



**Nahuel Moreno**

**The Revolutionary  
United Front**

Discussion on Colombia (1985–1986)  
Discussion on Mexico (1986)

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1986

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## Foreword to the 2020 edition

This book includes Nahuel Moreno's speeches at the meetings in Buenos Aires of the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the International Workers League – Fourth International (IWL–FI)<sup>1</sup> in the years 1985-1986. Moreno carefully prepared the main points of these meetings, so what we publish here should not be taken as an improvisation but as a deeply elaborated theoretical and political development.

Since the International Executive Committee was a permanent governance body of the IWL–FI, its agendas included several topics, some of a general nature and others dedicated to the cyclical analysis of the class struggle situation in different countries and to the elaboration of the response to the problems that arose in the daily life of IWL–FI and its sections. Certain issues, for example, the situation and politics in Bolivia from the beginning of the revolutionary rise that culminated in the great general strike of 1985 until the defeat of the latter and the reactionary situation that started from there, were discussed in successive meetings. The same happened with other issues, such as the discussion of the revolutionary united front in Colombia, which we present in this book.

This forces us to change the criteria we used in the three previous volumes of this Collection, in which we published Moreno's speeches at the 1985 congresses of IWL–FI and the Movement towards Socialism (MAS) of Argentina, in the party cadre's schools held in Venezuela in 1982 and in Argentina in 1984. When addressing the editing of the discussions in the International Executive Committee, we will keep, first of all, the thematic unity, that is, we will gather the speeches by Moreno and the written documents on the same subject of which he was the author or co-author, in the chronological order in which they took place.

The discussion about the application of the revolutionary united front tactic in Colombia in the years 1985–1986 had two facets, closely linked: the politics and the theory. The first one had to do with the policy the *Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores* of Colombia — PST (C), the section of IWL–FI in that country — should have in front of the organisation *A Luchar*. The theoretical aspect referred to the class and political definitions of the petty-bourgeois organisations and movements that temporarily face imperialism and/or the bourgeois governments and regimes of their countries with revolutionary methods, as well as what the Trotskyist policy should be against these currents and the governments they set up if they succeeded. They can be found in *Discussions in the IEC (April 1986)*, available for download in <http://www.nahuelmoreno.org/#2>.

In this book we opted to present the political question. The documents that made it up are:

1. The debate at the IEC meeting of IWL–FI in May 1985.
2. The debate at the IEC meeting of IWL–FI in September of the same year.
3. The debate at the IEC meeting of IWL–FI in April 1986.
4. The letter from Nahuel Moreno to Simon on 30 August 1986.

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1 Nahuel Moreno, after the failure in 1981 of the attempt at unity with the current of Pierre Lambert, founded the International Workers League – Fourth International (IWL–FI) in January 1982. After Moreno's death in January 1987, the IWL leadership gave wrong answers in the theoretical, political and methodological arenas, entering into crisis. In 1991–1992 it divided. Since 1994, the followers of Moreno in that organization keepers of the website [www.nahuelmoreno.com](http://www.nahuelmoreno.com) are grouped in the International Workers Unity – Fourth International (IWU–FI), [www.uit-ci.org](http://www.uit-ci.org).

5. The conversation between Nahuel Moreno and Alberto Frank on November of the same year, whose almost complete recording has been preserved.

6. The Open Letter of the International Secretariat of the IWL–FI to PST(C) about *A Luchar*, January 1987.

7. As an appendix, the discussion at the IEC meeting of April 1986 about the revolutionary united front in Mexico.

These speeches have been carefully transcribed but were not reviewed by the author, who died in January 1987. They were first published in Spanish on paper by Editorial Crux, in the book *The Revolutionary United Front, the discussion on Colombia (1985 -1986)*.

The pseudonym “Simon” corresponds to the leader of the Colombian PST, Kemel George. “Alberto Frank” is the Venezuelan leader Alberto Franceschi. Both subsequently broke with Trotskyism. Kemel George walked away shortly after these debates. He was a national senator for the Liberal Party, one of the country’s traditional bourgeois parties, replacing a well-known liberal leader of Barranquilla, during the presidency of Andres Pastrana. Then he resumed university lecturing in mathematics. In recent years he has been retired from political life. On the other hand, Franceschi continued in the Morenist current until shortly after its crisis and split in 1991–1992. Some time later, he reappeared in the political life of Venezuela as a member of the bourgeois Democratic Action party, which was part of the traditional and pro-imperialist right-wing bloc that was totally displaced by Chavismo, which Chavez called the “squalid”. For many years he has been living in the State of Florida in the United States, and has a program that is broadcast on Twitter against Maduro from the most pro-Yankee positions of the bourgeois right-wing opposition.

“Lucas” was the pseudonym of Daniel U. (who also used “Miguel Romero”), who subsequently abandoned revolutionary militancy and all political activity.

**The Editors**

March 2020

## Preface to the first Spanish edition (1994)

In the previous books of Nahuel Moreno's Unpublished Collection, we tried to solve the information gaps that the reader could have through editors' notes. On this occasion, we are forced to make this preface so the reader can place himself in some elements of Colombia's reality in 1985-1986, as well as in the different stages of the discussion on the application of the revolutionary united front tactic.

### The political situation

The revolutionary process in Colombia was essentially peasant in the past. Its highest expression was the civil war known as *La Violencia* [The Violence] (1948-1958). Upon completion, a pact between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party was established to alternately rule the country. These two bourgeois parties, although the pact has ceased to be valid, remain the fundamental political tools of the Colombian bourgeoisie.

On 14 September 1977, the National Civil Strike broke out in Colombia, which was a combination of a workers' general strike with elements of urban popular insurrection. This date marked the opening of a revolutionary situation and signalled a change in the class struggle: although combined with the traditional struggle in the countryside, the Colombian revolution became worker and urban.

However, from then until today the workers' movement, although it had periods of great struggles, failed to repeat the 1977 deeds because of the treacherous role of its political and union leaderships. At the same time, a permanent guerrilla action continued. On the one hand, the traditional guerrilla in the countryside, with some expressions that locally had a certain mass base, and others of *foquist* type. On the other hand, the urban guerrilla emerged.

By the time of this discussion (1985-1987), the bourgeois government had given itself the policy of negotiating a truce with the guerrillas, so it would abandon the armed struggle and integrate into bourgeois democracy. Some guerrilla organisations, including the strongest, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), had signed the truce; others, such as the National Liberation Army (ELN), were against it, and others, such as the 19th of April Movement (M-19), oscillated between the peace negotiations and following the guerrilla struggle, with actions such as the occupation of the Palace of Justice, which ended in a massacre of guerrillas and magistrates at the hands of the army.

Politically, the workers' and mass movement followed the two traditional bourgeois parties, and there was also an important sector whose backwardness led it to disinterest in politics, which manifested itself in high electoral abstentionism. In the union arena, the working class was divided into different centrals, which responded to Conservatives and Liberals and to the Communist Party (CP). Moreover, there was independent trade unionism, which grouped an important sector headed by a very combative vanguard, a large part of which was politically influenced by the various guerrilla organisations.

The *A Luchar* organisation emerged from the application of the revolutionary united front tactic, which resulted in an agreement between the *Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores* (PST (C)), some union currents politically influenced by the guerrilla organisations that were against the

truce and some smaller political groups. To place the debate that opened in this regard, we will review what this tactic was and the stages of the discussion.

## The Revolutionary United Front

The policy of trying to build revolutionary united fronts was proposed by Moreno almost from the very beginning of his international work, at the beginning of the Stalinist crisis, whose first manifestations were the rebellions of East Berlin and Hungary in the 1950s. His first formulation appears in the *Theses of Leeds*<sup>1</sup> Moreno argued that three processes of uneven rhythm would take place. The first, and fastest, would be the crisis of the counter-revolutionary apparatuses of the workers' movement. The second process, produced by the previous one but slower, would be the emergence of vanguard sectors that would move towards increasingly revolutionary positions (he called them "Trotskyist-like"). The third process, slower than the other two, since it would start from a situation of marginality, would be the strengthening of the Trotskyist parties and the Fourth International. Based on these forecasts, Moreno argued that the revolutionary leadership, the Fourth International, would not move towards mass influence cumulatively, by its own growth process, but by the fusion of the Trotskyists with these revolutionary currents. He quoted in this regard Trotsky's definition — apparently contradictory — that the Fourth International would become of masses when the Trotskyists were a minority within.

For Moreno, achieving this fusion must be the conscious policy of Trotskyism, consisting of proposing to the Trotskyist-like currents a program and organisational agreements (a front) for common revolutionary action in the class struggle. And, from there, making with these currents all the necessary political and programmatic discussions, move towards the joint constitution of revolutionary workers' parties. He called that policy "revolutionary united front".

We will not do the history of the experiences and details about this policy that range from its formulation to the discussion which is the subject of this book. Let us directly see how this policy was defined in the IWL–FI Manifesto, drafted by mandate of the First IWL–FI World Congress, March 1985, and published three months later:

The Fourth International will be built through the fusion of our current with organisations and groups that break with the treacherous and reformist leaderships and make up revolutionary fronts at national and international levels. The tactic of bringing revolutionaries together in every country where possible, building revolutionary fronts, is a very important tactic at this stage for the construction of the Fourth International of masses.

This policy has nothing to do with Mandelist revisionism. The revolutionary united front must be the unity of the revolutionary fighters, not of all those who fight under other banners, such as the Castroist or the Sandinista. In other words, a true revolutionary united front is one agreed upon on the basis of a clear revolutionary program. Without this clear program, there is a danger that such a front is not revolutionary, but a centrist organisation, that is not a step towards the construction of the revolutionary workers' party, but an almost insurmountable barrier to its construction.

The revolutionary united front is, therefore, a tactic, very important in this stage of crisis of the traditional leaderships of the mass movement, but nothing more than a tactic, which can and should be applied at some times and countries in the line of building the Fourth International. More than ever, the great task to be carried out in all countries is to develop and strengthen the Trotskyist organisation. Without it, it is most likely that revolutionary fronts will not be built in of them or that, even if they are built, they will rapidly degenerate into centrism and capitulatory opportunism.<sup>2</sup>

1 Writing of 1958, available for downloading from <http://www.nahuelmoreno.org/english.html#2>.

2 "Manifesto of the International Workers League–Fourth International", *Correo Internacional*, Year II, No 10, July 1985, p.42. In one of his speeches in this World Congress, this is how Moreno developed this definition:

"For us the revolutionary united front is not one more tactic, among other conjunctural ones, to construct revolutionary mass parties. For us, it is the privileged tactic at this stage, which we define as increasingly serious, more severe, and which combines with the crisis of counter-revolutionary apparatuses. We see an increasingly large revolutionary



## The debate on *A Luchar*

Said in a broad brush, two positions were faced in that debate. One, headed by Simon, one of the most important leaders of the PST (C), which argued *A Luchar* should become a revolutionary united front and the PST (C) dissolve within. The other, led by Moreno, which argued that *A Luchar* should develop as a revolutionary trade union current but not as a political front, given that in the other organisations that made it up, the guerrillas had political influence.<sup>3</sup> Along with Moreno, the leaderships of all the IWL–FI parties and the wing that ended up being absolutely majority of the PST (C) were aligned.

We will summarise briefly the stages of this political struggle.

- The *Open Letter of the International Secretariat of the IWL–FI to the PST (C)* (which we publish in this volume) shows the initial position of the international leadership and, as part of it, Moreno in the IWL–FI World Congress (March 1985):

At the World Congress in March 1985, we had discussed the possibility that *A Luchar* would quickly become a united revolutionary front or, in other words, that it would lay the groundwork for a revolutionary workers' party.<sup>4</sup>

However, already at the World Congress itself, Moreno warned such a front could not be made up based on minimum programmatic points, such as being against Contadora, its secret diplomacy and its agreements to curb and defeat the Central American revolution, being against delivering fighters to the police, etc.:

It scares me the belief that the revolutionary united front is only against Contadora, not at all. It must have a clearly revolutionary program, of socialist revolution. And it is a tactic, no more, within our principled and fundamental strategy of making revolutionary Marxist mass parties. It has that purpose. It is a tactic nowadays privileged because of the crisis of the apparatuses.<sup>5</sup>

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upsurge of the masses, with a crisis of counter-revolutionary apparatuses also increasingly large. Faced with this situation, which combines with our extreme weakness, we believe that the revolutionary united front is the privileged tactic because different groups will inevitably occur and currents of fighters who will put forward revolutionary positions will emerge.

“What do I mean by ‘revolutionary positions’? That their proposals against the bourgeois state and against all bourgeois politics will be categorical.

“We say that it is a privileged tactic because we do not see the slightest possibility that our parties alone will develop, develop, develop, and eventually lead the revolution. (...)

“Some comrades see this tactic similar to that of the unity of fighters, or weird names, [as] the ‘new vanguard of masses’ that Mandel was looking for. Mandel argued that we had to join the new vanguard of masses. What was the new vanguard of masses? It was the vanguard of 1968 that had become Maoist or Guevarist, that is, that had adopted a non-revolutionary program. For example, in Portugal, the new vanguard of masses supported a military lodge that was in government, a bourgeois government to the marrow, saying that it was a progressive government that could become like the one of Castro. They were not revolutionaries. It was a strong vanguard, of prestige, that fought, but that fought at the level of its factories, or of its regiments or even of the agrarian zones; but for a counter-revolutionary policy of unity with sectors of the bourgeoisie.

“We fought hard this position of Comrade Mandel, saying that a vanguard is revolutionary when it has a revolutionary program, that is [a program] for the destruction of the bourgeoisie in all its aspects, and not of unity with a bourgeois sector. What we put forward is the opposite of Mandel’s. (...)

“The revolutionary united front is unity with all those who raise the revolution against the capitalist regime.” (Nahuel Moreno, *Speeches in the First Congress of the IWL–FI*, CEHuS, Buenos Aires, 2017, p. 8. Available for downloading from <http://www.nahuelmoreno.org/english.html#2>.)

3 The reader will notice that Moreno usually refers to certain trade union and political currents as “surface organisations” of guerrilla groups or as “directed” by them. This has to do with the internal nature of the discussion and he would have never used these terms in a public writing. This is so because the Colombian bourgeoisie, its armed and police forces, and the paramilitary and vigilante gangs not only brutally repress the guerrillas but also kill thousands of union activists and political militants. We should clarify, then, that the terms Moreno uses do not imply organic relations between trade union and political currents and guerrilla organisations but political affinities.

4 *Open Letter from the International Secretariat of the IWL–CI to the PST (C)*, see page XXX.

5 Nahuel Moreno, *Speeches in the First Congress of the IWL–FI*, op. cit., p. 39.

I do not believe that the minimum revolutionary program is the revolutionary united front program. These are general guidelines to start discussing a revolutionary united front.

For example, in Colombia Stalinism has given the list of all its militants and guerrillas who did not abide by the truce. (...) If we, when entering *A Luchar*, ask them if that seems to be right (...) and they say yes, we do not talk anymore, we do not even greet them. But that does not mean [that if they condemn the CP, *A Luchar*] is a revolutionary united front. (...) Even a fairly honest reformist says “nothing is given to any policeman (...).

The minimum program then serves for that, to begin discussing:<sup>6</sup>

- In the International Executive Committee of May 1985, the differences that had already been outlined began to become clear. Moreno changed position and argued that *A Luchar* was a “revolutionary union phenomenon” or a “revolutionary union current”; that it had to be developed as such, and that it was not going towards a revolutionary party. The leadership of the PST (C) did not agree with this characterisation and insisted it should be developed as a revolutionary united front, towards a common revolutionary party.

- In the IEC of September 1985, the PST (C) leadership raised that in Colombia there was an ongoing civil war. Moreno argued with this characterisation and warned it could lead the party to submit politically to the guerrilla side, abandoning a class analysis. The differences regarding the character and evolution of *A Luchar* remained.

- The characterisation and policy of the leadership headed by Simon were imposed in the Colombian PST Congress.

- In the IEC of April 1986, one of the crucial issues of the PST (C) Congress was discussed (which we will present in the volume that will reflect the theoretical aspect of this debate)<sup>7</sup>: the class definition of the leaderships and the countries independent of imperialism. Moreno pointed out that M-19, ELN, FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front) of Nicaragua, FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) of El Salvador, Shining Path of Peru, etc., were leaderships independent from the Stalinist apparatus, revolutionary but petty bourgeois, not working class, and because of these limitations of class they would take the revolution to a dead end. He also pointed out that any alliance or agreement with these leaderships should be transitory and on short-term problems since they were against deepening the national revolution, of developing the world workers’ socialist revolution, of having as a priority task the construction of the International, and of fighting for workers’ democracy before and after the seizure of power. And he insisted the members of *A Luchar* were openly against these positions of Trotskyism and, therefore, a common revolutionary party could not be built with them.

- After the IEC of April 1986 the IWL–FI’s International Secretariat (IS) and Moreno, in particular, began to worry about the political course of PST (C), which was yielding to the pressures of the other members of *A Luchar*. This was expressed in a vanguardist policy and not towards the whole of the workers’ movement, and in the position in the face of the general strike of 20 June 1985, the elections, the visit of the Pope, the isolated actions of the guerrillas, etc. In addition, they stated the axis of party activity should be union unity. The PST leadership disagreed. Negro E., a member of the IEC and of the leadership of the Movement towards Socialism (MAS) of Argentina, travelled to Colombia to hold this discussion.

