



# Nahuel Moreno

## The Latin American governments and the revolutionary struggle

(Document for the 6th Congress  
of PRT-La Verdad)

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# Foreword

The 6th Congress of the PRT-La Verdad was held in September 1971, amid a great Latin American rise that had begun in 1968. Moreno located from the beginning of the document the change of situation in Bolivia where in August the Torres government had fallen and the blood-thirsty military dictatorship of General Hugo Banzer had been installed. In Peru, Velasco continued to rule and in Chile was the Popular Unity with the socialist Salvador Allende as president.

The congress discussed and approved the different definitions of class, strategies and tactics that Moreno presented on those governments, as well as the electoral tactic towards the Broad Front for the upcoming elections in Uruguay. Moreno takes up Trotsky's elaborations on the different characteristics of the popular front bourgeois governments in the imperialist and backward countries, Bonapartism *sui generis* and Kerenskism.

The document was published in *Revista de América* No 8/9, May–August 1972. In the same issue was published another of Moreno's documents, Lora renounces Trotskyism (available to download at [www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org)), arguing against the political course of the POR (Masas) towards the People's Assembly and the Anti-imperialist Revolutionary Front (FRA). And also, the FRA Manifesto of November 1971,

To learn more about Moreno's writings from these years, and in particular the Bolivian process, see *Argentina and Bolivia — the balance sheet* and *Letter to Gonzalez Moscoso (Bolivia)* in [www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org).

All notes are by the editor unless noted otherwise.

**The Editors**

March 2021

# The Latin American governments and the revolutionary struggle

We believe the reactionary victory in Bolivia<sup>1</sup> has not changed the sign of the stage opened with the Mexicanazo and the great Uruguayan mobilisations of 1968. Specifically, the greatest rise of the mass movement that our continent has known has not been crushed, nor diverted by imperialism and the national exploiters. The defeat in Bolivia falls within the ups and downs of this rise as a whole.

A simple glance at the Latin American map shows us that reserves and revolutionary potentialities of decisive weight have not yet joined the revolutionary fray: Brazil, Mexico and Central America remain absent and Argentina incorporates with some sluggishness. We can define the current revolutionary process as going from the periphery to the centre (from the least to the most important countries). It began in Uruguay, continued to a certain extent in Peru; it ignited with all intensity in Bolivia and extended to Chile and Argentina, mainly to the first. The lulls, the defeats of the mass movement have not meant — we do not believe that it can mean — the stabilisation of any of the regimes. On the contrary, we believe that instability and the rise will catch in the other Latin American countries, which will be reaching and surpassing the highest levels achieved by the mass struggle in other countries. Added to this is the global situation of the rise of the mass movements of the advanced countries, mainly the United States.

The current rise has two essential characteristics: the resurgence of bourgeois nationalism, the leading role of the working class and the urban struggles; these two characteristics are not always combined, they are not always linked in a joint process. The decisive thing is the role of the working class, which, with its mobilisations, has managed to cause semi-insurreccional or directly insurreccional situations (Uruguay, Argentina, Bolivia and Chile).

## The Latin American governments

Defining Latin American governments and regimes is not an idle concern but one of the most urgent revolutionary needs. What class character did the Torres<sup>2</sup> government have? Where does the

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1 It refers to the military coup against President Juan Jose Torres in August 1971 headed by General Hugo Banzer Suarez (1926–2002) who became a dictator until 1978.

2 **Juan Jose Torres** (1920–1976) was a Bolivian politician and military leader who served as President of Bolivia from 1970 to 1971 when he was ousted in a US-supported coup that resulted in the dictatorship of Hugo Banzer. He was murdered in 1976 in Buenos Aires, in the frame of the United States-backed campaign Operation Condor.

Lanusse<sup>3</sup> Government go to? What will happen to the future Uruguayan government? How to define the governments of Allende<sup>4</sup> and Velasco?<sup>5</sup>

If all the revolutionaries agree to define the Brazilian regime as semi-fascist, this agreement is no longer so true when it comes to defining its current stage and dynamics. The agreement on Brazil transforms into a total disagreement when we define the already aforementioned regimes.

The attempt to ignore the serious theoretical problem of defining the current Latin American regimes with ingenious journalistic phrases, such as, for instance, military reformism, does nothing but obscure the problem and moves us away from the Marxist, class analysis.

