America after the great crisis of 1929 and as a reaction of the landowners. Protectionism had two goals: to charge on the working people part of the losses or the decline of agricultural income and facilitate the diversification of agricultural production by preventing the entry of agricultural or manufacturing products that can be made with national raw materials. That is why the friction between landowners and imperialism during the crisis is not accompanied by measures against foreign capital income but it rather facilitates it.

3) In Latin American countries there is no serious opposition between the interests of the strongest industrial sectors and the landowners.

This is for a very important reason, the capitalist landowners do not arise in Latin America to the beat of industrial production as in the countries of Western Europe but to the beat of the world market and, therefore, as a class, it is first on the local stage and many of them capitalise their incomes in industry or as capitalists in the countryside and later the reverse phenomenon takes place, many industrialists capitalise their profits on land.

b) The bourgeoisie, agent of imperialism

1) Trotsky has already pointed out that the social importance of the bourgeoisie of the semi-colonial or colonial countries marches according to the importance of industrialisation.

On the other hand, the highest and most important sectors of the national bourgeoisie have a close bond with foreign capital and this bond, as Trotsky also points out, grows closer day by day. Furthermore, it has an absolute dependence on foreign machinery. It is not necessary to highlight again the union of the strongest sectors of the bourgeoisie with the large landowners. In all the most advanced countries of Latin America, close links are established between foreign financial capital, landowners and national bourgeoisie, these sectors form trusts with each other, making up the monopolist and dominant sector.

It is necessary to emphasise there is no Latin American national bourgeoisie but 20 bourgeoisies, one for each country, with their specific and often contrary interests. This is a product of the atomisation of the Latin American market and causes the terrible weakness of the national bourgeoisies, even the strongest. This is a remarkable fact because some comrades compare the situation in certain Latin American countries with that of India or China where there is a single bourgeoisie that has an absolute economic and political weight which is vastly superior to the backward bourgeoisies of the small Latin American countries. As soon as the small industry develops a little in some Latin American country, the smallness of the domestic market forces these bourgeoisies to look for the markets of the nearby countries. That is the case of Argentina, Mexico and Brazil.

2) Capitalist law shows that the capitalists are brothers in front of the workers and enemies to the bitter end among themselves. This relationship is established between imperialism and the national bourgeoisie which is always fighting for greater participation in the surplus-value.

The salient features of this process are:

a) This conflict is exacerbated in times of crisis when imperialism wants to place the burden of the crisis on the national bourgeoisie and landowners.

b) The national bourgeoisie understands its dependence on imperialism, therefore its strongest sectors try to and do reach an agreement to the detriment of the weakest.

c) The national bourgeoisie as a whole understands its dependence on imperialism and its subordinate role. For this reason, its friction always has only one goal: to achieve a better deal, never the plain and simple eviction of imperialism. Therefore, it is their chief foreman, their agent. Because foreign capital always keeps controlling and taking most of the production and surplus-value, because the national bourgeoisie, if it has friction with one imperialism, seeks a deal or to depend on another imperialism, never to become independent since it knows the impossibility of this.

d) In good economic times, the friction between imperialism and the national bourgeoisie almost does not exist, in this, what Marx noted regarding competition between capitalists in good economic times is fulfilled.

3) We have already pointed out the numerical importance of artisans and small independent producers in Latin American economies. On the one hand, large companies and, on the other hand, crises and imperialism are continually displacing them. At the same time, protectionism and economic promotions make them re-emerge, as during the current war.

This sector is the one that needs a firm and determined protectionism the most. Its antagonism with imperialism is total and is sharpened in times of crisis. Its atomisation, its respect for private property, as a movement in itself, make it incoherent and without any possibility of success. Either it is used by the national bourgeoisie to crush the proletariat for a better deal with imperialism, or it has the other possibility of being led by the proletariat. The main thing is that, despite its inability to play an independent role, its weight is decisive for the revolutionary movement.

4) Numerically, the most important sector of the Latin American population is the small peasants. We must distinguish two sectors: those who work for the market and those who do not.