- At the end of August 1986, Moreno sent a letter to Simon where he again pointed out the aforementioned issues and concluded: “Never, ever will *A Luchar* be a revolutionary workers’ party.”

- In parallel, two positions in the PST (C)’s Central Committee began to face each other. One headed by Simon and Miguel Angel, which tended to politically dissolve the party in *A Luchar*, and another that opposed it. The discussion began to take a factional tone. For this reason, the IS of the IWL–FI proposed to postpone any discussion in the ranks of the party until the Congress of the

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 39–40.

<sup>7</sup> It refers to *Discussions in the IEC (April 1986)*, available for downloading from <http://www.nahuelmoreno.org/english.html#2>.

unitary workers' central that was being founded, the Central Union of Workers (CUT); it called on the comrades who opposed to politically dissolve in *A Luchar* to facilitate the application of the party line, creating the best climate to facilitate the discussion of this problem, and proposed that, once the CUT Congress was over, the PST (C) Congress be convened.

- To participate in this debate, two important documents were written: *Theses on the Guerrilla*,<sup>8</sup> by Moreno, Greco and Frank, and then the *Open Letter of the International Secretariat of the IWL–FI to the PST (C)*.

- The factional struggle within the PST (C) continued to sharpen during Moreno's last days and after his death, culminating in the break with PST (C) of Simon and a small group of cadres. In its course, several important materials were published, which were collected in the *International Bulletin* of April 1987.

The wing opposed to the dissolution of the PST in *A Luchar* won most of the leadership. On 26 January 1987, the minority current headed by Simon was established as a National Tendency. The Executive Committee of the PST, to safeguard the unity of the party proposed to the National Tendency that, "within a party agreement in Congress, the two lines could be applied by putting them into practice; that is, Simon and Miguel Angel could make their experience in *A Luchar* with a group of comrades who were in agreement".<sup>9</sup>

- This proposal was not accepted by Simon's tendency, which on 22 February was formed as an "Internationalist Current", and announced it had made the "decision to form as an independent organisation" and not to participate in the PST Congress.<sup>10</sup> Although the PST Executive Committee insisted they participate in the Congress with all the guarantees, on 19 March Simon's tendency ratified its decision in a document entitled *Why we don't go to Congress*.<sup>11</sup>

The number of militants who broke with PST was small, but among them were Simon and Miguel Angel, two very important party leaders. Both ended up moving away from Trotskyism, which meant an unquestionable loss, not only for IWL-FI but for the workers' revolution in Colombia. Later, *A Luchar* disappeared. Hence the importance of this discussion, from which the reader can extract several teachings. Perhaps the most important of these is to understand how Moreno could combine the initiative to seize the opportunities to build the party with the awareness that the bolder a tactic the more the party needs to cling to certain basic principles of Marxism: class analysis as a method, the revolutionary program as a foundation, concrete policies regarding the facts of the class struggle as a definitive proof of the character of any current or organisation and, above all, an internationalist placement organically embodied in the membership to a worker's and revolutionary International.

**Mercedes Pepper**

**Eugenio Greco**

Buenos Aires, June 1994

<sup>8</sup> Available for downloading from <http://www.nahuelmoreno.org/english.html#2>.

<sup>9</sup> "Congress Resolution", *International Bulletin*, April 1987, p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> "Internationalist Current", *International Bulletin*, op. cit., p.52.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 56-60.

# Glossary

## The workers' movement

At the time of these discussions, the Colombian worker's movement was divided into the following trade union currents:

- The Workers' Union of Colombia (UTC): it was the main trade union centre until the mid-1980s; founded by the Church, it was controlled by bourgeois parties, especially the Conservative.
- The Colombian Trade Union Confederation of Workers (CSTC), led by the Communist Party.
- The Confederation of Colombian Workers (CTC), headed by Manuel Felipe Hurtado.
- Independent trade unionism, which brought together a series of trade unions independent of these two centrals. One of the most important and combative was the Colombian Federation of Educators (FECODE), which grouped all the unions of state teachers of Colombia and whose union in Bogota, the capital of the country, was the District Association of Educators (ADE). The independent trade unionism was the most combative sector of the Colombian workers' movement and different currents influenced it, including the guerrillas. The Unity Committee of Independent Unions (CUSI) was an attempt to centralise the different currents of independent trade unionism.

In 1986, there was an important change in the organisation of the Colombian workers' movement. An important leader of the UTC, Jorge Carrillo, assumed the position of Minister of Labour in the government of Belisario Betancur.<sup>1</sup> From there, as a manoeuvre in the service of the bourgeoisie but also adapting to what was an imperative need of the Colombian working class, he promoted the constitution of a single trade union centre. To this end, Carrillo promoted the constitution of the Democratic Trade Union Front (FSD), an organisational formula whose goal was to bring union leaders around that project. UTC suffered an important division, from which the Union of Workers of Bogota and Cundinamarca (UTRABOG) emerged, led by Carrillo, which converged with the CSTC and the CUSI to make up the Central Union of Workers (CUT).

## Political parties, trade unions and guerrilla organisations

Within the workers' and mass movement, besides the bourgeois parties, there were other political parties, guerrilla organisations, and trade unions:

- The Communist Party (CP): In addition to its union current, the Colombian CP has influence in sectors of the peasantry, won when it fought allied with the Liberal Party during *La Violencia*. The peasant guerrilla organisation politically-related to the CP is the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Its top leader is the legendary Manuel Marulanda Velez ("*Tirofijo*"), whose real name is Pedro Antonio Marn. *Tirofijo* began in the liberal guerrilla; he later joined the Communist Party and became the undisputed head of FARC. He was falsely declared dead repeatedly, and we do

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<sup>1</sup> **Belisario Betancur** (1923–2018) was a politician, President of Colombia from 1982 to 1986 for the Colombian Conservative Party.

not know it for sure whether he is still alive [in 1994]. He took his pseudonym “Manuel Marulanda Velez” at the request of the CP, in honour of a peasant leader killed under police torture.

- The April 19 Movement (M-19). It was an urban guerrilla that ended up signing the truce with the government. Its top leader was Carlos Pizarro. Later it became the Democratic Alliance, an electoral party integrated into the bourgeois democratic regime; his maximum figure is Antonio Navarro Wolf, who was Minister to President Gaviria.

- The Independent and Revolutionary Movement (MOIR): Party coming from Maoism that became, together with the Communist Party, one of the two main leftist parties of Colombia, until it entered into crisis. For years its policy has been closely linked with that of some sectors of the Colombian bourgeoisie.

- The National Liberation Army (ELN): Pro-Castro guerrilla organisation founded in 1965. The Trade Union Work Committees (CTS), a trade union current that was part of independent trade unionism, sympathised with this organisation.

- The Communist Party of Colombia (Marxist–Leninist) (CP-ML): Organisation of Maoist origin that, by the time of this discussion, had become pro-Albanian. It influenced politically the guerrilla organisation Popular Liberation Army (EPL).

- The Workers Revolutionary Party (PRT): A guerrilla organisation that in 1991 participated in the National Constituent Assembly under the rule of the bourgeoisie and ended up joining the bourgeois democratic regime along with M-19. The trade union tendency that sympathised with the PRT was the Union Integration Current (CIS), which was part of independent trade unionism.

- The National Guerrilla Coordinating Board (CNG), which grouped FARC, ELN, EPL and other minor organisations.

- The National Association of Peasant Users (ANUC): Trade union organisation that grouped small and medium-sized peasants but not the agricultural proletariat or day labourers. By the time the discussion in this book takes place, the ANUC was divided. The wing influenced by the “democratic” sectors that sympathised with the guerrillas participated as ANUC in *A Luchar*.

## ***A Luchar***

The process that led to the setting up of *A Luchar* began at the local level through very progressive union agreements of some independent trade union currents with PST (C). It was then taken by PST (C) as a national policy. The highest point of this process was the First National Convention of *A Luchar*, held in Bogota on 28, 29 and 30 June 1986, whose fundamental resolutions were included in the pamphlet *Documents - First National Convention - A Luchar! - For revolutionary unity*.

This Convention was attended by 850 delegates elected in the different regions of the country, and in a group of supporters that completed just over 1,000 attendees. At that time, the most important organisations that made up *A Luchar* were the Trade Union Collective (CTS), the Trade Union Integration Current (CIS) and the PST (C); there were also minor groups: the Bread and Freedom Movement (MPL), the Revolutionary Workers Coordinator (COR), the Committee of Credit Industry Activists (CAC) and Workers’ Opinion. Overall, an important and combative, although minority, sector of the Colombian trade union vanguard was represented, that was part of the independent trade unionism.



# Discussion on Colombia (1985–1986)

## CHAPTER 1

### International Executive Committee, May 1985

(The discussion on the point concerning Colombia in this International Executive Committee began with a report presented by Lucas, a member of the International Secretariat and the leadership of PST (C). We have transcribed the most important paragraphs of that report.)

**Lucas:** The situation took a major leap in the class struggle. The truce crisis began and is developing. To such an extent that the guerrillas, in fact, in practice, have been divided between FARC on the one hand, which acts totally in favour of the truce and the government, and M-19, which is practically in permanent combat. They fail to land a military defeat to the M-19, despite the attempts.

This is nothing more than a reflection of the very important development of the guerrilla movement at the national level. M-19 began to get into the cities, influencing quite a bit in neighbourhoods and marginal sectors. There is a significant strengthening at the national level of the Ricardo Franco Front [a dissident grouping of FARC opposed to the truce], which would be winning sectors of FARC. The indigenous guerrilla of Cauca is also strengthening, which makes it almost a liberated zone. But the phenomenon among the mass movement, popular, marginal to the working class, is M-19. What marks the national situation is the guerrilla movement.

Along with this, the mass movement has taken a very important leap. The trade union movement has been giving many partial struggles and there is a very important peasant rise, which is not guerrilla struggle but actions of the peasant masses. There are some popular actions, such as neighbourhood civic strikes.

The electoral campaign theoretically began two or three months ago, but in reality, it does not start. Some politicians say the war opens before the elections.

The economic strategy of the bourgeoisie is to reduce real wages by 40 per cent in about a year and a half. (It is a change in relation to the period 1982–1984, in which not only the real wage was not attacked but it increased slightly. Betancur's strategy, despite the crisis, was not to attack the real salary to solve the problem of the guerrilla.) Then it is foreseeable that there will continue to be resistance from the mass movement, such as the strike of the teachers that is being prepared.

In conclusion, what we see is that the mass movement advances, but within the mass movement, the working class is obviously lagging the most. The peasant movement is on the rise and the guerrillas are strengthening, especially M-19. The mafia is in opposition to the government and is apparently the one that supplies weapons to M-19. They make political campaigns: against imperialism, against extradition.

*A Luchar* is a revolutionary political phenomenon that nobody controls. We believe it is a vanguard phenomenon with certain elements of mass influence. Among the leaderships that are part of *A Luchar*, there is agreement that you have to go forward, that you have to have political audacity, etc., but a wing has emerged from the ranks — that we do not know what it follows, whether it is a militarist wing or encouraged by the guerrilla leadership — which argues that *A Luchar* is a political-union phenomenon to coordinate actions, that it has to coordinate with the popular, peasant, and student sectors but that within *A Luchar* those sectors do not have to exist.

This has shocked all the forces, even us who are clear that we have to develop *A Luchar*, that we have to publish the newspaper, flyers, that we should hit in agreements with some forces. Most of the forces agree that *A Luchar* must be developed as a political force that tends to a mass political movement. We say that *A Luchar* is not an alternative of revolutionary leadership, but that it must be developed as a political force that is a component of a revolutionary project that is also integrated with other existing forces. Our view is that with all these forces we would have to go to a revolutionary project, an alternative of revolutionary leadership that for us is the construction of a revolutionary party.

In the Central Committee, we voted to act politically subordinated on *A Luchar*. That is, we fight inside *A Luchar* but ultimately we do what *A Luchar* says. Since the emergence of this sector, we have begun to question this way of behaving, but we do not know well how to continue. We considered changing this subordination policy and we plan to propose an internal discussion *Bulletin* through which our positions become widely known, or publish the magazine and contribute our positions there.

**Alberto Frank:** Don't we have characterisations of the internal currents, of the changes that have taken place in the positions of some of them?

**Lucas:** The only explanation is that it is a phenomenon. For example, the vanguard forces were CTS and CIS were rear-guard, they were the ones who said: "This is political-union." Now they say: "We see reality and we play for this. This is a political project, and although we do not know well where we are taking it, whether to a party or what, the action of the revolutionaries passes through here. So let's develop the union, popular, peasant aspects, doing political struggle..." And all the leaderships say so.

**Moreno:** One question, which is: What is the program of *A Luchar*? What political project are we going to push for? I see the party in bad shape now. There are elements of empiricism that can be fatal; that is, suddenly [*A Luchar*] is armed and the party is armed, [and is moving to] a party catastrophe. Have we said that in *A Luchar* there can be no one who does not attack the CP every week for opportunist and if we [do not agree on that] *A Luchar* is broken? Because I get the impression that, with this business of "we are the ones of *A Luchar*", we are getting into Mandelism. It's very dangerous. And maybe it's very, very positive what they say that [*A Luchar*] is a political-union front. This is why theoretical questions [are important].

I see it increasingly confusing. And I start to be afraid we will bury ourselves because this empiricism [can lead] to everything exploding. And when everything explodes, we are left with nothing: they go everywhere. It is very dangerous to say: "I don't know where we are going." If you say "I don't know where we are going" when we start to move forward one will say: "No, where you are going I don't want to go; I don't want a unified party that systematically attacks the CP." Another will say: "I want a Maoist party." That is what I am afraid of. I don't see the programmatic points of *A Luchar*, or of a wing of *A Luchar*.

Just the problem [of] whether or not *A Luchar* is going towards a party is very dangerous, to the extent that we are not clear about which party it goes to and which program it goes to.

There are reasons we are against the truce. We have that point [in common]: Against the truce. What else? What other points do you say? Because, for example, "For the socialist revolution" is implicit, but not explicit. This is very dangerous.

**Lucas:** Actually, the point that we have firm is that of the truce and everything related to it.

**Moreno:** So it is a political-union front.

**Lucas:** And also the national strike and the uncompromising struggle against the government.

**Moreno:** Yes, but “uncompromising against the government”, what does it mean? M-19 [is also against the government]. Yes, we are screwed... What happens if you present a program and say: “Three months of discussion and that’s it, and if it is not approved, we don’t continue. *A Luchar* continues but as a political-union front”? What happens? Will they accept it? I think not, they are going to say: “No sir, after three months we accept nothing.” We are accepting that [the policy] is: “Go ahead, go ahead”. And then there they defeat us.

**Negro E:** To go ahead without defining the proposal. In the proposal you make on the emphasis being: “Let’s expand *A Luchar*, let the guerrillas come, let the entire world come”, without defining within what programmatic limits we extend.

**Moreno:** And that is dangerous. If we squeeze, we break.... *A Luchar* is a great thing. Even if it doesn’t seem so, [with] what I say I am defending it. It is a great thing. And maybe the most lucid are those who say: “It is a political-union agreement.” [Although for me] it is not even political-union: [it is union]. That is my first doubt. If we press the accelerator and the engine doesn’t respond, we may distance ourselves from many people. And why? *A Luchar* has already shown it is a very highly progressive current, immensely [progressive] in the union field, for me. It is one thing the entire IWL has to learn.

But now we also have to learn something else, **Lucas:** like, how theory serves enormously for the practice. [This] means it is decisive to define whether [*A Luchar*] goes towards a truly revolutionary political party or not. Because if we define it doesn’t, our allies are those of the most retrograde wing of the CTS, when it comes to it. That is, here, in cold, I wouldn’t dare say: “This is the progressive wing and this isn’t.” Because in the wing that says “Let’s go forward” maybe there is the guerrilla sector that wants this movement without a goal [because] they consider us “a beast” and above all because of our extraordinary capacity. [Because] the guerrillas think: “We have none like Lucas or Simon; There is nothing like this party, damn it! This is good for us.” But for what? For a little mess of two or three years. And they [also] are willing to enter another truce tomorrow. Because it is not clear in the program. Then it can be fatal for the party itself.

Instead, when these questions are well defined, we do not put forward the line of not recruiting other people and we do set the line of continuing to grow. That is, everything we have to discuss these days is very delicate.

**Frank:** As a partisan project, shouldn’t we tend to close politically with those that exist? I mean, wouldn’t it be better to propose that we agree right now to open the political discussion to see if there is anything for a party?

**Moreno:** It may be.

**Frank:** If we raise this, do they reject it?

**Moreno:** For me, yes.

**Mercedes Petit:** *A Luchar* can really be a revolutionary union type phenomenon, which gives us exceptional conditions to move towards the revolutionary united front, the workers’ party and grow. But if we mix it, we will be stark naked and without a party.

**Moreno:** Correct.

[?]:<sup>1</sup> What do you do with the non-union sectors?

**Moreno:** That is extraordinary. Why can’t artists and students, peasants, and all who want to come to a trade union movement? There, I would be in favour, once it’s defined. What’s the problem? This is secondary. The problem is, what do they come for? Do they come for the trade union movement? Then artists come to support our union activity, perfect.