The pincers of Yankee colonisation on the one hand, and the workers' mobilisation, on the other, cause violent and spectacular changes in the character of the bourgeois regimes. Some are semi-fascist such as Brazil or directly reactionary on a foundation of bourgeois legality such as Uruguay. Others, bourgeois nationalists which tend to be transformed or are transformed into Bonapartist *sui generis*, according to Trotsky's teachings. In industrially backward countries, foreign capital plays a decisive role. Hence, the relative weakness of the national bourgeoisie regarding the national proletariat. This gives rise to special conditions of state power. The government swings between foreign and domestic capital, between the weak national bourgeoisie and the relatively powerful proletariat. This gives the government a Bonapartist *sui generis* character; a distinctive character. It rises, so to speak, above the classes. Actually, it can rule already by becoming an instrument of foreign capital and bolting the proletariat with the chains of a police dictatorship or by manoeuvring with the proletariat and even making it concessions and thus achieving the possibility of some independence from foreign capitalists. The current policy of the Mexican government is in the second stage; its greatest wins are the expropriations of the railways and the oil industries. These measures remain entirely within the domain of state capitalism. However, in a semi-colonial country, state capitalism is under the strong pressure of private foreign capital and its governments and cannot hold up without the active support of the workers. For this, it tries, without letting the real power escape from its hands, to place on the worker organisation a considerable part of the responsibility for the progress of production in the nationalised branches of the industry.

The spectacular rise of the mass movement originates situations of institutionalised or atomised dual power, which gives rise to another type of government and regime, the Kerenskist. These are typical of revolutionary situations when the workers' power is so strong that the government is suspended in a vacuum between the two powers. An exciting discussion has begun in our ranks about the character of the Velasco, Torres and Allende governments. The discussion revolved around the possibility of defining them as Bonapartist *sui generis* or pre *sui generis*. We believe it has been a theoretical mistake to consider only two possibilities, pre and directly Bonapartist *sui generis*, when the colossal rise of the mass movement and insurrectional and semi-insurrectional situations with the emergence of dual power can give rise to a third type of government, Kerenskism; an extremely unstable Bonapartism or semi Bonapartism between all the exploiters and the mass movement and not as Bonapartism *sui generis* between imperialism and the mass movement. The current revolutionary rise tends to transform Bonapartism *sui generis* into Kerenskist or reactionary Bonapartism.

3 **Alejandro Agustín Lanusse** (1918–1996), de facto president of Argentina from March 1971 to May 1973. Great architect of the so-called Great National Agreement. On 25 May 1973, he handed over the presidency to the Peronist candidate, Hector Campora.

4 **Salvador Allende** (1908–1973) was a Chilean doctor and socialist politician, who served as president of Chile with the Popular Unity from 3 November 1970 until his death. On 11 September 1973, the military moved to oust Allende in a *coup d'état* led by bloodthirsty General Augusto Pinochet and supported by the CIA. Later that day he committed suicide in La Moneda, the presidential palace.

5 **Juan Velasco Alvarado** (1910–1977) was a general who led and executed the *coup d'état* of October 1968 that overthrew the corrupt and ineffective Belaunde Terry government in Peru. In the first year of government, he took three measures: the expropriation of the Yankee oil company IPC, and two laws on fishing and agrarian reform, reflecting the sectors of the Peruvian bourgeoisie interested in developing the internal market.

We need these theoretical clarifications to define the three regimes we are considering. We believe that the Torres regime has Kerenskist elements, as opposed to Velasco's which, in its own way, has Bonapartist *sui generis* elements. Allende is halfway.

In Bolivia, there have been the three types of government that we have defined: reactionary to semi-fascist that of Barrientos,<sup>6</sup> tending to Bonapartist *sui generis* that of Ovando,<sup>7</sup> Kerenskist that of Torres.

## The Bolivian experience

Bolivia is the mirror in which we Latin American revolutionaries must look to draw useful conclusions for our countries. Each Latin American country is a potential Bolivia.

There were three decisive moments in the Bolivian situation: the fall of Ovando and the rise of Torres; the stage that goes until Banzer's coup and, finally, the triumphant coup of the latter. Each of those moments yields specific and transcendent teachings.

When Ovando fell, two facts of importance took place. The first was the division of the armed forces, against the guerrilla thesis of the monolithic, oligarchic and pro-imperialist character of them. This division of the armed forces reflected the division of the bourgeoisie itself or the shadow of the national bourgeoisie.

The second and fundamental fact was the transformation of the division of the armed forces into a semi-insurrection of the workers' movement and the urban masses that allowed Torres to take power, originating a situation of dual power. The comrades of González's POR have made a correct characterisation of the situation.<sup>8</sup> For two days, the possibility of taking the power was in the hands of the working masses, according to this report.