The latter are generally Indians who still preserve their customs since the market is generally accompanied by the entry of immigrants and the assimilation and miscegenation of the Indian.

c) The petty-bourgeoisie

1) We must leave aside the well-to-do petty-bourgeoisie, whose interests march in unison with the middle or lower bourgeoisie, to deal with the urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie, which makes up most of the working population of Latin America.

Eight years ago, the United States Tariff Commission defined Latin America: "The fundamental economy of Latin America is agricultural and in some parts pastoral. It is estimated that over two-thirds of the population is engaged in agricultural (including pastoralist) activities. In many of the Latin American countries, a large part of this agricultural population consists of independent families that are almost self-sufficient."

the analysis of the four most industrially developed countries corroborates this statement. Brazil "currently has 3/4 of its working population engaged in agriculture and livestock". Argentina is in a somewhat different situation: 1/6 of its working population is engaged in agricultural tasks. Being around 2,000,000 agricultural workers, against 800,000 industrial workers. In Mexico "approximately 76 per cent of the working population of the republic is engaged in agricultural activities." In Chile, 32.9 per cent of the working population is engaged in agriculture (Corporation for the Promotion of Production, Volume 1, 1940-45).

This is how in Latin America, because of the needs of the domestic market, there are many small industrial, manufacturing, and artisanal companies that give employment to the other large sector of the population, the urban petty-bourgeoisie. In Brazil, it is estimated there are around twice as many artisans as industrial workers. In Argentina, there are a little over one million artisans or an amount equal to or greater than the number of industrial workers. In Mexico, in 1930 there were 386,759 artisans as opposed to 305,402 workers dedicated to the industry. The first figure has all the appearances of being inaccurate since although the 1940 Census of Mexico does not include any item on artisan work, one item appears as having more workers than any, even in the agricultural work that follows it, it is "domestic work"; we presume that artisans belong to this category. In Chile, the same phenomenon, there are as many or more artisans than industrial workers, of 296,000 people engaged in manufacturing and trades in 1930 we know that in 1940 only 116,493 were engaged in manufacturing.

The first sector is totally sensitive to crises. The closing of the world market and the state policy of saving agricultural income, make it carry on its back all its weight. It is in the same situation as the petty-bourgeoisie but its atomisation aggravated by the distances. Just like the petty-bourgeoisie, it is either used by the national bourgeoisie for a better deal with imperialism or it is guided by the proletariat for the nationalisation without payment of the land, the only way to eliminate the exploitation that the landowners object them to.

d) The proletariat

1) The urban proletariat knows the combined exploitation of imperialism and the national bourgeoisie. On the other hand, because of the great concentration of the industry, it also knows modern technique and discipline.

This is the only class capable of fighting to the end against imperialism, the bourgeoisie and the national landowners. Its ultimate interest is against exploitation, with no possibilities of agreement or reformist paths; its liberation is the destruction of the capitalist regime. On the other hand, to achieve victory, Latin American workers need the support of all the exploited sectors of the population, mainly the majoritarian, namely, the small peasants and small artisans.

2) The workers linked to small manufacturing workshops, or small peasant family farms, will have a conception much closer to these than to the modern proletariat. They must, however, be the basis of the revolutionary movement in the countryside.

Third Part

a) The state and the traditional political parties

1) All Latin America rests on the following common bases: the modern emergence of the bourgeois state and the bourgeois classes: landowners, industrialists, workers and modern peasantry.

During their colonisation, some countries were based on the mercantile economy, working for the market of agrarian products, exploiting slaves, killing cattle or extracting minerals. Other countries settled on the natural economy of the indigenous people exploiting them in a semi-feudal way.

Merchants, landowners, farmers, miners, ranchers, imported bureaucracy; such are the dominant sectors of the Portuguese and Spanish colonies. Artisans, slaves, Indians and labourers, such are the working and exploited classes.

In the colony or countries like Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, which are based on semi-feudal exploitation in the countryside, a serious problem is presented to them, the agrarian one. It will be an inheritance for future states and governments.