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1 [?] means we could not identify the speaker.



**Lucas:** In *A Luchar*, deep down, there are different projects without becoming explicit. We want the revolutionary party and there are some wings of *A Luchar* that are discussing the same thing. There are people who see it as a mass political front of a guerrilla sector. Others see it as an autonomous mass political movement. The sector that reacts and puts brakes on it is the one that defends the CTS project; they are the ones who propose the revolutionary project is the National Liberation Army (ELN), which has to have a union front, a popular front and a peasant front.

The programmatic aspect is being discussed. We, Pan y Libertad (Bread and Freedom) and CIS propose that we must give *A Luchar* a programmatic framing.

**Moreno:** But maybe we are the ones who have to be against even those who say we have to go to a party. The first thing is the program. Don't even [discuss] the party. The discussion is so simple! [But I think] you're addressing everything wrongly. You have to say: "*A Luchar* is the greatest thing there is and it is a revolutionary union current." And we already have to define it this way, although there are opportunists who are for unity with the bourgeoisie. From the trade union point of view, it is [that:] a revolutionary trade union tendency has emerged organically in Colombia. And it is nothing else. Everything we do by pushing is very dangerous; [that's] confusing wishes with reality.

[Following] that, a note from us has to go to all of them telling them: "With a revolutionary union tendency in Colombia we do nothing. We do a lot but we do nothing because the problem of the peasant struggle is not solved, and so on. Thus, we want to discuss this program [with] *A Luchar* and with those who want to, to agree to go to a revolutionary political front and not a revolutionary union front." I think it's that simple, it's very simple. And, more than ever, to publish a beautiful newspaper of the party — not this *Bulletin* — that raises this every week. That is a possibility.

The other possibility is: you don't want to make that mess? You do it with the leadership. "Well, comrades, our party is going to start a ferocious campaign for a revolutionary political front; As we get along so well we want to [do a] seminar or whatever to discuss for a fortnight or a month before we go out with that. But we are going to go out with that, because if there is no [revolutionary political front] this revolution sinks; nobody is going to get hold of M-19; a tremendous mess comes with FARC."

We must define [positions] for this policy, which [has to become part of] the history of the Colombian revolutionary movement, even if you reject it and we are left alone. Because otherwise, the empirical path will be fatal for everyone. I do think so, that there are projects. They are studying them themselves, but [they are projects] of them.

So, first, we are the champions of keeping *A Luchar* as a revolutionary tendency and we don't want to interfere. We will not propose that *A Luchar* be transformed into a party or anything [like that] because we are very respectful of those who are for the strike to the bitter end, of those who are to the bitter end against the government and of those who are to the bitter end for the mobilisation, and we will not be the ultimacists or those who try to manipulate *A Luchar*. I think they like this a treat. We are the champions that *A Luchar* is what it is today. If it ceases to be and it becomes what we want... well, it is a party, we win the lottery.

[But] the weak point I see in *A Luchar*, [already] since the World Congress, is the problem of the political program to go there.

**Frank:** Would it be inferior to the Peruvian Worker Peasant Student and Popular Front (FOCEP) in that regard?

**Moreno:** Totally. It is the opposite of FOCEP, for now, it is the opposite. FOCEP was political. This is why I think your definition that [*A Luchar*] is of vanguard with mass elements is correct, but we have to insist a lot, very much, on the issue of mass influence. In the trade unions, they are very strong, [although] not of masses, because I believe they have no strength to make their [own] central. That is why I agree: it is not of masses.

So I think we are [very well] and we will get along, and [that] we don't [have to] dilute ourselves now. Then, [we must] publish *A Luchar* as a trade union-political *Bulletin*, but fundamentally trade union. It comes out and our atomic bomb is this political battle to create the revolutionary party.

Because for me, and also for Lucas, we have very serious problems there: the pressure of M-19, the problem of FARC, the very own [Front Ricardo] Franco, what you say that they dominate the guerrillas. We have to continue preparing for a vanguard recruiting. We have a scourge there, which are FARC and the backwardness of the working class. And we, where are we top dogs? When the substantial workers' approach comes, there all our motions predominate. [This] is no accident; the class struggle process shifts to the guerrillas and we are increasingly marginalised; the workers' movement comes and we go to centre [stage]. We have to discuss like this. This is why I see an impasse in you. You see you are very well placed and at the same time you don't know where to go. This is the impression I have. And it is because of that, because we are in a confusing project, confusing everywhere. Even those who say "Let's go ahead" can be at the height of confusion. They themselves tell you.

[We have to make them] this same proposal. They are very good people, we will recruit many. To maintain a good relationship we have to start by agreeing on whether there is a political agreement or not. Knowing that *A Luchar* is immovable, it remains as it is because it is something great. *A Luchar* is objective for us, and it is great; not big — great.

Why does FOCEP not happen? I think it has to do with objective causes: the Colombian proletariat is also ignorant, like the Argentine. We have two big misfortunes. And the Peruvian proletariat is extraordinary; it has a lofty level. So it is logical that *A Luchar* happens in Colombia and it is logical that FOCEP happens in Peru.

**Lucas:** In *A Luchar* nobody sticks their neck on a clear project.

**Moreno:** And [there is] no one who can risk their neck on a project to dissolve what is theirs. Only we, who are Marxists, can. I'm serious, it's true. They take care of their business, they are petty bourgeois.

**Lucas:** If there is a national strike, we are well placed to convince about the need for a revolutionary party. If there is no strike, if there is a considerable lull, everything will be channelled through the guerrilla movement.

**Moreno:** Sure.

**Lucas:** So we're going to get pretty screwed in our politics, in our perspective.

**Moreno:** Oh no. You can lose [but only] for the moment... God forbid! You are already [superbly] placed. They are in a bad way. Yes, yes, [the guerrillas] will recruit thousands and us units but [in the end], you keep the package — 20 times more than in Nicaragua. You keep the package because the working class will not disappear, the struggle will not disappear. The continuity of *A Luchar*... [Navarro Wolf],<sup>2</sup> all these will fail despite their extraordinary successes. We have to keep discussing. This is the strong point of *Lutte Ouvrière*. Did you know that *Lutte Ouvrière* says that in 1947 they led Renault? Forty-five thousand workers in a factory all together on the edge of Paris. So you can see: a small group of less than 100 [militants] shook France. If they had had that strength in 1968, the history of France changes.

**Lucas:** Our recruitment policy is not directly to the party but is to organise *A Luchar* circles led by us. This is the way the party would take to organise people.

**Moreno:** If you have a good newspaper, this tactic is very sound.

**Lucas:** We plan to supply the newspaper with a good political *Bulletin* that goes to everyone, to the party, to its periphery, and even to the circles, to recruit and politically arm the party.

**Moreno:** Very well, it can also be a magazine, a monthly magazine. But there you have a problem: *A Luchar's Bulletin* is horrible in this regard. They do not have a weekly response. But this is tactical. It may be a magazine once a month; it may be a *Bulletin* not to clash, whatever. The important thing is how we fight [systematically] for our program. Because, for me, [transforming *A Luchar* into a revolutionary party] is not a slogan today. There are not enough elements of judgment;

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<sup>2</sup> **Antonio Navarro Wolff** (b. 1948) was a commander of M-19; he was left a paraplegic in combat and went to Cuba in exile. Since 2014 he has been a Senator of Colombia.

neither knowledge of them nor of reality. Because of the characteristics of Colombia, we can't do it now either. Unfortunately, the seminar was not held. Believing we can transform *A Luchar* into a revolutionary party is a false perspective. Right now, categorically, there is no such perspective. Imposing it means breaking *A Luchar*. This doesn't mean that with some sectors we won't succeed. But even [we might not succeed] with any of them because we will find they have different party projects. Maybe 80 per cent agree with the point "Let's make a party of *A Luchar*" but everyone thinks: "My party". That is another serious thing: "My party".

[?]: Can't we go to more advanced processes of discussion with any of those sectors to go to a party?

**Moreno:** Yes, to the bitter end. But you can only know once you sent them a note and they tell you: "Look, we agree on these points and not on these points."

[?]: And attempting a thorough discussion with ELN?

**Moreno:** But if I am proposing that before I send the letter, they should bring everyone together and we tell them: "Well, we want to discuss this project with you; these are our points." See what they say and then discuss thoroughly.

Why be guided by psychological impressions? Why don't we give each one a note and ask whether there is an agreement or not? And they tell us: "We agree on this and not on this." It is the first [step]. Or a discussion, a seminar, a thorough talk, but [that] already [is] precise: "Do you agree on this, on this, on this?" I say [this] for the political project, [always] taking care of *A Luchar* like the apple of our eyes because *A Luchar* is already a conquest and the other is a hundred pigeons in the bush. I don't know whether you understand me. So this conquest must be kept by taking great care of it, being conservative in that. In case we divide them by us pressing the accelerator. Is this clear or not?

**Carmen Carrasco:** Ultimately, that was what we thought.

**Moreno:** That line was very good: we would held the seminar, we would discuss thoroughly. [Here] we shuffled [the hypothesis] that [*A Luchar*] would divide. The true plan here was that, when making the approach at the seminar, inevitably [a wing was going to arise]. Our great joy [would have been] that the majority were in our favour.

**Frank:** But not to divide *A Luchar* but to see how far it can go.

**Moreno:** No, not to divide it, but from there we would return to [insist on the discussion of] the party, but not to divide. Do you see it very difficult like this?

**Lucas:** There is a discussion about the prospect of making a party, the programmatic framework, etc., which is already open and is going through the organisations. I don't see it about the letter: they won't answer us.

**Moreno:** Ok, but then we don't send them a letter. [We publish a] weekly newspaper where we will hound them every week. We have to hammer every week: "In Colombia, nothing is fixed if among the revolutionaries we do not make a party based on this minimum program." And you have to tell them that and not just orally but [reaching] thousands.

Then you don't have to publish a magazine or a *Bulletin*. And [during] the whole campaign you publish a newspaper that essentially says: "There has been a crisis, essentially of Maoism. Maoism had these positive aspects for those who joined it: it believed the apparatus of the bourgeois state had to be destroyed, and so on and so forth. On the other hand, it is us, the Trotskyists. So it's not about [discussing] whether the Trotskyists or the Maoists were right but it's about seeing, after this experience, if former Maoists and current Trotskyists agree on the following program, to make a revolutionary party."

**Lucas:** What if we propose to *A Luchar* a discussion *Bulletin* where everyone presents their positions?

**Moreno:** Ah, well, but then this means recruitment.

[?]: Sure, in fact, alignments take place.

**Moreno:** No, in fact not, because you can't do political discussion just because. If you open a discussion *Bulletin* you have opened an alignment of people. For me [*A Luchar*] breaks after a fortnight, there is nothing left. You will bury the union organisation. [For example,] you go to Barranquilla and there is an argument; those of Pan y Libertad in Barranquilla are against it, you beat them [with your arguments] and they are still against it. Then they pick up the phone and say, "You have to break *A Luchar* because they take everyone out." I don't think you get a *Bulletin* this way. Because then you take the internal struggle to their ranks. Instead, what I tell you is perfect: "This is untouchable and there is no *Internal Bulletin* because it is union. And to the son of a bitch who wants to come here to bring a political thesis, we kick him out of *A Luchar*." "Who proposes it?" "We do: throw him out. We are democratic." Then no one can tell you anything. And we publish a newspaper giving [our] line every week.

**Carrasco:** In short: to handle two parallel projects.

**Moreno:** United but parallel.

**Carrasco:** We take care of *A Luchar* and discuss with the other currents from the newspaper.

**Moreno:** And with great care. *A Luchar* of Barranquilla is very good, there is a current in our favour and we do not accept it [within the party]. We only sell them the newspaper and [have] meetings. Anyhow, that fits... the ship moves. And nobody can tell you anything. I say [this is better] because the *Internal Bulletin* means the factional struggle within *A Luchar*. I'm against [this]. Precisely, *A Luchar* is so great that I take care of it. Here is the dialectic: how we take care of *A Luchar*. And besides [there are] other people who are not in *A Luchar* who can sympathise [with us], we can win them.

Think. Now, if they put up with the *Bulletin*, fantastic, I am in favour of the *Bulletin*. But I know it will cause deep friction. The good thing about the *Bulletin* [is] that those on your side come quickly.

**Lucas:** And if an agreement is reached in the leadership?

**Moreno:** Ah, that would be great. You have to go and stay at least for a month or two without publishing a *Bulletin*, newspaper, or anything. That is as big as a house. But speaking clearly, without manoeuvring: "See, comrades, *A Luchar* is great on the union arena, so we don't want to screw anyone. We want to have good relations, to unite, to continue *A Luchar*. But there is another problem: there has to be a political project. We are delaying and this screws everything up. It leaves us exposed with M-19, it leaves us exposed with the official CP, which, according to you, are opportunistic. Ok, then you have to start the discussion. And this discussion has to go to the ranks, planning how [to do it] so it does not screw anyone because it is not about screwing someone but about all winning. Although we may have different projects, we have a fraternal attitude; we are militants in the trade union arena which is the most important front for us, for our party. We did not do the seminar — and we propose the seminar again — we propose to do it to reach agreements. Let's discuss for a month in a row: every Saturday the leaderships meet four or five hours to discuss the problems." Nothing that gives the impression you are coming with a project to bust them, [with something] new or crazy.

**Lucas:** This seems feasible because the leaderships work.

**Moreno:** Well, then fabulous. And then you explain: "And if we don't do this, we have to keep publishing monthly the *A Luchar* newspaper, centred in the union arena, and all the parties may publish their newspapers, campaign and try to win without [touching *A Luchar*]. Our project remains; not our party. There will be no revolutionary Marxist party with mass influence based on our party. No. It will be through individual merges and with revolutionary groups. And we believe all of you are revolutionaries. What we want most is to see whether we achieve a common party project."

Maybe you'll find yourself with a surprise: that the leaderships are the ones who are most in favour.

**Frank:** Then we can advance in a program.

**Moreno:** But you take the program, the document, and you tell them: “What do you think of this?” I don’t know whether you understand me: [we have to] start with the political. I am very afraid we will start with the movement and with optimism and then, in the end, we will encounter surprises.



## CHAPTER 2

# International Executive Committee, September 1985

(In this International Executive Committee, Simon presented an extensive report based on the Theses he had written about the situation of the class struggle in Colombia and the policy the PST (C) should carry out. The following is a synthesis of the key paragraphs of the report, after which we gather the essentials of Moreno's debate and speeches.)

### Simon's Report

**Simon:** On 14 September 1977, there is a workers' and popular national strike in Colombia. This strike puts the country on the brink, at least, of a revolutionary crisis — which closes rapidly — and divides recent history into two: the previous stage, dominated by stability, although with the existence of guerrillas, etc., and the current one, crossed by the following periods:

The period of 1978–1979, of the rise of Turbay Ayala,<sup>1</sup> is the period of the reaction; Its essence is the reaction against the period of rising opened in 1977.

We consider the period from 1980 to 1981 as transitional. In this period we give much weight to the internal resistance and especially to the victory of the Central American revolution and its repercussion in Colombia.

From 1982 to 1985 there are two periods, or two phases: one phase of the revolutionary situation, which extends until May 1984, the year in which the national strike is defeated and the truce is signed. The other phase is the one opened with the truce.

The unitary element of these periods is the civil war, which began in 1977 and is the common thread that has been expressed for seven years. Since it starts it has no break in continuity until now. The central thesis proposed in this document is that there has been a civil war for seven years. What we want to discuss is whether what dominates the national crisis is the civil war.

Now, rereading several texts I had concluded it was always the reaction which started the civil war. It is not the working class, which does not have these methods or another sector. It is the reaction, which cannot make concessions: there is an economic crisis, chaotic disorder, it has to stop the revolution and, instead of confronting the people, it declares fascism, the war to the death. I believed the enemy always started this process (there is the example of the Spanish revolution, that of Russia in 1917), and what took away all doubts about it was the Mexican revolution. In Mexico, the one who declares the civil war is Francisco Madero,<sup>2</sup> who draws a proclamation in San Luis Potosi calling— so says the proclamation — to the uprising in arms against the Porfiriato<sup>3</sup> and calls to start the civil war with a fixed date: 20 November.

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1 **Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala** (1916–2005) was a Colombian lawyer and diplomat member of Liberal Party, and President of Colombia from 1978 to 1982.

2 **Francisco Madero** (1873–1913) was a Mexican revolutionary, writer and statesman who served as the 33rd president of Mexico from 1911 until shortly before his assassination in 1913. Madero was notable for challenging Mexican President Porfirio Diaz for the presidency in 1910 and was instrumental in sparking the Mexican Revolution.

3 **Porfiriato** is a term given to the period between November 1876 and May 1911 when General Porfirio Diaz ruled Mexico as president.

**Moreno:** There were countless guerrillas. Wasn't it civil war before Madero? You already sank your entire thesis. All the fantastic guerrillas that existed before Madero, weren't they civil war? Did [the civil war] begin only when Madero makes the proclamation?

**Simon:** In Colombia, there were guerrillas and guerrilla actions for 30 years; but there was stability and therefore we argued it was not a civil war.

**Moreno:** To keep moving forward: [the Mexican process] before Madero was not more or less 50 times higher [than in] Colombia?