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6 **Rene Barrientos** (1919-1969) was a Bolivian military officer and politician who came to power with a *coup d'état* in November 1964 that overthrew the Paz Estenssoro government. Barrientos served as president of Bolivia twice non-consecutive from 1964 to 1966 and from 1966 to 1969. During his rule, left-wing opposition and the workers' movement were repressed, including a guerrilla group led by Che Guevara in 1967. He died in a mysterious helicopter accident and Ovando succeeded him.

7 **Alfredo Ovando** (1918-1982) was Commander of the Bolivian Air Forces and served as President of Bolivia twice nonconsecutively. First, from 1965 to 1966, as co-president with René Barrientos after the *coup d'état* which overthrew the government of Paz Estenssoro and then as de facto president from 1969 to 1970. He was followed by Juan Jose Torres.

8 "The political mistakes made arise from a false characterisation of the military crisis, from the misunderstanding of 'military reformism' and from a capitulating conception that ignored the taking of power by the workers and which in fact transfers this historic task to other sectors.

"The creation of the Political Command was initially a success but the presence in its bosom of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois tendencies diverted it towards reformist and not revolutionary criteria.

"When the Political Command had to be the revolutionary leadership of the mobilised masses, which would channel the revolutionary energy towards the independent workers' solution, it settled for the role of a sidekick that is satisfied with the crumbs of the feast. *At no time did they participate to weigh the strength of the masses to open the way to a workers' and popular government.* The indefinite general strike, the mobilisations of peasants and workers were decreed to favour one of the military sectors in conflict, to support a general against another general. The Political Command did not act as the leader of these masses to lead them to victory but as the subordinate negotiator of this popular force. Within the Political Command, a shameful spectacle was seen, it was not discussed there how to take advantage of the military crisis to advance the workers' and socialist outcome but how to distribute the perks, the positions, the ministries. The Political Command peaked at that time, as all the candidates and opportunists attended and deliberated *en masse*. When the possibility of seizing the ministerial positions failed, the Political Command lost popularity.

"Some exhibitors at this forum have said the Political Command was the scene of a clash between those who wanted to take advantage of the situation to bite the fiscal budget and those who advocated a line independent from government. On this scheme, they concluded the Command acted well by curbing the voracious appetite of the former.

"This analysis seems simplistic to us. The content of the political struggle during the crisis is downgraded. But it serves to show that the Command lacked who would fight for a revolutionary solution. The most progressive of the Command did not exceed the limit of independence. But just talking about independence was insufficient, it was necessary to complete this proposal with the use of the power of the masses to define the situation in favour of the

Since Torres' rise to power, a situation opens up of total instability for the bourgeois regime, with a government suspended in a vacuum; with hints of dual power. A weak reorganisation of the workers' militias begins and the People's Assembly is created as a weak political superstructure of the power of the masses. In this sense, the definition of Soviet is correct, although all the leaderships played into the hands of the Torres government, without developing the People's Assembly as a true grassroots power. That's why we say hints.

The political course of the People's Assembly (with all its parties) and the Torres government prepares and facilitates Banzer's coup while the People's Assembly and its parties are dedicated to wasting time in Byzantine discussions without organising and mobilising the workers and especially the workers and students who were drafted. The bourgeois and imperialist reaction closed ranks and reorganised for its *coup d'état*. The Torres government showed its bourgeois character by demoralising the masses, by not solving any problems, mainly economic, unemployment, and by not giving them weapons.

The Banzer coup found the workers inside and outside the army without enthusiasm, direction and organisation to face it. Banzer succeeds because the workers do not mobilise massively. Only the worker and student vanguard face him. The strength of the workers' movement is so great that the coup was given by all the bourgeois sectors, united to Yankee imperialism, and well-off petty-bourgeois sectors. This bourgeois-imperialist united front, politically materialised in the MNR–Socialist Falange<sup>9</sup> front, is very precarious since as soon as the workers' danger that united them passes into the background, the friction will begin of imperialism and the different bourgeois sectors with each other, fundamentally the new mining bourgeoisie of the Altiplano<sup>10</sup> with the bourgeoisie of Santa Cruz, reflected respectively by the MNR and the Falange.

It is no coincidence that we leave the actions of the guerrilla groups. These, after years of preparation and failures of guerrilla attempts, were incapable of participating and leading an insurrectionary situation.