The lack of a concentrated, centralised class is the primary characteristic of all Latin American countries before this century. There is a certain indisputable unity of the ruling classes, which is based on their relations with the world market. The unity achieved by all Latin American countries is achieved through their relations with the world market and is always based on the criteria of the ruling classes: feudal landowners or merchant capitalists. It is in this society and with these classes that the modern Latin American states arise, with all the bureaucracy and peculiarities of the European states but without the fundamental European classes: the industrial bourgeoisie, the middle class and the proletariat and without the struggles of these classes against feudalism. All the defects of the modern state were received without its virtues.

The same happened with Latin American political parties. They came to life when financial capital had taken over the country. As a consequence, the political life of Latin American countries was corrupted from the beginning. Added to this was a large sector of the population that had no occupation and that took politics as a means of participating in the national income.

The existence of financial capital and this declassed petty-bourgeois popular base allowed a bipartisan game in favour of imperialism. On the one hand, the “foreigner”, “cult” party of the buyers, importers and agents of financial capital dragging important sectors of the well-to-do or with possibilities of doing well petty-bourgeoisie. Along with this, the existence of a strong producer, exporter bourgeoisie gave rise to the “plebeian parties”, “anti-foreigner”, which relied on the broadest sectors of the petty-bourgeoisie and which attempted a timid defence of national production, especially of what was exported.

But the big national producers also depend on imperialism and financial capital; hence they always end up capitulating to them. On the other hand, the lack of concentration and homogeneity of this class leads their political movements to paralysis and disintegration.

There are judgments or opinions that to remain, it is not necessary to demonstrate them but to repeat them. This is the case with the supposed representation of the Argentine industrial bourgeoisie that the Radical Civic Union (UCR) would have or had. This assertion is not based on any fact, since the UCR when it ruled neither made any kind of industrial protectionism nor development of the industry. It was the conservative governments that started proper industrial protection. But the most curious thing is that the UCR arose when the true industrial bourgeoisie did not yet exist, that is, we have nothing left of the first statement.

b) The Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist character of governments

The relations between rival imperialisms, the national bourgeoisie and the landowners, the popular movements, and the modern bourgeois state with its vices necessarily give rise to governments of the Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist type in Latin American countries. The general characteristics of these governments must be noted.

In times of good economic situation, of development of production and easy placement of agricultural products, the relations between the exploiting classes take place without major friction, and this characteristic is reflected in the character of the government. This expresses the good relations between landowners and bourgeoisie and national landowners and dominant imperialism. Also at this time, and if the decline of the popular movement has reached its zenith, we see governments with many characteristics of the classic Bonapartist type.

In times of crisis and violent friction either between the landowners and imperialism or between the bourgeoisie and imperialism (no matter that during the great crisis of 1929 the friction was between the landowners and imperialism), governments reflect this situation and, without destroying imperialist exploitation, try to save the national exploiters, carrying out fiscal protectionism for imperialism to take in part the losses and carrying out protectionism in favour of purchasing imperialism. In other words, in times of crisis and friction, governments act in two ways: raising fiscal barriers to imperialist merchandise and protecting buyer imperialisms.

Protectionism is carried out and was carried out fundamentally in nations where America was not or ceased to be a major buyer, as a means of protecting the buying metropolises and taxing the loss of markets to imperialism.

2) In their intergovernmental relations with the imperialist countries, Latin American governments on many occasions represent the specific interests of an imperialist sector as opposed to the general interests of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. As it happened with the Brazilian, Uruguayan and Argentine governments that defended the interests of the meatpacking companies in the negotiations with the Labour government that reflected the interests of the English bourgeoisie. The same is true of the Bolivian government in the tin agreements, which defend the three dominant foreign companies. These diplomatic conflicts do not mean an opposition between a government opposed to foreign exploitation and imperialism; since both governments, in different ways, defend imperialist exploitation in these cases, that is, in a contradiction of imperialism itself.