**Simon:** It may be, yes. I am not making an analogy; I am giving a historical example. I thought the reaction always declared the civil by and in this case I saw it was not the so. In Colombia, the civil war opened in 1977 and still stands; it is an element of the last seven years.

**Moreno:** To clarify: then 1977 [in Colombia] is equal to Madero's call in Mexico? Do the two start a civil war?

**Simon:** No, it's not the same. I thought the civil war was always when the reaction began a period with civil war methods and I discovered that I was totally wrong, that civil war sometimes begins from the side of the revolution.

**Moreno:** Allow me. I want to insist [now], so I don't interrupt you any more: Is the Madero truce similar to the Colombian truce?

**Simon:** No.

**Moreno:** We do not understand you.

**Simon:** I'm giving an example. I believed the counter-revolution always started the civil war. And now we have seen, through another example, that it is also started directly by the revolution.

**Moreno:** We understand nothing, excuse me. In Colombia in 1977 was it not for a civic strike?

**Simon:** In 1977 the civil war does not open; a workers' and popular insurrection erupts.

**Moreno:** You just said [the civil war] started and didn't stop since 1977, and now you tell us it didn't. And [you just] said it is [civil war] when [the] the reaction starts it, that in Colombia the reaction starts it, and before you told us that the reaction did not start it but the civic strike did.

**Simon:** I was wrong. Sorry comrades. In 1977 there is a workers' and popular uprising that did not have to trigger a civil war, but Turbay does it with the Security Statute. The methods of civil war are those that open the civil war in Colombia, it is not the civic strike of 1977. The enemy opens that process.

**Moreno:** So the [period] of Gil-Robles<sup>4</sup> [in Spain] was the greatest civil war in world history because the decrees of Gil Robles were roughly 50 times more violent than those of Turbay.

**Simon:** I don't know about Gil-Robles. I want to know what happened after Gil-Robles. In Colombia, the regime wore out after a year using these methods because the Nicaraguan revolution broke out. The Nicaraguan revolution pushed thousands of guerrillas in Colombia against Turbay's decrees and civil war broke out. So the sequence is: first, the 1977 civic strike. Second, Turbay opens the reaction with civil war methods. Third, the Central American revolution changes the sign of the process (also internal resistance is another element). Fourth, Belisario Betancur tries to divert it with a peace policy. Fifth, the process gives a leap with the massive workers and popular rise. Sixth, the government changes the correlation again, imposing a truce, but the revolutionary situation remains.

The other interpretation that was considered here, which is not what we have now because we believe it is not correct, is much more balanced. It is reflected in an article of *Solidaridad Socialista* (Socialist Solidarity) called "Between two fires". Schematically, this interpretation says there is a process of the guerrilla and another [process] which is of the workers' movement, and

<sup>4</sup> **Jose Maria Gil-Robles** (1898–1980) was a Spanish politician, leader of the Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rights (CEDA), a Catholic conservative force, and a prominent figure in the period leading up to the Spanish Civil War. He served as Minister of War in 1935.

there is a combination between the two processes which is what explains the history of the recent class struggle. It also holds that the first process reflects Colombia as a country almost part of Central America, united to it by the guerrilla process and that the other process is of the workers' movement and its methods: Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, and so on. Then there is pressure from Central America and pressure from the South. This vision has the advantage of allowing us to see the guerrilla process parallel and contradictory to ours, and to remain in ours: the proletariat. And it has a disadvantage: it does not arm us for a multitude of phenomena that are appearing. We now see that it is a single process and, rather than saying there is guerrilla warfare on the one hand and direct struggles of the proletariat on the other, we say the class struggle has led to these kinds of forms. We do not see two different processes between war and class struggle. Rather, there is a class struggle in which a fundamental expression at certain times, a form of class struggle, is the civil war.

(...) Whenever the bureaucracy, the counter-revolutionary apparatuses were interposed, there were not only lulls, losses, defeats, but there was some process that showed the emergence of revolutionary leadership, or of progressive or pro-revolutionary currents.

(...) We define *A Luchar* as a political-union phenomenon, not a union, because of the problem of the leaderships, which are linked to the groups.

(...) On the problem of the conception of the party. We have many examples of working class areas, some of them very important, in which the party developed a very important work. Today we almost have no party in those areas. Social decomposition, the deep crisis, and unemployment have created a very difficult situation. It is full of paramilitary organisations, bosses repression is brutal and the most important unions are led by people linked to the guerrillas. We have been subjected, on the one hand, to paramilitaries, and on the other, to guerrilla harassment. There the party is between two fires. It does not have minimum security measures, a special partisan structure for work within the workers' movement, it does very badly.

**Moreno:** Those who have that structure die more and you say: ["As it has] that structure is killed like a dog, the only way out is to return to the guerrillas."

**Simon:** We say the government continues the civil war by other methods. Thus it requires a party with a minimum security structure. Not to conclude that more security requires a guerrilla party structure, but the other way around. We believe that because of our location and the character of our party if we had more security, not only would we not risk our lives so much, but we would endure more. The minimum forms of struggle of the strip that resists show there are very important actions for which the party has to be prepared.

The party has to study the ways of struggling of the peasant uprisings with blockades — which exist now and are stronger than in Bolivia although not so widespread — not to go to the peasant movement or to replace them but to know there is a strip that resists violently and we have to take advantage. Where you go on strike, where you fight, you fight and win by the increasingly radical methods the workers have. The disputes that succeed are those that use more belligerent methods. In a broad section of the working class, at the level of consciousness, we do not find workers who see isolated methods in this but the other way around; they see it with sympathy even if they do not use it. And we are placed within the strip of worker fighters who are resisting with fairly strong methods, not in a strip that is fading away. To win you have to fight very hard and we want the party to be built and tempered within those fighters. That is programmatic, it is our line, but it is not part of a whole conception. What we want to discuss is the party conception.

**Moreno:** Wasn't [this] our methodology? While I was there we always raised armed [pickets], which was essential... [We said that Colombia] was a very violent country, [that] we had to be the vanguard. I say [this] because you propose it as a new thing.

**Simon:** No, it is not a new thing, but we have not yet made it part of our methodology.

**Moreno:** Ok, but [then] let's say it like this: "For seven years...".



**Simon:** If you want I say it like this: It is part of what we have defined as our methodology and our program but it is not ours yet. There is a general conception of the party that makes the revolutionary united front in Colombia. In Colombia, the 10,000 workers led by *A Luchar* are mostly led by the guerrillas and when you propose for *A Luchar* a revolutionary united front you must be clear that whoever sits with you is with the guerrillas. Thus, we require a party with a special conception that this is their environment because otherwise, why do we call to a revolutionary united front with them? We believe that in the party there must be a conception that is the basis of the security measures we are taking, which are not only because of the truce or because we believe the revolution was defeated and fascism or repression comes. The security measures are because our strip is in that environment, so the party has to have the conception of that environment. The line we have on these sectors is crossed, mediated by the problem of war, and our party has to respond not only with a program but with a methodology. We want a conception in the middle of the war.

Therefore, I propose the following points, so we vote them almost as resolutions on the party's conception:

One: the working class, through its vanguard, participates in one way or another in the war. A majority sector indirectly does so against, through the apparatuses. The apparatus says: "We are for the truce, for peace, for democratic openness" and the rank has not yet rebelled. For example, in the FECODE [Colombian Federation of Educators] Congress 200 delegates voted for peace and truce and one 100 against.

**Moreno:** Are those who voted for peace and truce for the counter-revolution in the civil war?

**Simon:** Yes, of course. They are in the military camp of the counter-revolution.

**Moreno:** Is the majority of FECODE in the counter-revolution?

**Simon:** Most of the leadership. We are the wing and the current that is against.

Two: on the military level this opens two camps and we are a belligerent part of one against the other.

**Moreno:** Perfect. Our slogan is: "Kill the 200 who voted for the [truce]."

**Simon:** No. But how shall we...! I am saying that it is in the military camp.

**Moreno:** The [difference between] the military [and the political] camp is that we don't discuss but kill! If they are with the counter-revolution they must be killed! We are against all paramilitary sectors in favour of the government. And FARC and the CP [today are] paramilitaries of the government!! Let's shoot them!!

**Simon:** Oh, but not against the teachers of FECODE.

**Moreno:** If there is a civil war, yes! [But] I do not claim there is civil war! Because, for me, [for there to be] civil war most of the proletariat must be in favour of the civil war, and according to what you say the vast majority is against!

**Simon:** But I say that political participation is indirect! It is not the same as if there were armed teachers on the government side.

**Carrasco:** But then in the FECODE Congress there was no civil war.

**Simon:** Of course not.

**Moreno:** You just said the opposite, Simon.

**Simon:** No. Forget the civil war. A truce was signed. FARC is on the side of the truce, therefore, the one who votes "Truce", indirectly, politically, is on that side because indirectly he follows the leadership of the CP.

**Frank:** FARC, who moved to the side of the counter-revolution in the civil war, are killing guerrillas in our military camp. If we are in the guerrilla military camp that is against the truce, we have to shoot the CP.

**Simon:** No. It means that when someone else shoots the CP, I do not condemn it; however, when the CP shoots, I condemn the CP. It is a political position but don't send me to shoot them. We propose that the truce is a camps' dividing line and it is even if there is no war. The truce is not only in the military camp. It is truce so that there are no disputes, so that there are no struggles, for the government to legislate in peace. It is political, not just military. In the military aspect, we are a belligerent part; we are against the truce. In the clash between the guerrillas and the army, we are on the side of the guerrilla because it is hitting the army. We say that in every clash between the guerrillas and the army we do not condemn the guerrillas, although we differ from them.

Three: let's not say we don't have a military program because ours is that of the socialist revolution. We do have a military program, which is that of the proletarian insurrection, the generalisation of the workers' militia, and so on.

Four: our placement is exceptional but for that reason, it is also dangerous. The party must have a minimum semi-clandestine organisational structure. The party has to know that this is characteristic of its structure.

Five: the printing press and the distribution and printing mechanisms of the newspaper must be our property.

Six: our parties in Central America and the Caribbean have to function with the same guidelines.

**Moreno:** [Illegalise the party?]

**Simon:** Illegalise, no: clandestinise. We have already taken some measures in this regard. What we propose is to give up for a period the legal facilities so the party assimilates much more to the environment in which it lives and is a more conspiratorial party. Not illegal, but for the party to give up those advantages even if the government requires it to be legal and gives it its legality—which, incidentally, we might win it. But what I say is to hide its organisational structure and recommend the same for the area of Central America and the Caribbean.

## Moreno's speech

**Moreno:** Comrades, I apologise because unfortunately, I have not had time to prepare a comprehensive report. Yesterday I had a slight setback, [to which] all these tremendous electoral tasks are added — when we convened for this date we believed the electoral problem would be completely fixed. And today, when I started preparing the report, they called me from Brazil [and I had a very long telephone conversation] because the bank workers are about to go on strike.

So the situation got complicated on all sides for me, thus I chose to go right to the root of the problem. [Anyway,] this is a very fraternal discussion, at the level of an Executive Committee — it is not a Congress, it is not a report and a counter-report. [Although] I had planned to bring well-classified quotes, I could none of that, so I opted to take the document, follow its chapters and make a series of observations and draw some general conclusions. I promise to send an exhaustive letter to the Colombian comrades, which will touch more or less the same topics I plan to touch now. I already apologise because, on account of that, my presentation will be a bit boring, giving quotes and commenting on the chapters of the [comrade's] document.

We think, and it was my personal opinion, the document was precious but [at the same time] very dangerous. It was precious to start the discussion, very dangerous if it was approved. We wanted to discuss with comrade Simon, who is the author of the document, and [with] the Colombian leadership but not to impose a line or [to] have the Executive vote a line, but only to discuss. The comrades have to apply their line, including this line which for us is very dangerous. For us, it even has elements similar to [the positions of] Mandel. I insist: elements. I do not pull my hair, that is, I do not see any dangerous situation in the document but the opposite, a contribution, an effort, a formidable description of what is happening. Everything said there is like that, it is not [exaggerated]. All the facts pointed out show that a civil war exists. Not only that, but it makes us

happy. We have a lot of material here too and for us everything that the comrade reports approaches reality almost 100 per cent.

Colombia is a very complicated country, very difficult, so we have to be modest, especially if we are at a distance, and very careful with comrades like Comrade Simon, who is a serious scholar and who has helped a lot in the theoretical elaboration of our International.

Now, why were we a little worried? First, we were worried because, in such an exhaustive analysis, we saw large, very large shortcomings, even from an objective point of view. For example, we saw gaps regarding the role of Stalinism. Not that the problem was untouched but when saying deficiencies we thought it was touched casually, phrases here and there, without it being a special chapter. We believe Stalinism has a conscious policy and this is an objective, counter-revolutionary factor. That is, there was no chapter on Stalinism and my opinion is that in Colombia Stalinism is a factor almost as important as the army, as the Liberal Party, and so on and so forth.

And specifically [we must define] what the truce between the FARC and the government means, what is the objective meaning of stopping because the current stage we are experiencing is that truce. We saw this flaw [in the document]: what's the meaning of the fact that Stalinism has resolved by this stage to burn their ships in order to crush the guerrillas together with the government. And [to define] whether it was in [the line of] crushing the guerrillas; maybe not.

Another very large flaw we saw [in the document], also of an objective type, is the fact of the general strike. The general strike failed. In FECODE there was an overwhelming defeat of those who are against the truce. Are these two phenomena united or not? I am pointing out gaps but very serious gaps. Comrade [Carrasco], for example, when she gave a talk on her return from Colombia if I am not confused, she had to start by saying: "Comrades, before I left I told you I was leaving to witness a strike with transport stoppages, shots, everything stopped, something extraordinary according to national characteristics... I have to start by telling you that nothing I told you was like that." And that was the opinion of the party, it was the opinion of our party there; the comrade did not invent it unless she reflected a faction or a tendency of the party. In Colombia, a strike was called, our party pushed for this and it did not happen at all, absolutely not at all.

And therefore, we see two gaps there: one, why nothing happened of what our comrades expected? And two, a self-criticism. [First,] why didn't they see it would be like this? And second, why don't the comrades say they had a criminal policy, an error of those that happen very occasionally in a revolutionary party: calling to a general strike that nobody met? Something fails in the analysis. Didn't they [even] suspect the strike could fail? Because if the strike was to fail it should have been said, this line should have been fought, like the Marxists act.

That is, there is a methodological problem: why are we so far from the Colombian people and proletariat that we believe an almost insurrectionary strike is coming and there is no strike? A serious problem, it's the most important. There can be no line, no analysis of Colombian reality without explaining why the party made the most colossal and fabulous theoretical-political mistake in its history.

This has to do with the discussion with *A Luchar*. If *A Luchar* keeps insisting [this line] was a win, we are facing theoretically criminal people and then the mistake can be repeated again. We were worried about that.

But we were also worried about one of the interpretations of the general line of the document. For example, I know that many comrades are against preparing the proletariat for armed struggle, pickets and suchlike. I think this is a very important point of the Transitional Program and it is a great success of the comrade [Simon]. I say [this] because I know there are other [comrades] who are against it (without attacking the party; it is a party that comes from propaganda).

That's why I say it is a very useful document, very good, to discuss. Comrade Simon develops and helps us throughout the IWL to rethink this theoretical-political problem which is the only thing that will allow our party to be truly revolutionary, which is the problem of the battle-hardened party. It is the first document [in which] [this problem] arises like this.

What does battle-hardened mean? For example, *Lutte Ouvrière*. Today, chatting with the comrade, I have taken one of the greatest joys of my life to see that *Lutte Ouvrière* is quite similar to our party. [They allocated] many comrades to the problem [of racism, though] they gave it little importance in the newspaper and they are the strongest sector that fought to the bitter end against the racists in [Paris]. Unlike the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), which made fantastic propaganda and was the one who commanded fewer [militants], or did not command, or stayed half way or with propaganda; [in fact they raised]: “Defend yourselves.” Not *Lutte Ouvrière*: they as a party, and a small party, assumed it as a very important task, [although] not the decisive one.

Then, we can discuss [but] it seems to me this part of the comrade’s document is well placed here because it is a document, a thesis — and rather of a historical type — but it is an essential point of IWL, essential, almost of principles. And it is true that, because of the very propagandist nature of our groups, sometimes if they are too small, it is not [even] necessary to raise it, [or] it must be later demoted. But from there the comrade, in Colombia, begins a program. Even to say: “We are tiny and we cannot do anything but from there this is what we should do.” And they are not so small anymore and can do something.

I clarify to you comrades that the Argentine party is made in this tradition and in this program. The Argentine party has everything, everything. Read everything the guerrillas do in the entire world and [you will see that] the Argentine party has done it but accompanying the mass movement. Is it clear? They have done everything. Think [of all the spectacular things] that you read in the newspapers and the Argentine party has done so but accompanying the struggles of the workers’ and mass movement.