Power was in the streets when Ovando fell, as the POR comrade points out, but no revolutionary party, least of all the guerrilla groups, were able to understand and work to achieve a revolutionary workers solution that would bring the proletariat to power. The building of a Bolshevik party that would base its entire strategy on the mobilisation of the workers, mainly on the development of dual power, the workers' militias and the destruction of the bourgeois army from within to pass it on to the revolution, proved to us it was more necessary than ever. The crime of all the workers' parties, without exception, is to have wasted time in the People's Assembly, without concentrating their work on preparing the masses to crush the reactionary coup that was being publicly prepared and

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socialist revolution, it was necessary to organise the masses for the struggle, it was necessary to order the workers-peasant armament, it was necessary to give birth to a workers' military organism, etc.

“Far from this, the Political Command was reduced to writing the 20 points of the Minimum Bases. But this program of demands was not for the Command to carry out by directing the mobilised masses but rather to deliver the price that General Torres has to pay for popular support. But this negotiation is not in cash but on credit, with an indefinite term and without any guarantee. The COB Political Command did not know how to take advantage of the crisis of power that took place in October and in this sense, it is guilty that the strength of the workers has been wasted and that their victory has been squandered. It can be said that there were no conditions and that the relationship of forces was not sufficiently favourable for the revolution. The argument does not seem right to us.

*“In October the fight between the military chiefs paralysed the repressive force of the army, for two days there was a power vacuum, with the Government Palace and the ministries abandoned. At that time, it was necessary to act with the masses in the street, it was necessary to defeat the Mirandistas in action and struggle. Even in the supposed case of not taking power, the workers' movement and the revolution would have advanced much more, and the Torres government, if it emerged, would today be a prisoner of the masses.”* (Italics by Nahuel Moreno).

From the document of the POR (Combate), “The University and the COB Political Command”, *Revista de America* N° 6/7, p. 49. [Note by the author.]

9 The **Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario** (MNR) is a Bolivian political party founded on 7 June 1942, initially centre-left and currently centre-right.

The **Bolivian Socialist Falange** (FSB) is a far-right Bolivian political party established in 1937, drawing inspiration from fascism. It was the country's second-largest party between approximately 1954 and 1974.

10 **Altiplano**: a plateau region situated in the Andes of Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru.

without concentrating that propaganda on the army. Leaving aside that participation in the People's Assembly was correct but only to develop this policy of mobilisation of the masses.

## Chile: The Allende government

Allende's Popular Unity government is categorically a bourgeois government. It is a government tolerated by the Chilean bourgeoisie and which remains within the bourgeois legal structure (parliament, armed forces, bourgeois justice). This does not mean that it is not progress against the previous Chilean bourgeois governments. First of all, it is a bourgeois government that has been forced and reflects a broad democratic-anti-imperialist movement made up of the entire working class, important peasant sectors and sectors of the urban middle class. It is based on an agrarian revolution underway and a bourgeois anti-imperialist program. This gives it Bonapartist *sui generis* characteristics. The fact that it relies essentially on the political and trade union organisations of the working class gives it some Kerenskist characteristics, that is, of opposition and friction not only with imperialism and the landlords but with the bourgeoisie and the exploiters as a whole, with elements of dual power. These Kerenskist elements, that is, of dual power and latent civil war, have not yet hatched as a consequence of the weakness of the Chilean bourgeoisie, which tries to keep the process within bourgeois frameworks, aided by Allende and the Socialist and Communists parties which strive to achieve the same, to avoid the development of a true mobilisation of the workers' and mass movement that develops the few existing elements of dual power,

Logically, a bourgeois government, however progressive it may be when compared to other bourgeois governments, cannot have the least critical support and the least trust by the revolutionaries. This does not mean they do not critically support all the progressive measures that are adopted in their friction with imperialism and the landlords. Together with this policy of critical support for any progressive measure, we will raise the line of mobilising, through the organisation of workers' and popular militias, as well as the formation of committees of soldiers and non-commissioned officers, against any preparation and outbreak of a reactionary coup against the government of Allende. We are not indifferent to future attempts by the imperialist reaction to overturn the Allende government but, on the contrary, we are the most intransigent and revolutionary fighters.

Our policy has a clear axis: to patiently convince the working masses that only their organisation and mobilisation can guarantee the progress of the revolutionary process, which can only have one objective: to overthrow sooner or later the Allende government, committed to the bourgeois regime, to impose a truly democratic government, which cannot be other than the workers' and peasants' government product of the socialist revolution.

## Peru: the Velasco government

Although there are common Bonapartist *sui generis* elements between the Allende and Velasco governments, there is a profound difference. Allende is based on a colossal rise of the mass movement. This does not mean that under Velasquismo the working masses have not begun to mobilise. But this mobilisation remains molecular and not massive, with an aggravating factor — the agrarian revolution has not yet raised its head. Given the importance of the agrarian revolution in Peru, its current delay is a serious handicap.