3) The worldwide trend towards statisation or government control of unions is also manifested in Latin America. In itself, statisation means neither a pro- nor an anti-imperialist policy but the general trend of trustification and financial capital. But, like any political measure, it can be transformed into an economic lever, union statisation must be considered in each specific case according to the relations between the classes and between exploiters.

In times of good national situation between the landowners and imperialism, union control benefits the latter, which is the most powerful sector. On the contrary, in moments of friction, the national bourgeoisie and the displaced landowners play on union democracy and tend to paternalistic protection of the unions as a means of using that strength for a better deal with imperialism. In general

terms, union statisation benefits the aforementioned monopoly sectors and mainly imperialism that wants, above all things, to control the workers' movement

4) The same thing happens with nationalisations as with trade union statisation, it cannot be considered in itself as pro- or anti-imperialist; we need to consider it according to class relations. Throughout Latin America, the compensation for the railways, and especially the English railways, has been a magnificent business on the part of imperialism. They were all extremely old railways, without renovations for 40, 50 or 60 years, with some contracts ready to end, they were paid for much more than they are worth.

The same happens with the compensation of oil companies in Mexico. At the time they reflected the entire popular anti-imperialist rise; today they mean nothing more than a nationalisation that does not harm the dominant imperialism. Nationalisations with a good payment and mixed companies should be considered, in general, as manoeuvres that allow the monopoly sector of the economies of Latin American countries to control, through the state, the economy of the entire country.

Fourth part

a) The workers' movement

1) The recent emergence of the proletariat, the failures and degenerations of the Second and Third Internationals, the weakness of the first, the semi-artisanal character of many workers, the struggle of the petty-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie for democratic rights, all this has had as a consequence the non-existence until now of revolutionary workers' parties in Latin America. At the beginning of the century, the workers' movement in Latin America took on an anarchist and unionist form. Put another way, an individual and economic form.

Since its emergence, the Latin American workers' movement has suffered violent persecution. This reason, and also the rottenness of political life and the standard of living of the Latin American proletariat, has resulted in the narrow union framework of the workers' movement.

The groups of the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL have the historical obligation and duty to build the first revolutionary workers' parties in Latin America.

b) The national anti-imperialist movements, the anti-imperialist struggle and us

1) The revolutionary rise will give a huge boost to national movements, we need to contemplate them: the inexistence in some Latin American country of a strong industrial bourgeoisie that has an important antagonism with imperialism, in the same way that political "independence", has resulted in the absence of nationalist parties with a clear orientation and program, based on the interests of a strong and concentrated national bourgeoisie.

National movements have been the consequence of the permanent crisis of the Latin American petty-bourgeoisie and the peasantry and, as such, have originated movements led by the urban petty-bourgeoisie, mainly the students and also indigenous or peasant movements. These movements have gained greater or lesser importance in each country according to two processes: the importance of the workers' movement and the situation of the petty-bourgeoisie.

The character of the petty-bourgeoisie sets the tone for these movements. These movements have a reactionary ideology; they fight to make a great capitalist nation of Latin America or its countries. They are reactionary and utopian because they want to achieve, in this declining stage of capitalism, a whole period of progressive development of these countries under capitalism. On the other hand, they aspire to paralyse or prevent the consequences of the imperialist regime without destroying private property. The differentiation process also operates in the petty-bourgeois movements and its ruling layers are assimilated to the landowning, bourgeois or imperialist sectors.

Furthermore, these petty-bourgeois movements do not look at the proletariat with trust, they join with it to fight against imperialism, becoming at any moment a bulwark of reaction, putting all the blame on the proletariat. The absence of Marxist parties has facilitated their work.

2) The Trotskyist groups must carry out, based on their anti-imperialist program, concrete agreements with these movements on common objectives. At the same time, we must continue to denounce the national bourgeoisie as an agent of imperialism in the anti-imperialist movement for its reformist and of agreement, anti-popular and capitalist politics, and the reactionary hopes of the petty-bourgeoisie. We must take part in the first row in any popular anti-imperialist or democratic movement but clearly distinguishing and identifying our objectives and banners.