Ok, then I see this point as the strong [point]. I know other comrades see it [as] the weak point and a dangerous one, as an abstraction. For me, it’s an abstraction but fundamental. It is an essential point of the IWL. It is very good for us to discuss it, or even separate it, and even making a general thesis of the IWL. others

Where is the point that terrified us? (To me; I see that other things terrified others. [This document] has had the virtue of provoking scares. Then we will specify of which issue each one is frightened.) I took a leap back (not huge because with Simon we have always discussed strongly and fraternally and we have reached agreements, [so] it is good we start by disagreeing), with a reasoning which is as follows: there is a civil war, and when there is a civil war we submit to the discipline of a side. We say which side is progressive and we submit to its discipline. There is a civil war; today that civil war is led by the guerrillas who in turn control *A Luchar*, ergo — [the document] does not say so but it can be concluded — we go to the discipline of the guerrilla organisations that have not accepted the truce.

And I think, if civil war means for Simon this political conclusion, then we must discuss the term well, carefully because it seems to me an aberrant political conclusion; aberrant and with non-Marxist elements in the analysis. Beware, I do not say this is the line [of the document]; I think it’s eclectic; there is a whole tradition of the working class, so it is not accidental that he insists on the problem of the proletariat, how to arm it, and so on and so forth. I do not know whether it is a consequence of going overboard to the other side, which is also positive. I want to point out this other positive aspect when the comrade talks about the truce, civil war, and so on and so forth.

I want to tell a bit about the history of this discussion. (Later, I will touch, if I have time, the trajectory of the Colombian party, which for me is much better than [you may believe], that is, it is almost an example, despite big mistakes that we have noted.) The Colombian party refused to accept there was an acute revolutionary situation, comrades. It has said it. Not even [pre-revolutionary]. And it was us who insisted that yes, there was [a revolutionary situation]. I do not know whether [we said it] with precision but we have always insisted [the party] was perplexed that in Colombia there was not this situation of stillness the comrades told us about but quite the opposite: it was already a social crisis, a situation the comrade summarises in very few lines in, for me, a perfect way. I don’t know whether it’s a very advanced revolutionary situation; for now, I delete the definitions, [although] I think it is correct. The important thing is the description and definition the comrade



makes at a moment are perfect for me: the decomposition, the cattle rustling, how [everything] falls down, how all the social sectors enter into the struggle (the one that least fights at this moment is the working class). For me, it is a phenomenon far superior to the guerrillas. Later, I will dwell in the objective situation, supporting this analysis of the comrade.

But the comrades saw neither the magnitude of the crisis nor the magnitude of the [rise of the] mass movement and we insisted [with this situation]. Therefore, to get them seeing that there were very large processes, we started using that expression: “Truce of what?” If there is a truce, [it is] among people who fight. The comrade takes very well this question we have asked from IWL and with which we completely agreed here: truce of a civil war, or of a guerrilla war or something like that. Now we have to specify well of what [is the] truce. But the truce is a fundamental category, in which we also agree: the comrade says “the situation is characterised by the truce” and we also agree.

I also want to clarify that when M-19 [emerged] we had a great discussion with Camilo. Simon, together with me and almost all the comrades in IWL today, we raised the problem and discussed a lot with Camilo — the ironies of history because Camilo, I believe, is today a spokesman, or something like that, of M-19. Camilo said it was a phenomenon of no importance, some crazy people who were shooting and we [held] that M-19 had a very large future because of the tremendous crisis in Colombia and the rapid urbanisation that caused very, very serious urban problems which were going to [favour] M-19. I want to clarify that discussion too. This happened in Colombia.

There is a certain theoretical-political context in IWL and also in the Colombian party (in the Colombian party the leadership resisted more but not in IWL) that in truth Colombia was a very serious matter, [that] it was part of the Caribbean, that Nicaragua would fortify the guerrillas. All these positions and ideas that Simon systematizes and points out here are a common heritage.

It seems to me the resistance to see that the situation was pre-revolutionary and then acute revolutionary has made the comrades go [to the other extreme]. Every truth, as soon as it is extended, becomes a falsehood.

Let’s go to the civil war problem that the comrade defines. There are different ways to [define it]. If we wanted to make a controversy with the comrade we would see that if we take the numerical analysis there is no civil war because the comrade says the civil war covers 25 per cent of the territory. And for me today FARC is not in a civil war, that is, within the definition of the comrade, FARC is part of the counter-revolutionary camp. All the documents the comrades have provided me say that FARC has at least 70 per cent of the guerrillas, some say 80 per cent. And then, the comrade says there are three million people who are in a civil war, that is, they support the guerrillas — controlled by the guerrillas, they do not even support — and that the civil war covers 25 per cent of the territory. If we deduct from this Stalinism — 70 per cent — it means there are fewer than a million people left. Are you following me or not? Today, it is one million in a country of almost 30 million [inhabitants]. Here the comrade says [then] that to talk about a civil war in a country...10 per cent is [enough]. According to the Comrade’s definition, if FARC is not in a civil war, then in Colombia, today, after the truce, the situation has changed qualitatively and there is no civil war.

But this is a “chicanery” discussion, as we say, because it may be a mistake, a rush, it may be false that it is 70 per cent, perhaps it is 50 per cent. [In addition,] I do not add the problem of M-19, which at one time was in the truce and it was more serious, and so on and so forth, because I agree with the objective analysis of the comrade.

Then I will dwell on the problem of a civil war: what is civil war and why I disagree with very serious statements by the comrade. The problem of civil war, which has several angles, is already beginning to encompass everything from a theoretical-political point of view.

Let’s go to the first angle on civil war, which is the angle of guerrilla theorists. Let’s see whether, for the guerrillas, there is a civil war not in propaganda but in the theoretical analysis. The guerrillas define that every guerrilla war has three phases — I think Simon knows it as much as I do. The first phase [is that] of guerrillas, which they think is not a [civil] war but guerrilla warfare. The second phase, which is also not a civil war, is of columns that already move: 100, 150, 200

people. And civil war is when they come to [the] war of positions, having nominated a geographical sector and with armies; that is, they face 1,000, 2,000, 5,000 [combatants], and the problem of government takeover is raised, [it is] when it is militarily possible to take over the government.

For example, I think the comrade's definition that the true civil war begins in Mexico with Madero's call is completely correct (despite the interruptions I made yesterday, but I did it to see whether we agreed) because all the fabulous guerrillas they had before Madero were not a civil war. Because before Madero, Mexico was falling apart, and Porfirio Diaz, who brutally persecuted the peasantry started this civil war. Zapata's problem, for example, begins before [Madero], under Porfirio Diaz.

I would not [define] it [as] civil war, or I define everything [as] civil war but I define the stages of the civil war. Every guerrilla, 20 guys who come together to shoot, is a civil war but it is a "little guerrilla" civil war divided by 10, which has nothing to do with civil wars already with real armies like those that Madero mounts. I don't know, interrupt me whenever you want. That is what Madero starts: the struggle for power based on armies.

Civil war is when armies that reflect different [social] classes face the possibility, one or the other, of taking power. [This is] the restrictive definition of civil war, following Simon's very good oral analysis yesterday that civil war exists potentially in the class struggle. There are two expressions of civil war, as [it happens with] the theory of relativity. What we are discussing is the specific one — the civil war that is geographical and the class struggle that becomes geographical. Trotsky's narrow definition of the civil war: the geographical one.

For me, guerrilla warfare is not a civil war because it does not raise the question of power. It is defensive: hit and hide. The second phase is not civil war either, it is a step. The third phase, when armies arise and the defeat of the other army is posed, the confrontations of an army against an army is civil war.

You know I am quite manic about Mao and the guerrilla theorists, so excuse me for this theoretical discussion, everybody has his flaws. I have said they are great and I think so, that their analysis is great. I think the revolution in Greece was lost because Markos<sup>5</sup> transformed his guerrilla — which was in its second phase, to move on to the third — and went on to the third phase. He declared civil war there; that was a civil war. But he did not realise his army would be weak and lost. He lost and finished everything: guerrillas, everything... Markos himself disappeared from the face of the earth, possibly liquidated by the GPU.

So this civil war problem, seen from the guerrilla angle, is very interesting, very correct. Rather than quoting Clausewitz,<sup>6</sup> I would quote guerrilla theorists and the three phases. To bring the discussion down to earth, in Colombia we are between the first and the second phase and not between the second and the third. And with the defection of FARC, I get the impression we have gone back to the first. But we can discuss it later, [now] I want to bring the discussion down to earth. So, if my analysis is correct, there are guerrillas in Colombia, not a civil war. I insist: according to guerrilla theorists.

But there is much more than guerrillas. Because in Colombia, according to what the comrade says [in his document], there is a situation in which the peasantry rises, the desperate sectors of the middle class get up and fight, there is cattle rustling... Yes, that is the basis, for me, this is the key, I agree a thousand per cent. That is what it is: there is more than guerrillas.

And the guerrillas connect with a social problem. Comrade Simon is absolutely right. But it is not the dominant factor; it is an element, a part of this process. Colombia is what the comrade paints, it is a problem, a tremendous social crisis, desperate urban masses; the problem of generalised

5 **Markos** was the great leader of the Greek guerrilla. He was part of the Communist Party, which became of masses during the resistance to the Nazi invasion. As part of the agreement of Stalin with the Allies, the heroic Greek resistance was betrayed and abandoned and ended up defeated militarily by the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

6 **Carl von Clausewitz** (1780–1831) was a Prussian general, one of the most influential historians and theorists of modern military science. He is best known for his treatise *On War*. He had many aphorisms, of which the most famous is "War is the continuation of politics by other means."

robbery in cities is not pointed out there, which I also think is an expression... it is a socialised robbery; it is stolen out of desperation. There is a massive cattle rustling — that is, theft of cattle in livestock areas. There are increasingly large peasant mobilisations. Everything, everything the comrade says in his thesis is true. And the guerrillas are part of this phenomenon. [It is] combined: elements of the city who go to the countryside and find a [conducive] environment.

(And combined with a very important geographical fact, almost unique in Latin America: it has three mountain ranges in the Andes instead of one. That is, when guerrilla theorists look at a map, they say: “This one.” I don’t know how Che Guevara didn’t go there, it’s crazy! And with the tradition [that Colombia has] because it is a country that has lived in civil wars, guerrillas, banditry, everything, everything.... These phenomena happen.

For example, a former teacher comrade, a great labour lawyer who had his whole family killed in the famous Violencia, told me some things that made my hair stand on end; things that I thought I had only lived in Peru when it took me three days in a taxi to go from Lima to Cuzco. He told me he lived in a town in Tolima and to go to the small town of his family, which on the map is something like 20 or 25 kilometres [in a straight line] away, it took him more than half a day or a day. So imagine a place that in Argentina is 10 or 20 minutes, at most half an hour’s journey, in Colombia the guy takes half a day to a day to arrive. Well, that is Colombia: a geographically exceptional place [to make guerrillas].)

So I think this is the social situation, which is most interesting. There are guerrillas, within a problem in the countryside increasingly acute. There are peasant mobilisations that are not directly guerrillas. There is the despair of urban sectors. It is a society in an economic and social crisis, totally in crisis, with sectors of the masses that enter into permanent struggles and with a minority, very minority guerrilla within the mass movement. The mass movement is much larger than the guerrillas. Guerrillas do not dominate the mass movement; they have influence in an important sector of the vanguard but not the majority. And without the proletariat being the axis at this juncture.

It is not accidental my observation to the comrade of why he contradicted himself between the Theses and his oral presentation because I believe the comrade has a contradiction. It seems to me the comrade’s analysis in his oral presentation is much more coherent when he says that the civil war opened in 1977 with the civic strike and not when Turbay Ayala makes the offensive. Turbay Ayala, for me, makes the offensive because in 1977 the class struggle in Colombia gives a colossal leap. That is why, while disagreeing with the category of civil war, it seemed to me the periodisation the comrade did yesterday in the oral report is better than the characterisation he did in the Theses. For me what divides Colombia is the great civic strike of 1977. Of such importance it is, I would almost say it opens an entire era in Colombia. And the failure of the strike and the passage of FARC [to the truce] have not changed this scenario at all, there is no historical defeat, they did not close that stage or anything like that.

Now, where it seems to me that I disagree — and this is secondary, it is a matter to discuss with the Colombian comrades who know the history of Colombia better than anyone else — is that 1977 emerges like lightning in a clear sky. I disagree. I think since the end of the 1960s, a colossal rise opens up in Colombia, which encompasses mainly the students, originates several phenomena — the Socialist Bloc<sup>7</sup> and MOIR [Revolutionary Independent Labour Movement] as the two most important superstructural phenomena — which connects with the Stalinist crisis caused by Maoism and creates powerful parties, movements and [causes] transformations in the superstructure and also in the struggles. There are, for example, great struggles like Paila’s, if I’m not mistaken, in the sugar [union], to point out one. And many others. The unions begin to develop and the independent and the Maoists gain a terrific strength; MOIR is almost transformed into a party as strong as the CP; ANUC [National Association Of Campesino Users]... well, everything.

<sup>7</sup> The **Socialist Bloc** was a very progressive centrist organisation which Moreno won for orthodox Trotskyism and then became the Colombian PST.

And my opinion is that the culmination of this process is the civic strike which, for me, was a revolutionary crisis. We would need to fine tune it. (A revolutionary crisis: that's very nice, I had not thought about it.) [And,] like every revolutionary crisis that does not lead to the problem of power, [it] leads to a decline. But [it is] a descent from a summit, which no longer goes down [to the previous period]. For me, they are stages of the rise and within the stages of the rise [there are] ebbs and flows.

You will say this discussion is historical and how boring! It is very boring. However, it is important because, just as the great Russian Revolution was based on the highest point of the ascent, which was the 1905 Revolution as a general essay, I allow myself, with my theoretical mania, to make another statement: the Colombian revolution will be a civic strike like the one of 1977, [only] much broader and supported by the guerrillas if they subsist. At least, it will be the most likely revolutionary process.

There is the other, the Chinese style — not Nicaraguan — revolutionary process of guerrillas. I do not see it for Colombia, to begin with, because I consider Colombia to be an advanced capitalist country: among the backward [it is] among the most advanced, [it is] very capitalist. And that the most that can be are to repeat that of Nicaragua. But [Colombia is] on a much, much higher level. Nor do I think it repeats [the process] of Nicaragua because Nicaragua also wins because of the civic strikes, not the guerrillas. What the guerrilla gives is direction. And let's see what kind of direction. This is the serious problem that exists in Colombia unlike Nicaragua: that, for me, there is no party with mass influence which wants to defeat the government, excepting the small guerrilla nuclei, to which we, with good reason, look with great sympathy even though they support [Sandinismo in] Nicaragua and everything. But not because it is with good reason can we magnify them: they are small guerrilla groups.

I am trying, as you see, to make an exposure to see what we disagree on and what we are agreeing on. After so many strong aspects that I have pointed out, here comes a weak point of the comrade's Theses, which is the role of Stalinism. If in Nicaragua Stalinism had led the guerrillas, Somoza would not have fallen, or Somoza would have fallen in another way, almost certainly not by revolutionary means. It is one reason [why] the victory in El Salvador slows so much and possibly leads to El Salvador not winning.

The two great guerrilla victories in Latin America were made by leaderships — in this, I think Trotskyism has to change its definition — [which are] revolutionary, petty bourgeois, and democratic: Fidel Castro and FSLN. In Colombia, we are very screwed. We have to say it. Unfortunately, the role of Stalinism is very strong in the guerrillas and quite strong in the trade union movement.

The document [of the comrade] tries to grab the new phenomena and this is where he goes overboard. The great definition is what the situation of the classes is: the peasantry begins to mobilise; the urban sector is screwed and does not contribute the proletariat and quite rightly so. This is why I say it is the key definition. Well, what weak methodological point do I see in the comrade's expression? There is the tremendous danger of the blocs, of eliminating Marxist, class analysis: what classes fight; if there were civil war — and for there to be, for me, it would have to be the third stage of the guerrilla but I don't want to discuss names — what classes the armies respond to, what class the armies reflect. Then there would have a civil war and all the reasoning of the comrade would fit perfectly. It is a civil war [in which] we have to say which side we are on.

But in Colombia there is no civil war, there are small guerrillas and other very large guerrillas. Then [there is] the danger of replacing class analysis, which the comrade does so well in one of his theses, for another analysis being that the fundamental reality of Colombia [is civil war]. That is the danger when one insists: "We have to see everything through the civil war, everything goes through the civil war." And for me everything goes through the class struggle, which has not yet risen to the level where there is an army that reflects the proletariat and the impoverished masses; it has not risen to that point.



Then [there is] the danger of the famous bloc theory, that our political action is in blocs. There is the bloc of those who shoot bullets and the bloc of those who do not shoot and are for the truce, and those who are for the truce are an objective part of the counter-revolution.

Then the question becomes confusing, it becomes confusing as a placement: do we place ourselves in the bloc that is against the truce? Or do we agree [to be] against the truce with the guerrilla that is against the truce? But we “agree”, because our work is not there, but [with the working class]. Look what almost foolish truth for a Marxist! But that has been the discussion with Mandel and with Lambert, on different levels: [with Mandel] about the guerrillas and with Lambert regarding Mitterrand. We are with the working class. Our workplace is the working class. And it is to convince the entire working class and not those who fight. That is our exclusive, fundamental task.

We don't have the task of convincing those who do guerrillas. I say [this] to see whether we have differences. Our great task is to convince the working class, including those who vote for Turbay Ayala, including those who are for peace and the truce. Because as the guerrilla is a superstructural phenomenon, which has not yet connected with the social process, for us they are a tactical problem — of agreement, of defence, of agreement against the truce. But [it is] a very difficult problem because we have to combine it with what policy we have for the whole of the working class, including [for] the sectors of the working class that are in the truce, which I get the impression are mostly majority.