The Velasco government reflects the interests of the modern national bourgeoisie, interested in developing the domestic market, such as the new neo-capitalist investments or the new branches of production, counteracting the interests of the traditional exporting and importing bourgeoisie. Regarding these traditional plutocratic interests, we can say that it is a government of the modern petty bourgeoisie, which begins to rise to power with Belaunde Terry.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> **Fernando Belaunde Terry** (1912–2002) was a Peruvian politician who in 1956 founded Accion Popular (AP, Popular Action) a bourgeois liberal and reformist political party. He twice served as President of Peru (1963–1968 and 1980–1985). Deposed by a military coup in 1968, he was re-elected in 1980 after twelve years of military rule.

There are powerful elements of Bonapartism *sui generis* in this government. Its agrarian reform, like all the economic legislation, clearly indicates the attempt to gain support from the mass movement, to capitalise the modern bourgeoisie and to resist the pressure of the old bourgeoisie and oligarchy, as well as imperialism.

We must not get confused by the deep contradictions of this or another bourgeois government. The Bonapartist *sui generis* characteristics, the friction with the oligarchy and imperialism, its attempts to lean on the mass movement do not mean that it does not permanently try to reach an agreement with the oligarchy and imperialism or that it does not repress the mass movement as soon as it leaves the established frameworks and the plans of the government itself. Any government with Bonapartist *sui generis* characteristics acts in the same way, striking blows to the right and left, permanently oscillating. It is not characterised by its straight-line but precisely by its Bonapartist character, its oscillations. So was Cardenas, Peron; Ibañez, etc., typical Bonapartist *sui generis* governments.

With much greater care than with the Allende government, our policy has to be similar: no trust in the bourgeois government, systematic denunciation of any preparation for a coup by the reactionary forces; critical support for any progressive measure against landowners or imperialism, systematically opposing the government or the bourgeoisie to apply it.

## The use of elections and the Uruguayan experience

Some Marxist comrades have defined the Uruguayan Broad Front as a popular front. We consider this definition is a serious theoretical concession to Stalinism. It is the Stalinism of the advanced countries, especially of Italy and France, which defines the Broad Front and the Chilean Popular Unity as popular fronts. It is a formal and superstructural definition, not a class one. It is a mistake similar to the one made by the Stalinists when defining England in 1938, when Trotsky's interview with Fossa,<sup>12</sup> as democratic and Brazil as semi-fascist, to hold that England was "progressive" in relation to Brazil. This apparently and formally correct definition, similar to that of the Social Democracy in the 1920s, which believed that France was progressive, civilized and Abd el-Krim<sup>13</sup> was feudal, retrograde, hides the class character that every definition must have. In this case, which side is imperialism on?

The same thing happens today with the definition of the Broad Front or the Chilean Popular Unity as a popular front. Stalinism tries to put an equal sign between the European or American popular front, under Roosevelt, and these movements. Fighting them both as equals is already making a serious theoretical concession to Stalinism, not clearly distinguishing what Lenin and Trotsky so carefully distinguished: the backward countries, from the imperialist countries; the political movements or parties of the backward countries, with those of the advanced countries.

This is how Trotsky defines it: "The People's Front" represents the coalition of the proletariat with the imperialist bourgeoisie, in the shape of the Radical Party and smaller tripe of the same sort" ("Committees of Action – Not People's Front", 26 November 1935, *Whither France?* New Park, London, 1974). "The Radicals are the democratic party of French imperialism — any other definition is a lie" ("France at the Turning Point", 26 March 1936, *Whither France?* op. cit.)

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12 **Mateo Fossa** (1896-1973) was an Argentine labour leader. Founder and leader since 1917, he was secretary-general of the Federation of Timber Workers. He joined the Communist Party of Argentina, breaking with it in 1927 and becoming a follower of Trotsky. In the last years of his life, he joined the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST).

13 Between 1921 and 1927 the war of the Rif — a region of Morocco, divided after the First World War between the French and Spanish imperialisms — took place. The Rifian resistance was led by **Abd el-Krim** (1882–1963), who was president of the short-lived, self-proclaimed Republic of the Rif between 1923 and 1926. His guerrilla tactics, which included the first-ever use of tunnelling as a technique of modern warfare, directly influenced Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong and Che Guevara. The combined strength of both imperialisms — which used mustard gas against the civilian population included — led to the surrender of Abd el-Krim in 1927.