In other words, we participate in and carry out practical alliances to attract the working people to our ranks and solutions and we can only attract them when we have unmasked the reformist and reactionary ideology of the national bourgeoisie.

c) The application of the permanent revolution in Latin America

1) Trotsky, with foresight, pointed out that two tasks unified the Latin American peoples: the agrarian revolution and the national liberation from imperialism.

For most of Latin America's working population, the small agrarian producers, the only way to eliminate landowner exploitation is nationalisation without payment of the land. However; the nationalisation of the land affects both, the landowners and the national bourgeoisie and imperialism, the strongest and most important exploiter of the Latin American people.

On the other hand, the exploitation of the proletariat and the petty-bourgeoisie by the national bourgeoisie and imperialism can only be brought down by defeating imperialism, the strongest and most powerful enemy,

Only the proletariat, because of its concentration, its irreducible opposition to capitalist exploitation and therefore to imperialism, can lead and direct the revolution: against imperialism, the bourgeoisie and the national landowners.

Only the dictatorship of the proletariat —boldly carrying out the agrarian revolution and relying on the exploited masses, mainly the peasantry, in the fight against imperialism, without setting insurmountable barriers with socialist tasks— can open up the possibility of a broad development of the productive forces.

Now, the fight for the same fundamental objectives and against the same chief enemy unifies the fight of all the Latin American peoples, giving the possibility of the victory of each and all, in the fight for the Soviet Socialist United States of Latin America.

The struggle of the Latin American people against imperialism must have an ally: the proletariat of the imperialist metropolises, exploited by the same bourgeoisie. In other words, to be successful the fight against imperialism and for national liberation must be transformed into an international fight.

d) Two conceptions of revolution in Latin America: the opportunist and the permanent revolution

All the positions that appear before the Latin American revolution can be synthesised in two: the opportunist and the revolutionary.

Within opportunism, the socialist or pseudo-socialist (Democratic Action, APRA, etc.)¹, nationalist, and Stalinist currents operate. The opportunists' arguments can be summarised in the following positions.

1.- That Latin America or the country in question is exceptional, to which the fundamental solutions of the Russian Revolution cannot be applied.

2.- That the proletariat cannot lead the revolution against imperialism and the landowners; that the leadership will belong to the people and above all to the student youth and the "educated" sectors

¹ **Democratic Action (AD)**: Venezuelan social democratic party. **APRA** (American Revolutionary Popular Alliance): Peruvian social democratic party in its origins in the 1920s and 1930s. [Editor]

of society. The Stalinists speak of the “hegemony of the proletariat” in the democratic revolution but in all the movements they sponsored they delivered the leadership to simple agents of imperialism or its national agency, the bourgeoisie.

3.- That the proletariat does not have to adopt measures that go against the bourgeois property so as not to weaken the front of all classes against imperialism and the landlords.

4.- Within opportunism, there is also a current as dangerous, because of their thinking, as the one we have just mentioned. It is made up of those leftists who see only one antagonism in Latin America: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and who are unaware of the existence of imperialism.

Our revolutionary positions can also be synthesised in the following points:

1.- Although it is true that from region to region and from country [to country] there are profound differences, it is also true that all countries are intimately linked in the world economy controlled by imperialism, which therefore all countries are either imperialist countries or countries controlled by it. In all countries, the productive sectors of greater economic importance work based on capitalist relations of production.

2.- As a consequence of the above, it emerges that the two most important forces in all countries are imperialism —as the highest expression of capitalism— and the working class, as the most concentrated and technified sector of the workers. Hence, only the proletariat can lead the working masses against imperialism and the landowners with possibilities of success.

3.- The only way to achieve this —that is, to win in this struggle— is not by considering the industrial sectors or the high intellectuals of the country but by getting more and more enthusiastic support from the workers. There, the theory of permanent revolution is synthesised.