This is of cardinal importance and leads us almost to exchange shots with the guerrillas, with the guerrillas!, and perhaps to *A Luchar* dividing. Because, what is our true position? A variety like this: FARC, all the guerrillas and all the organisations call to a great democratic congress of the workers' movement and they all commit themselves to submit to its discipline, all of them. Thus we are having a dialogue with the working class majority who do not want guerrillas. We will say yes, the guerrilla in this [congress] is brilliant but only if the guerrilla that supports. *A Luchar* says: “We abide by the discipline of our class”! As in any workers' congress or whatever. Else, [we are facing] ultra-left groups and of elitist type, very respectable but of elitist type.

This is a great line for us, which will perhaps isolate us from *A Luchar*, or not, but that we have to fight for it. We have to tell the guerrillas themselves that the division of FARC by unilateral measure of [themselves] is a crime, a weakening of the guerrilla struggle itself. But along with this, we have to keep calling to achieve a front; [we have to] attempt to see how we uproot the peasants who follow FARC, which are two million peasants, how we win them again to face the government and not to work in favour of the government. A very difficult problem; hence the importance of the comrade's Theses.

Because there are tremendous problems. I don't think we will solve them. We have to be all very modest. But the problem of FARC in the government's service is a serious problem. The comrades have brought me exhaustive documentation that demonstrates FARC works militarily in favour of the government: they hand over the guerrillas who do not accept the truce, and so on and so forth. Then there can be slogans as good as this: “We are against the truce but we want a great democratic guerrilla congress.” Another, similar to what Simon [raised]: “We want a tribunal formed by the entire workers' movement, including international.” It is not bad, as long as it is accompanied by discipline to the workers' movement. For example, an international tribunal that says whether the Stalinists are really killing [the guerrillas who do not accept the truce], or that preside over a congress of the workers' movement to repudiate that and abide by all that is resolved, or a thousand variations which we can discuss later.

What we have to discuss is if we are part of the workers' movement, we work on the entire workers' movement, we are respectful of the backwardness of the workers' movement and we are totally against minority actions, we are for the democracy of the entire workers' movement.

This was the great discussion with Mandel about the guerrillas, and so it was the result for the Mandelist guerrillas. That's why we were with the Nicaraguan guerrillas. We were only in favour of

them after the demonstrations [for the murder] of Chamorro,<sup>8</sup> not before. Why? For example, [in the 1973 elections] in Argentina Peron took 70 per cent [of the votes] or a little more, the Radicals with the other parties 24 per cent or 25 per cent. Ninety-five per cent, 96 per cent of the Argentine people had voted against the guerrillas, and the ERP [People's Revolutionary Army] did guerrilla warfare. We said "No." That is why we proposed popular tribunals — something similar to the comrade's idea — to judge them and for them to promise to abide by the discipline. Because we said: "They will destroy you."

The case of Comrade Cesar [Robles, one of the top leaders of the then Argentine PST] is tragic. Do you know how and why he died? It was a cluster of misfortunes. Comrade Cesar went to the airport and there were no more tickets. As he did not know where to go to sleep, he waits for some comrades to arrive and lend him an apartment. In this apartment — or in another — Montoneros<sup>9</sup> had slept. Cesar did not realise that one block away was a car — I think a green Falcon, surely cops — parked with four guys inside. When the comrade with him realises this, they go quickly to Caballito<sup>10</sup> (they were two or three streets away from Caballito) and enter a café. They drink coffee and pay right away to leave. The police enter and Cesar leaves quietly: he had been saved. But the police say: "Didn't you see such a man — and describe Cesar — who is Montonero?" And the whole café quickly stood up to see how they gave him in. Do you understand? That's how he fell, handed over by the people.

It was logical. We used to tell Montoneros: "But how are you going to fight against 95 per cent of the proletariat who is against guerrilla warfare?" It is different from the problem of La Violencia.

So, comrades, I do not see that the great majority of the proletariat, not even of the Colombian people, support the guerrillas. That is why, for me, the general strike failed and we lost the FECODE Congress. For me; it might not be that way, but it deserves [to be discussed]. FECODE is one of the two most important facts of the workers' movement that there has been and also that precious strike by putting bombs that you have told us, which excites me, excites me, seems brilliant to me. Hopefully, we achieve it, let's popularise that and let's make pickets. Everything you said about this is another bright part of your report. It has to do with what I said. It is extraordinary that you propose a program of the armament of the proletariat, of pickets, of all that. That does not scare me.

But, for me, right now most of the Colombian people are not won, much less the proletariat, to overturn to the government. Sorry to tell you. I even doubt that all the farmers who mobilise are for making a revolution.

And, fall on your back: I will not criticise what looks like a monstrous betrayal by ELN, monstrous. I do not, with my conception, no. With the conception you apparently have, you would have to say they are scoundrels. Because, if I am not mistaken, and the facts seem to prove it is true, they have agreed with an imperialist company, [Mannesmann,] which has bought them by giving them the distribution of products.

I'll give you a few more details. The area where ELN is strong is the oil zone. The manager of [the] company — I don't know whether it's correct, you correct me, [but since] there is a mess with the government, there really must be something — he informs the following: he doesn't want the police or the government army to enter; he is very calm about the other guerrilla and the workers because who organises everything for them is ELN, [which] safeguards them from another guerrilla; they do not want the army or the police — and there is a mess with the army and the police, who want to enter; don't bother, because they have given money [to ELN], and besides money [they have given them] jobs, and giving them jobs the whole problem is over.

8 **Pedro Joaquín Chamorro** (1924–1978) was a Nicaraguan journalist, the editor of *La Prensa*, the only significant opposition newspaper to the long rule of the Somoza family. He married Violeta Barrios de Chamorro who later went on to become President of Nicaragua (1990-1996). In 1978, Somoza's henchmen shot him to death precipitating events of the overthrow of the Somoza regime the following year.

9 **Montoneros** was the main Peronist guerrilla organisation in Argentina. It was born encouraged by Peron himself. It pursued guerrilla warfare between 1970 and 1979. It was primarily composed of young men and women of the middle class.

10 **Caballito** is a district in the city of Buenos Aires.

This shows [the problem] is social and [of] lack of conscience. It doesn't seem bad to me, it doesn't seem like a mistake. It seems to me bad that we believed ELN is revolutionary, even if it has 65 revolutionary programs because an organisation that does that, that for a plate of lentils agrees to the defence of a capitalist enterprise... for those who believe it is revolutionary is a terrible mess.

I do not know whether [those of] you in *A Luchar* will ask for a pronouncement saying that ELN be thrown out from all places. Because I don't believe, I refuse to believe that a Stalinist leadership does such a thing, I refuse to believe it. And this is their main area. It is a problem to discuss. I would not make a great attack, fall [on your back], because I think it is a mixture of countryside guerrilla desperate for work and, ultimately, that is its real programmatic point. Is it clear? All the same, I would hit them hard [stating they are not revolutionaries]. I would see unity in this and in supporting them from Nicaragua. I don't know whether [what I told you] is like that, maybe they are lies, but I make it clear that there is a terrible mess. And ELN has not denied this problem.

And [ELN] is, politically, from the point of view of the class struggle, the most ultra-rightist faction in Colombia in this [aspect], even though it is against the truce. I mean, the line is that if a boss pays money and gives employment, they fight for that boss. This, not even the bureaucracy of UTC [Union of Colombian Workers] has the guts to say it or do it.

It doesn't scare me because I think it's a contradictory phenomenon and I still believe that refusing the truce is very positive. But it reflects a problem of lack of work and lack of revolutionary awareness of them, and so on and so forth. I'm not going to the extreme for this but I point out there is a very, very serious contradiction there. And for me, it is no accident that the comrade did not touch it in his material.

But it is also a rare civil war because the main sector [FARC] is — this must be pointed out — totally next to the government that makes the civil war: it is the counter-revolution. And they win unions like FECODE. I suspect — I may be mistaken — that also 80 per cent or 90 per cent of the Colombian proletariat is led by these people; this is why the general strike failed. It is my explanation but we must discuss it.

Those are the things to discuss. Because, if so, our first task... Our policy is always of class. Then we have to say: our class is very backward. And we have to do the same thing we have done with Peronism: see with what language, with what method, how we achieve the unity of the working class. Our policy starts with being of class, not of blocs. We are not with the guerrilla bloc against the anti-guerrilla bloc or against the bloc that, being from the mass movement, fights against the guerrillas; although we do defend the guerrillas. Our principle is we are with our class, trying to win our class so that in turn our class leads its eventual political and social allies. We must win the marginalised of the city; we must win the peasantry...

So, this problem of the placement of FARC is very important. But very important for two reasons. [One] is how we win the peasants that FARC influence. This is the true Marxist approach. There is no thesis dedicated to this or the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism. [In the document] it is indicated but with a very dangerous phrase, as meaning that FARC or the CP is a dike, a phrase that means "dike", which paralyzes. No, the issue is more active, so it deserves a chapter. They think how they sink the revolution, how they repress it. It is much more serious. But however more serious it might be, it does not make us lose our class criteria. We want to win the peasants they lead and there will be no revolution in Colombia as long as we don't win the peasants they lead.

But [the other reason is that,] first, we want to win the proletariat. This is extremely difficult, ultra-difficult. Why? Because the proletariat has not risen to the level of the civic strike of 1977. It is no accident that [in those years] our party has made a rally of 3,000, 3,500 people and aroused great enthusiasm, and our mobilisations had 1,000 to 1,500 people — which was spectacular in Colombia —, and that our column was third [in importance] in the May Day rallies and second when MOIR did not come, and that [was] shocking and almost the centre of politics, and not now. Because, as in May 1968 in France, it has fallen in relation to that point it achieved.

For me, as for Simon, qualitatively nothing changed. On the contrary: the proletariat ebbed but the peasantry enters more and more, the urban sector enters more and more. But in my perspective [a process like that of] Guatemala enters more. I believe in Guatemala. Look what is happening. It will come back, it will come back. It was a general rehearsal.

And, for me — here I disagree [with the comrade]—, our party has an extraordinary performance. It is a great proletarian party, a wonder. The most serious thing would be if it loses its mind because the general strike was lost. It is normal for the party to feel bad if the general strike was lost, it is normal. It was normal that we were fine in 1977. It's normal, we accompany our class. And no starting to freak out: [with] “these are fighters and then we will win them.” We will not win them for our policy. For our policy [we must] win the whole working class. We will not win the guerrillas.

So for us, the essential thing is the analysis of class and class policy: today how we get in Colombia the proletariat to rise up and return to a superior 1977 because it connects with the peasantry, it connects with the guerrillas who do not want to fight, it would connect with FARC guerrillas who want to be with the government, but it would connect, [because] it would see the guerrilla very badly, very badly, it would see Stalinism very badly. I mean, this has to be the orientation.

And with an addition: it seems to me that the guerrillas play a distortion role. For years I've had an attitude of acknowledgement of the comrade's sense of smell. The comrade had the colossal success [of posing] that there would not be a great socialist tendency in Colombia. He never gave a theoretical explanation of that success and I never gave the theoretical explanation, because I couldn't find it, of my mistake. I think I have given it now.

You know the old discussion in the Colombian party. With Simon we have almost always agreed, almost always, but this time we did not agree (always in an ultra-fraternal discussion) on whether a strong socialist current was coming in Colombia or not. My opinion was [this current] was inevitable and it would be expressed by electoral means. And the comrade said: “I don't see it, I don't see it.” He did not make a great theoretical explanation, but said: “It does not come.” And I said “It comes”, because I said: “It happened in Venezuela, it happened in Ecuador, it happened in Peru, it came up with PS-1 [Socialist Party-1] in Bolivia, it existed in Chile and it existed in Uruguay. It had not happened in Argentina and Colombia, and I said: “It happens everywhere, why isn't it going to happen?”

There is a joke in the Caribbean, which says the oil that came from Venezuela went under Colombia and came out again in Peru. Because Colombia had no oil, it was a miracle. Venezuela had oil everywhere: heavy, medium heavy, light, medium light, everything. Maracaibo has light oil of the best in the world, and the best heavy oil in the world they have it over there, through Guyana. So it was really a miracle [that Colombia did not have any] — now it is being discovered — [because] it was an obvious petroleum area.

Well, I was of the opinion the socialist movement would not repeat what happened with oil and Venezuela would come to Colombia and would join Ecuador. It didn't happen that way; it was a total failure. The press gave us a lot of importance. Beware: very good bourgeois theorists were of the opinion [it was possible], they saw us with sympathy, they came to our cocktails [for the press] thinking they were discussing with future great politicians. It was a very general hoax.

And Simon was right that it would not [happen, although] it was not well understood [why]. As he did not give me a reason, I always said: “Look at the crystal ball.” And I attacked him hard. But he, unstoppable, hard as a stone: “It won't happen, it won't happen.” And it didn't happen.

Why am I telling you all this? Because I think this discussion is so rich that it gives the key, it seems to me. The guerrillas play a decompression role in the true class struggle, of a safety valve, I regret to tell you. For FARC, Stalinism suits them extraordinarily well because, where does every very combative boy, a fighter of the workers' movement and who flirts with a class and strike line go? To the guerrillas. I am almost certain of that.



I am convinced Colombia would be like El Salvador or like Peru and Ecuador if the guerrillas did not exist, but I might be wrong. And, if the guerrillas had not existed, what began as a colossal movement in 1968, 1969, the socialist movement, would have caught. Not yet led by us, but before [we showed up]. We would have been a fraction of that. I am almost convinced. I think the guerrillas play such a role. It plays a nefarious role regarding *A Luchar*. And now I will touch the superstructural problem. Why nefarious? And here comes the discussion of *A Luchar* and the superstructure of the Colombian workers' and mass movement.

Well, the CP and FARC first. FARC and the CP are not exactly the same phenomenon although FARC is oriented by the CP. Why? Because for me FARC are a point of dual power, although today they fight against the guerrillas. For me guerrilla is not synonymous with dual power, it is not synonymous. Neither is dual power synonymous with revolution, although it gives the conditions of the revolution. What do I mean by this? In Germany, there were counter-revolutionary soviets, led by independent socialists or even by social democracy. And they were soviets, it was a dual power. There is Trotsky's famous analysis of how he tried to incorporate dual power into the constitutions of some regions of Germany. It serves the counter-revolution. This is a very serious problem for the bourgeoisie and for imperialism and for bourgeois governments. It is a very big problem, huge, that sooner or later it will burst somewhere. Unfortunately, this dual power serves the counter-revolution, but there is a contradiction: as a phenomenon it is unsustainable.

Why do I say it is dual power? It is dual power for what the document says perfectly well. Except that the document defines it as civil war and for me, that is not a civil war yet because those who lead it are not for defeating the regime. But it is dual power. There are sectors of dual power. Colombia is full of sectors where the bourgeoisie cannot get in — either the army or the police — or if it goes in it has to leave. It is a fact of reality, of the extraordinary revolutionary situation. This is why it is an acute [crisis]: there are elements of dual power. I believe it is much weaker or almost non-existent [in the cities], and they will smash them because Colombia is a modern country, [with axis] in the cities. What [they say] of Cali, I consider circumstantial and not fundamental.

If I am not confused — the European comrades will know much better whether it is so or not — during Mussolini's twenty-something years in Italy, in Milan there were several working-class neighbourhoods where fascism could not enter. Fascism rather contemporized. That is to say, a guy could be a communist but they didn't put him in jail because the fascists of the neighbourhood would be smashed. I read this in a critical film commentary, very, very deep, of a film by Marcello Mastroiani, which portraits the communist boss of the neighbourhood with the lady who followed him and who lived throughout fascism. The film commentary said it was a famous neighbourhood that fascism did not touch; it never imprisoned anyone because all the fascists knew that as soon as someone got in prison they killed all the fascists in the neighbourhood.

I think there are some elements of this in the cities [but] the phenomenon is not widespread. On the other hand, in the countryside, it is, [it covers] 20 per cent and of very important areas of the countryside. Everything the comrade says here about the civil war, I say about dual power, this is the dual power.

The government, with great skill, has tried to avoid the very serious problem that [means] that 70 per cent of that dual power kicks for the side of the civil war, and has tried by all means to get it kicking for its side. But there is a contradiction, as there was in Germany: it is dual power. Eventually, the government will say: "It is over." FARC are doomed, either to make an incalculable betrayal, to hand over the weapons, to let the army enter or that at a point in the counter-revolution's path [repression goes] against them, because the bourgeoisie — it is a matter of principle [for them] — cannot allow dual power.

To define the situation, I see the analysis thus — not of civil war but of dual power with a sector that makes guerrilla warfare. So, regarding FARC and the CP, today, unfortunately, the most substantial part of dual power eases the repression of those who have not accepted the truce. But dual power remains. The bourgeoisie, to do this manoeuvre, has had to accept it exists and that it be shown to the whole country. It is a scary example. The CP, comrades, is committed to make any

dirty tricks to sink the revolution. It is not a matter of being just a factor that is there and that slows it down. That is, it is an active, dangerous factor. Everyone is in favour of this.