In contrast to this, during or before the imperialist war, Trotsky defined Cardenas<sup>14</sup> or the Peruvian APRA<sup>15</sup> in a diametrically opposite way. “General Cardenas stands among those statesmen of his country who have been fulfilling work comparable to that of Washington, Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and General Grant. And, of course, it is not accidental that the British government, in this case, too, finds itself on the other side of the historic trench” (“Mexico and British Imperialism”, 5 June 1938, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1976, p. 359). The historical analogies are sufficient to perceive the profound difference that Trotsky discovered between the governments and movements, even if they were bourgeois, of the backward countries and those of the advanced countries. Not even dreaming would it have occurred to him to compare Herriot or Blum, the bigwigs of the French popular front with Marat, Robespierre or Danton. Trotsky continues: “Precisely because Mexico today still belongs to those backward nations which are only now impelled to fight for their independence, greater audacity of thought is engendered among its statesmen than is granted to the conservative dregs of a great past. We have witnessed similar phenomena in history more than once!” (ibid., p. 360). “The representatives of APRA at the September congress against war and fascism in Mexico have taken, so far as I can judge, a worthy and correct position together with the delegates from Puerto Rico. It remains only to hope that APRA does not fall prey to the Stalinists as this would paralyse the liberating struggle in Peru. I think that agreements with the Apristas for definite practical tasks are *possible and desirable* under the condition of full organisational independence” (“Anti-Imperialist Struggle Is Key to Liberation”, 23 September 1938, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-39)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1976, p. 34–35) (our emphasis).

This line of Trotsky of despising the popular front and at the same time defining in a completely different way the Cardenas government or APRA shows the clear distinction he makes between the nationalist, bourgeois-democratic movements and governments of the backward countries from the governments, movements and pro-imperialist parties of the advanced countries. Not because the Cardenas government united the bourgeoisie and the Mexican proletariat did, he define or despise it as he did the government of the French popular front. This does not mean he supported the Cardenas government or the Peruvian APRA, on the contrary, he demanded a clear political and organisational delimitation of classes since they were not governments, nor movements of the revolutionary working class, but from there to put them in the same bag with the popular front governments of the imperialist countries there was a considerable distance.

The Third International in Lenin’s time exhaustively stated the same. “The backwardness of the colonies finds expression in the diversity of the national revolutionary movements against imperialism, reflecting the different stages of transition from feudal and feudal-patriarchal conditions to capitalism. This diversity puts its stamp on the ideology of this movement” (*Theses on the Eastern Question*, Fourth Congress of the Communist International, [www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/thesis-on-eastern-question.htm](http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/thesis-on-eastern-question.htm)). In other words, for the Third International, the leadership and ideology of the nationalist movement was important but not decisive. The fundamental issue was to define them as a nationalist movement and from there arose a strategy and a tactic similar to the one held for the workers’ parties in the imperialist countries. Proletarian front in these; anti-imperialist front in the backward. “Well aware that the desire of the nation for political independence can be expressed, under different historical conditions, by the most diverse social forces, the Communist International supports every national revolutionary movement against imperialism. [...] It is equally necessary to compel the bourgeois national parties,

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14 **Lazaro Cardenas del Rio** (1895–1970) was a Mexican soldier and politician. He was a general in the Constitutionalist Army during the Mexican Revolution and a statesman who served as President of Mexico between 1934 and 1940. He is best known for the nationalisation of the oil industry in 1938 and the creation of Pemex, for the agrarian reform with the creation of collective holdings (ejidos), and for having granted political asylum to Spanish exiles during the Spanish civil war and to Leon Trotsky when Stalin sent him into exile.

15 **APRA** (American Revolutionary Popular Alliance) was a Peruvian bourgeois nationalist party in its origins in the 1920s and 1930s. It was founded by Raul Haya de la Torre. It has long since ceased to be nationalist and became pro-imperialist, with double discourse. Its best-known leader was Alan Garcia, president between 1996-2000 and between 2006-2011, who later went to prison for corruption and committed suicide in 2019.

as far as possible, to adopt this revolutionary agrarian programme as their own. [...] Any refusal of Communists in the colonies to take part in the struggle against imperialist tyranny, on the excuse of supposed 'defence' of independent class interests, is opportunism of the worst sort that can only discredit the proletarian revolution in the East. No less damaging is the attempt to remain aloof from the struggle for the immediate interests of the working class in order to pursue 'national unity' or 'civil peace' with the bourgeois democrats. [...] The Communist parties of the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the East, which are still at an embryonic stage, *must take part in every movement that provides them with access to the masses.* [...]