Let’s clear it up a bit. The revolution against imperialism and the landowners is strengthened if it responds to the most important needs of the workers, without taking into account at all the needs or interests of the big wigs of national politics or economy.

The revolution is not strengthened if it says: “We will not distribute the landowners’ land without payment because the landowners will turn against us. Let us try to achieve a fair means. Let’s buy the land the landowners don’t need by paying them as best as possible.”

The Theory of Permanent Revolution says just the opposite: Let’s give the land to the peasants without paying a single cent to the landowners, that from this moment on we will have hundreds of thousands of workers willing to die for the revolution since this means the parcel of land they cultivate. Losing the timid support or diplomatic agreement of some sectors of the landowners is nothing if we gain the ardent support of hundreds of thousands of workers.

In other words, the theory of the permanent revolution that holds that the revolution does not stop, nor can it be stopped, because it is led by the proletariat and has to satisfy the most felt needs of the workers, regardless of the small privileged national groups. This is the only way to get stronger day by day and not weaken.

e) The democratic problem

The capitalist world has entered the era of the curtailing of bourgeois democratic rights. Latin America has had no chance, just like the other colonial or semi-colonial peoples of the world, of experiencing a bourgeois-democratic stage. They were born to the modern world as this began its decline and have had to bear the yoke of the landlords, imperialism and the national bourgeoisie, who have made every effort to prevent the most common democratic rights from existing.

This is how most Latin American governments have been or are dictatorships or semi-dictatorships, which although sometimes covered in a democratic garment generally deny the most elementary democratic rights.

Trotskyist groups or parties must be the most dedicated fighters for bourgeois-democratic rights in Latin American countries.

It is important to point this out because some supposedly Trotskyist organisations have criticised defending the most essential democratic-bourgeois rights, such as freedom of association in Argentina and Bolivia. After all, it is fighting for the Yankees.

Although it is true that at any given moment any exploiting sector, including Yankee imperialism, can fight or vindicate democratic rights because it is convenient for them, as happened in Argentina, it is no less true that we defend democratic rights while continuing to attack the imperialist and national exploitation and while vindicating the revolutionary path and the class struggle as the only feasible path.

f) The indigenous problem

Some Latin American countries, mainly Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, retain important sectors of the indigenous population. This is because they still live locked up as self-sufficient producers who do not work for the market. Logically, they preserve their language and customs. Comrades have attached little programmatic importance to this problem. There is no doubt that the problem is closely linked to the exploitation of the Indians by the landowners. But apart from the problem of the fight against the landowner, there is the IMPORTANT PROBLEM OF THE OPPRESSED NATIONALITIES.

We must vindicate the right to national self-determination for indigenous people who preserve their language and customs.

g) The transitional program

Our most powerful programmatic lever at present is our transitional program. The economic and political problems that arise in the Latin American proletariat allow an easy agitation of the transitional slogans. The continuing high cost of living, the inevitable crisis will make transitional slogans even more useful as a form of mobilisation. However, we must stop on the most important problems, that is, that we see the concrete application of that program to the Latin American reality.

h) The defence of the USSR

The United States in complicity with the servile Latin American bourgeoisies and landowners have committed all our countries to the holy war against the USSR through the Act of Chapultepec² and other Latin American Conferences. Continental defence is not only that but one of the most powerful weapons of penetration in the United States domination.

We must denounce the treaty for what it is: as the means of domination and control of Latin America by the United States and as the use of the Latin American people as cannon fodder in favour of imperialism.

Trotskyist groups and parties in defence of the USSR and the conquests of the October Revolution must not make the same mistake as during the Imperialist War when they fought against the war through platonic declarations of the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war. Our defence of the USSR is the acceleration of the anti-imperialist struggle and the class struggle.

2 The Act of Chapultepec is a Pan American agreement signed in March 1945 in Mexico City. It imposed the position of the Monroe Doctrine, to use it in the Cold War, promoted by the conservative sectors of the United States and was completed with the creation of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR) in 1947 and the Organisation of American States (OAS) in 1948. (Editor)