Therefore, notice the contradiction: when we criticised the newspaper of the Colombian comrades, the biggest criticism we made was not because of the truce, as the politics of the comrades [to] criticise the truce seemed brilliant to us, but because we were of the opinion the most important thing was how to live in the areas where FARC dominated. Don't you remember? Because we were of the opinion the entire peasant movement had to be told: "We must do what FARC does, they take over a sector and do not let a policeman or a [soldier] enter", which is dual power. Notice how this theoretical issue has its propaganda implications of the first order.

Then M-19 follows. M-19, even if we accept the civil war thing, is sitting on a fence, which is very uncomfortable. It is almost impossible to sit on a fence but the M-19 has achieved this miracle: it must be recognised that it is on a fence. I do not know to which side it will fall because anyone who sits on a fence surely falls. Their slogan is "For a new government", but a bourgeois government.

This is another reason why we cannot call civil war even the previous stage, with FARC [fighting]. And Simon, defending his position, made a very good observation to me in the past, not here but in a discussion we had. He said, if I remember correctly: "Hugo, but did FARC fight, in the sense of fighting against the government?" I think not. I think FARC has permanently had the policy of not being a guerrilla movement of liquidation of either the landowners or the government. [They] have been a diverting manoeuvre of the CP in an explosive situation.

[This] reminds me a lot of Pierre Broué's<sup>11</sup> analysis of Madrid [at the time of the civil war] — that among other things, I don't know whether it's correct but at least *si non e vero e ben trovato* [if not true, it is well founded]—, which showed in Madrid there was not even dual power. In Madrid, there was a commune, as in Paris, because of [the weight of] the circumstances, that is, made by the counter-revolutionary Stalinism as a diverting manoeuvre and forced by the situation. In Madrid there was no bourgeois, there was a terrible hunger, if everything was not expropriated and distributed with bonds there was no way of eating, and so on and so forth. Then, Broué says the Commune of Madrid emerged, as developed or more than the one of Paris. More than dual power: directly workers' power. At the service of what? On the counter-revolution: it was led by the Stalinists in the service of reaching an agreement with the bourgeoisie and the government.

To what extent has the CP, knowing there is an explosive peasant situation, managed to take it to FARC, which in turn is a dead end because they do not pose the problem of the fall of the government but instead consider a government of national unity? A total difference with FSLN of Nicaragua, a total difference with that little guerrilla, which was nothing [in relation to] FARC, but [that was made great by] the mere fact of being consequently anti-Somozist; that is, "Down with the government" was truly the centre of their policy. Like Castro: the centre of his policy was "Down with Batista". I get the impression — you have to fine tune it better than me — [the guerrillas] also play a role as a safety valve to the rise of the peasant movement.

**Simon:** Manuel Marulanda<sup>12</sup> says that what the government did was to unleash repression of the entire peasantry and if instead, they had given them land and a little money, a coexistence agreement would have been made as they requested. I did not dare to raise it openly because we have no evidence but we will get it.

**Moreno:** Well, then it's already proven. Excuse me. Marulanda... No, and I think it's a problem and a respectable one. If we are good Marxists, we have to raise this slogan; otherwise, we fall into sectarianism and the ultra-left. That's why I defend ELN. I am even passionate that what they asked for is work. But I am against us magnifying... I would not call them traitors; they are truly starving. But neither would I call them a revolutionary party. I don't know whether you understand me. Or Marulanda either. As a [CP militant], yes: "Go to hell." But to him, as a peasant

11 **Pierre Broué** (1926–2005) was a French historian and Trotskyist revolutionary militant whose work covers the history of the Bolshevik Party, the Spanish Revolution, and biographies of Leon Trotsky.

12 Pedro Antonio Marin (1930–2008), known by his "nom de guerre" **Manuel Marulanda**, was the main leader of FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). He was nicknamed *Tirofijo* (Straightshot) by his comrades.

leader... He is typical of the narrowness of the peasant movement, so they need the leadership of the proletariat. I would not hit Marulanda [very hard] either, [rather] I would defend him, I would say: “Look what a scoundrel this Colombian capitalist regime is that did not give them what they asked for, and we want them to get it and that the proletariat fight for them to get it “

Ok, let’s go to the problem of *A Luchar*, to the discussion of whether it is a political or union [front]. This is also a catch-22 discussion, similar to that of civil war. We will never agree. And [however] it is very easy for us to agree if we bring [the discussion] down to earth. First, because every trade union organisation that endures over time is political. That is for sure. If when we say it is a union [front] this is taken in a narrow sense, in this the comrades trounce us: it is political. I think *A Luchar* has a basic political agreement, which is that it is against the truce. And this is political. And from this derive a series of consequences.

It is not only political, but it is also more than political. And here comes our skill. It is essentially the guerrilla trade union current — for me — where we have infiltrated. It is one of the best works of art of Trotskyism but it can be fatal because it can leave us hugging the bear.

**Frank:** They can infiltrate us.

**Moreno:** They don’t infiltrate us or care about us. They consider we are very brilliant elements for their politics. It is planned by them, sorry to tell you. Then, all the ultra-super-Trotskyist statements they accept from us also come into their plans to have a union superstructure. That’s why they don’t let students in. Because, according to the guerrilla scheme — they say it in their courses — they need to have a peasant public apparatus, a union public apparatus, and a student public apparatus; what they call “surface organisations”. And *A Luchar* refuses to let peasants or students in and it refuses because the guerrillas, the guerrilla leadership has resolved according to their principles and what they are taught.

The other thing they’re taught in the guerrillas is that the program has no importance. What [does] have [importance], the essence of the program, is the shooting. This is why they agree with different programs. The central point of their program is: “The mass movement is secondary; it is very good but as an aid; the focus is always the military.” This is why I believe the programmatic agreement with them is almost impossible; because they are not for the class discipline. They are for the workers’ movement to support theirs. For example, if the entire Colombian workers’ movement meets, makes a great congress, almost has soviets, and it tells [them] “You have to be subject to us”, I have doubts [they will accept it]. If the workers’ movement becomes very strong, it may be so.

To pose problems to you and bring down to earth what you discuss, I have doubts, for example, about whether they would put bombs in [struggles of] unions they don’t lead. It is not a principle of them as [indeed] it was of Durruti.<sup>13</sup> For example, they would be extraordinary [if they did what Durruti did]. Durruti planted bombs in [struggles] of as many unions there were and killed all kinds of bosses, even if they were not [bosses of unions] led directly [by his current.] It was really a working-class terrorist current. Is it clear or not? Well-disciplined and democratic too, of his faction.

Once he was told: “There is a construction strike in Madrid” — this is part of the history of the world workers’ movement. The strike would inevitably be lost. The anarchists could not enter Madrid and then they told Durruti (who wherever he stepped in not even the grass would grow): “Please, go to Madrid.” And he alone won the strike: he began to burst bosses that it was scary. And the construction [union] of Madrid was a bulwark of anarchism, the only bulwark of anarchism, and the most heroic union in the defence of Madrid. He lost half of his members, who died building the parapets [for the defence of Madrid]. Half died. Every time one poked his head, bang!, Franco shot him; [he fell and] another [took his place]. And that’s what Durruti did.

I don’t get the impression [of *A Luchar*] being like that. That is why I give so much importance to [what happened in] Mannesmann because ultimately it is the same as Marulanda proposed. I

<sup>13</sup> **Buenaventura Durruti** (1896–1936) was an anarcho-syndicalist who played an influential role during Spanish Civil War. Durruti is remembered as a hero in the Anarchist movement.

don't know whether you understand me. What did Marulanda say? "We wanted them to give us some land and some money to fix everything. Nobody wanted to overturn anyone." ELN says it wants to bring everyone down but [when] someone comes, it says: "Give me some money and work." And [if they get it] the problem is over: they stop fighting in that region. It might be false, but I compare it [because] it is the same social problem. Do you understand me? They did not rise to a true general program of support for the struggles. For me, hence the serious mistake of the general strike.

Then *A Luchar* is the essentially trade union surface apparatus [of the guerrillas], where they have realised that politically we are against the truce, we are for denouncing all the traitors in favour of the truce... They are also for this denunciation and then they agree with us in this and in a series of very progressive union positions. That is why for us it is union. Because of every attempt to transform it into political... [The union], like any Marxist definition, is operational. We in *A Luchar* should not argue that ELN is a monstrosity; not at all. We do not have to argue that [Sandinismo in] Nicaragua is terrible; not at all. We have to raise it, for me, from a newspaper within a global policy.

Well, comrades, as a conclusion then: one thing is to correct errors of appreciation, journalism, to locate ourselves; one thing is to know who our allies are or who we defend, and another thing is to change the orientation of our party. Our party in Colombia has had an extraordinary orientation. It has [also] had the mistake of not seeing the situation was advanced revolutionary. But it would be very serious to change the orientation of the party, even [the orientation] of the sectarian stage. It's a matter of overcoming sectarian weaknesses. It seems to me the party was also extraordinarily well in the sectarian stage. After all, what it did not see were processes that were not typical of the workers' movement. It did see the issue of the teachers; the work in teaching is extraordinary.

Because your task is very difficult. In each of IWL's parties, you have to convince yourselves of the problem of the Argentine party: there is no possibility of taking a great leap while the mass movement does not break the counter-revolutionary apparatus and especially Stalinism. [As long as this doesn't happen] there is no possibility of massive mass growth. We work on the proletariat, even if it is not enough, sometimes increasing by units, waiting for the outbreak of our class. And [we do it] holding the conviction there are no shortcuts; there is no manoeuvre that overcomes our situation of weakness while the proletariat is weak. There is no manoeuvre. Every manoeuvre takes us out of the proletariat and to disappear. [It was] the discussion with the Chilean comrades: [they might get,] perhaps, to occupy important positions in the guerrillas, and so on and so forth, but they [were] not going to move forward.

The Colombian party, for me, has to follow its trajectory, adding the program the problem of armament. Not just for the Colombian party, it must be added for the entire IWL.

[You have to] explain what the situation is. In the *Manifesto* [of the IWL-FI], for me, "insurreccional"<sup>14</sup> does not mean there are insurrections; [we say] insurreccional in the sense of "uprising". (If you want, we change the phrase, [although] I still believe that insurreccional is prettier and we all know that words are ambiguous and have different meanings.) We have to prepare for that. Guatemala confirms it, it's big. And you are very well, with enormous prestige. If you break the guerrilla that dominates the independents, you remain not with a wagon but with an entire railway. And if it's not this way, it's another way.

But [you] are screwed, that's why you are bigger than you think. Every guy, every activist who breaks with the bourgeoisie [in Colombia goes to] a Russian roulette. There is the CP; there is MOIR; as we were few, the grandmother gave birth: PTC<sup>15</sup> came out of MOIR; there is M-19. We were also few, the grandmother gave birth: there are the Albanians — the CP(M-L) [Communist Party of Colombia (Marxist–Leninist)]—; there are all these union currents; there is PSR<sup>16</sup> that bothers us a bit, especially on the coast; [there is ELN with three more guerrillas...]. Comrades, we have to be good Marxists: we are really screwed! The truth is, you are wonderful, a party of cadres.

14 The first chapter of the IWL–FI *Manifesto* is entitled "A mass insurrection shakes the world".

15 PTC: Labour Party of Colombia: ephemeral organisation originated in a split of MOIR.

16 PSR: Revolutionary Socialist Party, Colombian section of the United Secretariat.



And in the previous stage, you were doing very well. I prefer the previous stage to this one because it was very much of the class, and a sectarian stage is not bad. But losing all self-control, getting out of the workers' movement...

And I think you have to think about your return to the independence [of the party], to the newspaper. [You have to] take underground measures — fighting the truce is really very screwed up. But [above all] how we rack our brains again as before, in the great stage of our party. Because our party, being a small party, has been at the crux of Colombian politics, even with all those competitors a thousand times stronger than us, thanks to believing in the working class. When we got [the orientation of the] socialist party too, although it was a mistake. The problem of the UTC program is a historical fact; I don't know whether the working class will go there. Phew! The party has elaborated [so much]! Let's not lose our minds, comrades, for a reality that, [although] it is as you say, I have seen disasters precisely for wanting to cover the whole reality. Do you understand?

So this is our task: to wait for the proletariat to raise its head. That it will raise, it will; a [situation] will come larger than the one of 1977 and our party will quickly be the possibility of a party of a thousand [comrades] as we had at a certain time, and from a thousand to three thousand. That is, in the Colombian party, practically, perhaps more than in Brazil. In Brazil, all the circumstances are reversed, in favour; in Venezuela today too, and in Colombia everything against us because none of the apparatuses broke down. They broke down 10, 15 years ago but the rise has served to consolidate everyone. I think we too [consolidated] but less because we are not populist. Is it clear? It also obeys a deep reason.

So what is my position? To continue with the previous line but making these fundamental modifications, for example, the problem of violence in strikes, for example, clandestine measures, for example learning to make Molotov cocktails and bombs, for example sticking one's neck out and sometimes placing them on, raising the slogan that there should be no strike without a picket... well, everything the Transitional Program says about this, updated.

About *A Luchar* specifically, I'm of the opinion we must fight to the bitter end so it continues to subsist as a trade union tendency. And [also] that they accept our criticism. All the criticisms [that we make have to be] most sweet but [we have to] make them. If you want, [we do them] in the magazine and not in the newspaper but [you have to] do them. And in a respectful tone.

*A Luchar* is a great, huge, thing. Where it will go depends on the class struggle process, not our manoeuvres. There is no worthwhile manoeuvre. There is no manoeuvre that [makes] us go to the guerrillas and come back and [in the process] we win people. You cannot go against the historical process. Is it clear or not? Great events will allow us suddenly to win by hundreds or thousands. But all of this that *A Luchar* is a sector where we will win, I believe [it is not] so; as long as they remain pro guerrillas, no; as long as they remain a guerrilla apparatus, no. Problems will arise there. And we have to patiently follow the pilgrim's path: two steps forward, one step back, and sometimes, if the proletariat is [in a] bad [situation], two steps back and one forward. But that is our path.

Well, nothing else, comrades. Ah, I don't know whether it is understood: neither to fight for *A Luchar* to become a political party; nor to fight. Keep it there as [something] extraordinary. Already [it is very good] if we manage to get it to vote on union issues. And when someone raises [to transform it into] a political [front], we [have to be] the first to say: "We discuss politics but nothing is voted here because we have different positions", and so on. That's what I reckon.

And, for me, the revolutionary united front is made there... It can't be done with those of *A Luchar*. I disagree with what Simon said in his report that the problem of armed struggle and of the bombs was typical of the revolutionary united front. For me, we have to convince desperate Stalinist activists and [the] strikers of a factory [led by Stalinism] of the same. We even teach them to throw bombs or to bust the scabs. I mean, I am against that the revolutionary united front passes not through the working class but through a sector and that it is [something] alien, a bit of the working class and another bit alien to the working class. The revolutionary united front goes through *A Luchar*. There is no more revolutionary united front possible today than that revolutionary trade union tendency because it agrees on the fight against the government, it agrees on the fight against

the bourgeoisie, it agrees on the need for workers' democracy and it agrees against the truce of the government. Is it clear?

But I think that politically we have to have our own initiatives. For example, we can accept a large congress of the workers' movement, but of the entire workers' movement, even of CSTC, and fight to solve the problem of whether or not we abstain [in the elections], and we abide by the discipline. But the line of abstention for abstention [sake] is very dangerous because, for me, it is the fear of this minority guerrilla to be [exposed] as ultra-minority if it presents itself to elections. We don't have to [give in] to that fear. On the contrary, we would like to take the pulse through the election, which is a very relative pulse but it is an element. I think the controversy about whether to run for elections with independents is also correct for me — - which is why I say the general line of the party is to be proud. Then, you have to start convincing *A Luchar* to go to congresses, to class discipline. [We have to do it] without fighting, through the union route: "We have to get used to this, to solve everything..."

For example, for me, when we saw CSTC did not want the strike, we should have said in *A Luchar*: "Let's not fight for the strike anymore because these sons of bitches will sabotage it." And we should have printed in our newspaper: "The strike cannot be done because CSTC works for the government as infiltrators." And if *A Luchar* beat us, bad luck, but it was clear. It would have been a great win of ours.

But we cannot discuss all tactical issues. The problem is where we place ourselves. Do we place ourselves with a policy for the entire working class, including the most backward sectors, or for a small minority of the working class which, in turn, is a sector of a populist guerrilla which, in turn, is a minority in the guerrillas? That is the iron alternative. We always place ourselves [with the entire working class]. In the general strike of 1977, we were the only party that said there could be unity of the workers' centrals. [That was] before our foundation, [still] as Socialist Bloc. We have to continue with that policy, not deny it...

**Frank:** *A Luchar* is [made up of] 80 or 90 per cent white collar workers.

**Moreno:** That doesn't scare me. It is a big discussion in Trotskyism.

**Frank:** Why is this strip the most susceptible to the guerrillas?

**Moreno:** But, well, that doesn't scare me. I am thinking thoroughly that, if it is true that services are moving forward, they will be a sector of the revolution.

**Frank:** This is the most effervescent sector because of the strike and not the industrial proletariat. Didn't the party have the pulse of the situation of the industrial proletariat to know that nobody would strike there?