"The workers' movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries must *strive above all to achieve the role of an independent revolutionary force in the overall anti-imperialist front.* Only when its autonomous weight is acknowledged and its political independence is thus safeguarded is it permissible and necessary to conclude temporary agreements with bourgeois democracy" (ibid).

Our electoral tactics in Uruguay, as in Chile, as in general in the face of all the nationalist or democratic movements of our countries, should be adjusted to these general indications of our teachers, with precisions of fundamental importance caused by the objective situation of our countries and their history.

Some of these precisions are fundamental. The first, that the theses we have just quoted refer to the situation in countries where the workers' movement is incipient, just beginning to emerge, in opposition to our countries where in general the workers' movement has a very strong and big union or political organisational strength and independence. Contradictorily, this organisational independence is accompanied by the total subordination of the workers' organisations to different bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist currents (Peronism, *Torrismo*,<sup>16</sup> Broad Front in Uruguay, Popular Unity in Chile, etc.). This creates a contradictory situation. In the East, it was a matter of preventing the incipient workers' movement, which was just beginning to organise, from falling under the control of the bourgeois movements. Here, in Latin America, already solidly organised, it is a question of wrenching them out of the control and subordination to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois movements. The second, that our countries are politically independent, which is not an obstacle for them to have to fight for their independence, but this fight acquires a much more plastic, uneven, changing character, because of this political independence. As a consequence of this independence, it has been argued it is not licit to reach electoral agreements with nationalist or bourgeois-democratic movements. We believe it is a mere tactical problem, as long as the following principles are observed: to fight for the total political independence of the workers' movement, not to support under any circumstances the national bourgeois governments or Bonapartist *sui generis*.

Our comrades from Uruguay, saving the logical and inevitable errors of a very difficult electoral tactic and their lack of experience, have applied an extremely correct electoral tactic by agreeing with the Broad Front their participation in the elections.

First of all, our definition of the Broad Front is diametrically opposed to the Stalinist one which defines it as a popular front. For us, it is a democratic, bourgeois anti-imperialist movement, which drags the working class *en masse*, extremely progressive since it definitively breaks the bourgeois bipartisanship at the service of the imperialist colonisation of Uruguay. At the same time, it is a trap of the same bourgeoisie and imperialism to stop and divert the rise of the workers' and mass movements, with the complicity of the Communist Party and the leadership of the workers' central.

The electoral agreement is, first of all, an attempt to "take part in every movement that provides them with access to the masses." Second, this access is made to fight for the political independence of the workers' movement. Specifically, it is an electoral tactic at the service of those two strategic principles that the comrades have applied with all intelligence. The systematic denunciation by the comrades of the program and the bourgeois candidates will allow us, if the Broad Front wins the elections, to oppose the government, without committing ourselves politically to it. We believe a similar policy was the one that should have been carried out in Chile.

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16 **Torrismo**: Followers of Juan Jose Torres Gonzalez. See note on page 2.

We do not understand the brutal criticism of the electoral agreement in Uruguay with the silence in the face of the electoral campaign in Chile and Fidel's guerrillas in Cuba. Should we have agreed and participated in the Cuban guerrilla? What class difference did it have with the Uruguayan Broad Front? For us none; it was also a democratic movement controlled by the Cuban bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, according to Guevara's definition.

## Brazil and Mexico: giants with feet of clay

It is no coincidence that both Mexico and Brazil are the most stable countries on the continent. Just as Bolivia or Uruguay are among the most unstable. The economic situation is the ultimate explanation for both phenomena. They are, along with Venezuela, the countries with the greatest and most even economic development on the continent. This constant development in recent years has brought about unity between imperialism and the national bourgeoisie, the stability and solidity of the armed forces. There is an important difference, however, between the two countries. The semi-fascist Brazilian regime is the product of a colossal rise in the mass movement that the coup of Castelo Branco<sup>17</sup> crushed. The reactionary Mexican regime is the bourgeois degeneration of the great Mexican revolution. It is a classic semi-Bonapartism exercised by a party and not by a political dynasty.

Both one regime and the other will sooner or later have friction with imperialism over the distribution of the surplus-value. As soon as the economic situation worsens, the inevitable friction with Yankee imperialism will begin to undermine the solidity of the regime. This is an unavoidable law of every semi-colonial country. These contradictions among the exploiters will not be more than the accompaniment or the prior announcement of the new rise of the Brazilian or Mexican masses. Because stability and economic development have not solved any fundamental problem of the masses and the economies of these countries, these underlying contradictions are still latent, ready to explode in the first favourable condition.

The Brazilian regime is the one that shows obvious symptoms of instability. Against the solidity of the Castelo Branco regime, the Costa e Silva<sup>18</sup> and Garrastazu Medici<sup>19</sup> governments have started or tried a play more favourable to the interests of the national bourgeoisie, mainly industrial, which gives these governments a more unstable character for their friction with financial capital. This process towards instability has only just begun but there are already certain symptoms — the official and tolerated bourgeois opposition has begun to criticise the government.

The revolutionists of these countries must apply a variant of Trotsky's recommendations for the fascist countries in the *Transitional Program*. That is, their main activity must be propaganda, education and penetration in the workers' and students' movement to forge the revolutionary Marxist cadres and the revolutionary party. We say a variant precisely to avoid too close an analogy. In both countries there are certain possibilities of opportunities to participate in the mass movement, be it student or worker. Neither regime is overtly fascist. In any case, it will be necessary to patiently educate to wait for the onset of a crisis in both regimes, which may occur at any moment.

Once again: the revolutionary party is more indispensable than ever to lead the insurrectional or semi-insurrectional situations that will arise.

Revolutionary Marxists must carefully study the Bolivian experience. Against the guerrilla thesis that there would be no possibility of insurrection, we find ourselves, according to the expression of the POR (Gonzalez) comrade who reported officially at the University on behalf of his organisation,

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17 **Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco** (1897–1967) was a Brazilian military leader and politician. He served as the first President of the Brazilian military government after the 1964 military *coup d'état*.

18 **Artur da Costa e Silva** (1899–1969) was a Brazilian Army General and the second President of the Brazilian military government that came to power after the 1964 *coup d'état*. He held the post of Minister of War in the military government of President Castelo Branco.

19 **Emílio Garrastazu Medici** (1905–1985) was a Brazilian military leader and politician who was President of Brazil from 1969 to 1974. His authoritarian rule marked the apex of the Brazilian military government.

“In October the fight between the military chiefs paralysed the repressive force of the army, for two days there was a power vacuum, with the Government Palace and the ministries abandoned. At that time, it was necessary to act with the masses in the street, it was necessary to defeat the Mirandistas in action and struggle. Even in the supposed case of not taking power, the workers’ movement and the revolution would have advanced much more, and the Torres government, if it emerged, would today be a prisoner of the masses.”

We, orthodox Trotskyists, believe that the Bolivian experience, like the previous Dominican experience, like the experiences in Montevideo or Cordoba and Rosario in our country, are not the exceptions but the future for all Latin American countries and cities. In all of them there will be “Octobers with paralysis of the repressive force of the army, a vacuum of power and that time it will be necessary to act with the masses in the streets to defeat the Mirandistas in action and struggle.”

To the report of our Bolivian comrade, we need to add a decisive point which, in situations like the Bolivian one, we believe divides a Bolshevik policy from a left centrist one. The work on the armed forces to pass them, through their ranks, to the revolution. For this reason, the Bolivian comrade’s report, to be complete, should have added that “it was necessary to act with the masses in the streets to defeat not only the Mirandistas in action and struggle but all the bourgeois currents by making revolutionary propaganda on the Bolivian army to pass its soldiers and non-commissioned officers to the revolution.” Committees of soldiers and non-commissioned officers, a free career to the officer corps for non-commissioned officers and soldiers, propaganda from the trade union and popular organisations and the workers’ parties toward the soldiers was the key point of a revolutionary policy. Banzer’s victory is the consequence of the lack of this revolutionary policy on the part of all the workers’ parties of Bolivia.

Latin American Trotskyists and revolutionists will not lack many opportunities to carry out this policy. But for this policy, the culmination of a revolutionary, insurrectionary policy, which is simply revolutionary propaganda directed to the armies in a crisis of the Latin American bourgeoisies, a revolutionary Marxist party is necessary. Only a Marxist party, bonded to the workers’ and mass movement, endowed with a method and a leadership, will be able to understand when the supreme moment has arrived to concentrate its propaganda on the ranks of the bourgeois army to pass it on to the revolution.

Building this party is the great task of the Latin American Trotskyists. For this, they must understand the stage that the workers’ and mass movement of their countries is going through, the class character of their governments and adjust a transitional program that accelerates the mobilisation of the workers and strengthens the embryo of a revolutionary Marxist party because only the revolutionary rise will be able to achieve the crisis of the bourgeois army and its transformation into a revolutionary army.