**Moreno:** Yes, the party does. The party has the pulse and very well, it has been successful countless times, it has a firm direction. I think that if it deviated is because of this approach, it has to do with this [issue] of the blocs. *A Luchar* was [obsessed] that it could manage to make a general strike and [in reality] it was up in the air, it was making a utopia similar to when Fidel Castro launched the famous general strike in which no one stopped. It was his biggest failure. Everything turned against him and he almost lost the war. He called from Sierra Maestra to the general strike and his people were killed, it was a disaster and [on top of it] everyone in Cuba worked. Fidel Castro made a mistake, he had a miscalculation: he had the strongest part of the bourgeoisie, he had the entire petty bourgeoisie but he didn't have the proletariat.

## CHAPTER 3

# International Executive Committee, April 1986

(The bulk of Moreno's speeches in the International Executive Committee of April 1986 is included in the book *Speeches in the IEC of IWL-FI (April 1986)* — available for download at <http://www.nahuelmoreno.org/english.html#2> — which presents the theoretical aspects of this discussion. Here we only reproduce one of his speeches in the discussion of the World Situation point: the one that has to do more directly with the revolutionary united front policy.)

## The situation in Colombia and the Revolutionary United Front

**Moreno:** I think it is a very dangerous mistake to prioritise issues that are different, for example, the problem of the workers' state with the problem of the revolutionary united front. This has to do with the improvised character of the point by all of us, the members of the Secretariat.

For example, the most important point to discuss is: what is the revolutionary united front? Because it is what we voted as our grand political course. Then, in [the point] Activities, we will have to discuss whether we have advanced and today we have to discuss what theoretical-political advances there are.

Well, I think we have [advanced], that there has been enormous progress and extraordinary experiences have been made. With an addition: I believe this old global analysis of us, that today the main activity of the working class does not go through any party but goes through the trade union movement, has also been reflected in our general line of the revolutionary united front. We have not achieved anywhere [a political agreement to build a revolutionary united front]. That is the weak point of the resolution of a year ago, but an inevitable weak point because only the experience allows us to overcome, enrich a political course. For me, [the tactic of the] revolutionary united front was still a colossal success, with a weak point —we did not say what happened in Colombia was what would happen almost everywhere: [the united front revolutionary] was to happen in the union arena and at a very low political level in the structuring of the party.

Seen this way, what has happened in Brazil is a revolutionary united front and what is beginning to be outlined in Argentina is the beginning of *A Luchar*. It is the previous stage [to the current one of *A Luchar*, but] with dangerous elements such as those of the CP, [which nevertheless have] come to our policy of a united front, a spurious revolutionary united front, but also in the union arena. There are three processes, for me, identical.

The old working class, before 1940 or before 1950, lived in the committees, in the headquarters of the parties. For example, Mandel told me — and I have seen it in Argentina when I was young — that, because of the misery, [for] the crisis of 1930, a single socialist newspaper was bought in one party venue, or two, or three. And every day in the afternoon, in Argentina too, there were 80, 100, 200 militants and they read the socialist newspaper among all. Every day they went and read it. It was the most important social fact for every worker, after work and his fun on Sunday: to go every day to the premises of his workers' party.

My opinion is that this has been completely lost. Now, it is not like that. Television, the betrayals of the leaderships, and so on and so forth, have liquidated that. But where the vanguard and the working class go most today is the unions, not the parties; parties are voted on. Nobody can ignore this fundamental fact [which has caused the unions to be] the privileged place of our work on a world scale.

Today, for me, no work of entryism would succeed. (The CP itself also suffers from this.) Therefore, we have insisted so much that our great work [in Brazil] is in the CUT [Unified Workers' Central], not in the PT [Worker's Party]. It is a global phenomenon: today the masses are actively organised — and not always, sometimes they are only active at the moment when a collective agreement or something like that is discussed — in the trade union movement or in other forms of organisation of struggle, fundamentally economic. [This is so] because of the betrayals of the political leadership of the workers' movement.

We always said this and we practiced it. We have said: “Work on CUT and not on PT.” But we did not join it to the discussion with the comrades of *A Luchar*, [on] whether it was a revolutionary political or trade union united front — I still believe it is a union front because of their will. We had not drawn the conclusion. I think that, after having voted for the revolutionary united front, we have to make this addition: [the trade union ground is] the most feasible place to make a revolutionary united front. And, if you have a program similar to that of *A Luchar*, we have to consider it as extraordinarily positive. This is why I say that in Argentina we are three, four years behind in relation to Colombia, but we are also practicing it. And the Brazilian comrades are geographically behind because they have done something which, for me, will quickly [be] similar to that of Colombia but only in [one of the States of] Brazil and not in all of Brazil. It is very difficult, because of the federative nature of Brazil, to make it for all [the country]. [It would be] like achieving such a phenomenon, of the masses, for the entire United States.

But it seems to me it is not by chance the three strongest parties — the Colombian, the Brazilian and the Argentine — are the ones who have done it. And I get the impression that, although the process in Colombia is very, very advanced, Brazil and Argentina are part of the same process.

It's very important to say this because I think it will happen almost everywhere. It will happen in the Workers' Commissions [of Spain]. The autonomous tendencies, the autonomous activists, all the left centrist sectors — as a tendency, as a sector or whichever way we want to define it — are essentially for the time being in the trade union arena. They do not happen in the political arena.

For example, I think there is a sharp contradiction, although they do not realise it and believe they are united, between the guerrilla and the members of *A Luchar* who at the same time support the guerrillas. [The guerrilla] is another tendency, it is the tendency of a movement but it goes against [the] movement.

So, [if you ask me:] “In Colombia, are there centrist tendencies of the left that go towards the revolution and towards Trotskyism?” Yes. “And have we made the revolutionary united front with them?” Yes, and not only have we done it but we have advanced an enormity. “And do these currents [exist] in Brazil?” I think yes, thoroughly. And we have advanced an enormity with those individuals in the union tendency of Belo Horizonte.

I've never seen so many possibilities for Trotskyism. The comrade asked us for anecdotes. Can I tell an anecdote? We arrived last to Uruguay. In Uruguay, after having been in the leadership and in legality, we were left stark naked, without anything at all. [This happened to us when] Juan made his famous manoeuvre to Carlos. Carlos was legally in Uruguay and Juan told him: “Leave, flee.” The comrade took the bait and fled. By fleeing he could never return, and then he left us without leadership. Juan did send people and left us without a party. They robbed us, expropriated the party from us because all of Juan's group should be ours.

[Thus,] all the other Trotskyist groups arrived before us. We arrived last, with Comrade Andres and a small group with little strength or anything. And in the teachers union, we have made our faction and unity with certain independent elements. So we have raised a 72-hour strike and a united front of all the unions in a struggle. [We, in the IWL,] have given a very big battle. We told



them: “Hit hard on teachers.” They hit hard on teachers, they raised the 72-hours [strike] and they lost the [vote]. But it was a surprise, [because] they lost by 100 or 200 votes in an assembly of 700 or 800 [teachers]. But look at their adversaries: *Frente Amplio*,<sup>1</sup> CP, SP... all of them, all the parties of the workers’ movement, of the masses, the adversaries of them. Especially the CP, which is very strong; it drags almost 50 per cent of the Uruguayan proletariat in the union, not political, arena.

Well, the comrades have insisted again and again on the line and have won the [vote]: the 72-hour strike was held, it was an extraordinary victory. At the next assembly, the CP officially took the floor to say it had been a serious mistake for it not to have voted for the 72-hours [strike]. We defeated it. And here clearly begins to emerge a tendency [thanks to there being] a spectacular victory, a beating of the official leadership of the workers’ movement.

I think this is the extreme, the example, the mirror of all the possibilities we have everywhere. In Uruguay, there are other spectacular successes like this one. (It looks like we’ll win the first strike this year.) And it’s a group of thirty-odd comrades, there’s no more. The teachers’ union — in this, it is similar to Colombia — is the most important in Uruguay.

I also believe the revolutionary united front exists essentially as a trade union tendency that we have to make an effort to raise it to political, but it happens there. It is not accidental: it is due to the backwardness of our proletariat. In Colombia, it is the backwardness of the proletariat combined with guerrilla warfare, it is a specific phenomenon. In Brazil and Argentina we have the luck, or the misfortune — I think luck — that there is no guerrilla.

So, for me [the line] is still the revolutionary united front with this important addition, which we already had before but we had not synthesised, we did not have this clarity. And it is very important, for example, for Workers’ Commissions in Spain. The objective is the fight to the bitter end against the leadership and aiming to build a very revolutionary tendency, of class, for workers’ democracy, against capitalism... All that *A Luchar* proposes, which is already the maximum process.

Thus [the axis] remains the trade union tendencies, the union slates we are doing everywhere to dispute [the leadership] with the bureaucracy based on an actual revolutionary program: democracy, workers’ meetings, fight against capitalism, in many places for not paying the debt, etcetera. I already said [in Argentina and Brazil we are] several years behind in relation to Colombia. In Argentina, it is a process; it has not yet crystallised nationally but we are applying it in a great way.

It isn’t the unity of action; it isn’t a unity of action at all. These are organic issues. We are those who fight so the slates subsist. Because the pressure comes from Peronism to break the slates, which shows it is truly a new phenomenon. And [it’s] very well [that we defend] the slates and the colour [that identifies them] as well. Despite the impurities, [because] sometimes the slates cause the program to be lower, but everything leads to our program prevailing at the end if the slates are kept, for [the existence of] this independent vanguard and [these] sectors. The trade unionists of the Intransigent Party<sup>2</sup> are divided into two wings, one anti-bureaucratic and the other not, so we make [a slate] with the anti-bureaucratic wing.

**Frank:** What we have achieved in Argentina so far, or what we can achieve in Uruguay, are union tendencies of class.

**Moreno:** Not of class, because PT and CUT are also of class. I will touch the problem of what you said that in PT we have unity of action. In PT we are making an entryism sui generis. Entryism sui generis, yes, why are we going to be scared? But not “sui generis” in the sense of Pablo,<sup>3</sup> of 20

1 *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front) was a Uruguayan centre-left coalition of political parties with Tupamaros as its main influence.

2 **Intransigent Party** is a bourgeois centre-left political party in Argentina, founded by Oscar Alende. Its membership came from the Intransigent Radical Civic Union, one of the two factions into which the Radical Civic Union had divided in 1956.

3 Michel Pablo (1911-1996), Greek Trotskyist and main leader of the Fourth International after the Second World War, was the author of the tactic of “entryism sui generis” — i.e., for an extended period— in Stalinist Communist Parties. He later broke from Trotskyism. Together with Ernest Mandel, they promoted a revisionist policy of capitulation to



years, but a Trotskyist [entryism], of one or two years. Sui generis in the sense that for us [CUT] is much more important than [PT]. We think PT is filth; it doesn't have currents, and so on, and so forth. But I will not dwell in this phenomenon. We say sui generis because we do not believe in anything of what Trotsky believed — and that Trotsky was right to believe — that a left current was emerging in the socialist parties. We do not see in PT, within PT itself, a left current. But maybe I'm confused.

**Edu:** We are not in PT organisms. We use the name of PT to dialogue with the vanguard.

**Moreno:** That's what we call sui generis. We have the label of PT and we publish our newspaper, we systematically attack the leadership, etcetera, because we consider it an objective phenomenon, for now relatively positive. One of the positive things it has is that one: we do what we want.

[?]: It means it is "a bit" of entryism.

**Moreno:** And that's why we call it sui generis, in that sense. Sure, you were perfect. It is sui generis in that sense, not in the sense of Trotsky but just the opposite. That's why it's so sui generis, but it's entryism because we, where are we? In PT. Well, then it's a fact.

**Carrasco:** It's like being in the English Labour [Party].

**Moreno:** No, because those who work in the English Labour [Party] work on the English Labour [Party] among other things because in England there is nothing else: either they work in the TUC<sup>4</sup> or in the English Labour [Party].

All the same, in Brazil we consider it so sui generis that we are constantly thinking about when we become an independent party. The leadership is nervous, like a horse [at the gates]. On the other hand, in the CUT it isn't. That is already our environment. In that place, we are unconditional patriots. If we could, all of our tee-shirts would carry [the inscription] "CUT", not "PT".

I think this is a general, global phenomenon and that it has its expression in Latin America, and that it goes through revolutionary union tendencies that we have to raise to a party. And [what shows] we must have some of it right is that we gave the line a very short time ago in Brazil and fructified immediately and extraordinarily: it is a bombshell.

**Frank:** We were entangled in this discussion about whether *A Luchar* was political-union or revolutionary-union. *A Luchar* is not, as we thought, the political unity of political parties in Colombia to build a party.

**Moreno:** Sure, it isn't.

**Frank:** Now it turned out that, stuck to the class as an autonomous revolutionary current...

**Moreno:** No, no, no... "Sticking to the class" is an abstraction. "Sticking to the trade union movement" is more precise.

**Frank:** Then it gave a revolutionary trade union organisation that may become a revolutionary party.

**Moreno:** Or [perhaps] we can recruit them. Why would we gamble our all [for it to become a party]? Because this being a union phenomenon, let's see how we get it to express itself in the political arena.

**Frank:** What you discarded is that the phenomenon has taken place as we envisioned it, that is, by centrist political organisations.

**Moreno:** I just think reality has exceeded the perspective we gave, which was *A Luchar's* too but of agreeing with other parties. Later on, we discussed and said: "No, it is a union [front] but it is revolutionary, a revolutionary united front." And now what do we say? [As] there is the

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the Stalinist communist parties, social democracy and bourgeois nationalist movements type MNR of Bolivia. They promoted the "sui generis entryism", which meant the dissolution of the Trotskyists in the Communist Parties. In the 1960s he moved away from Trotskyism and was an advisor to the bourgeois government of Ben Bella in Algeria.

4 The Trades Union Congress (TUC) is a national trade union centre, a federation of trade unions in England and Wales.

mass movement in the world, the most important organisations, by far, that have the masses in the entire world, of class, are the trade unions. In some countries, other forms of organisation will arise, but in the Southern Cone, for example, today, specifically, this is the case in Peru, this is the case in Bolivia, this is the case in Chile, this is the case in Argentina and this is the case in Brazil and Uruguay. And we believe that this phenomenon is global.

**Frank:** So Lambert<sup>5</sup> has a great success in Peru since he is bringing together all these union leaders to see if he achieves a form of organisation similar to CUT.

**Moreno:** But for those of us who know who he is united with, it can never be a revolutionary united front because they are bureaucrats. And to make a revolutionary united front, the first point is “Down with the union bureaucracy!” Because the tendency that meets in Belo Horizonte meets to go against the bureaucracy of CUT itself. Otherwise, it is not revolutionary. This is the difference between of class and revolutionary. If the first point is not “Down with the union bureaucracy!”, [it is not revolutionary]. That is why in Argentina [also] it is an embryo of a [united] front because we try to keep trade union slates, that is, to transform them into an organism: this is why it is a united “front”. And revolutionary, why? Because the first point is “Down with the union bureaucracy! For a new revolutionary leadership”, or “of class”, or “that gives freedom”. In Argentina, it is more embryonic, but it moves towards there, it does.

We know from a good source that the direction of the CP is discussing and [that it is] totally divided (that’s why they give no importance to May Day). The previous issue of the CP’s newspaper did not mention May Day, and in this week’s issue, it has a little note this small, nothing more. And we know why; they have told us why. There is an infernal discussion in the Central Committee [about] whether or not they already break, [because they say] that we keep the whole lot. And [we believe] they held the rally to prevent us from doing it alone because then we could drag a huge amount of people. So that’s why they accepted [to do the rally] and why they’re doing all these manoeuvres to make it go wrong. And [they try] it doesn’t be ours, that we do not close it, that there be not three or four speakers. They are right. If we did the rally alone and we call it as a party and they did no held rally, we would take to the rally a huge number of people from the CP, I reckon about 3000 or 4000. The guys, like bureaucrats, have a tremendous sense of smell. They thrilled with the celebration they had and did not plan to do anything on May Day, and they were terrified when they found out [we were calling for a rally].

Is this problem understood? That is our decisive strategy. Our fundamental workplace [is] the unions, and within the unions attempting to make revolutionary tendencies...

**Ricardo Napuri:** In Peru, the pauperized petty-bourgeois masses are making large organisations, such as those of the shanty towns, for example. And, as the rise of the masses is sometimes very radical, to the point of sometimes becoming revolutionary waves as in 1977, the unions and CP appeared crushed by this movement. That’s why popular assemblies and defence fronts were created. However, this has been sifted afterwards because it is the expression of conjunctural moments of the rise of the masses. And what has remained firm are the CGT [General Confederation of Workers] and the trade union organisations, because the rest has not even remained in the form of structures.

It is good to say this because there are countries where this variation can take place and there may be a movementist and populist deviation in the sense that these can be the forms of the organisation because they occur in large rises of the movement. But in the end, there was the workers’ movement and CGT, which is the only one that can convene and the only one that can organise. So much so that all the centrist organisations, which are very powerful, capitulate to the CP, being a minority in relation to the rest, for having control of the workers’ movement.

**Moreno:** Sure, yes, that’s right. Well, that’s what I think. Along with this, we have advanced a lot with the problem of agreements. We also want our parties to learn to make agreements. This is almost a discussion of principles. We are terrified that the comrades do not get used to the fact that doing politics is making agreements — as Marx, Engels, and Lenin said — agreements of all kinds.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Lambert (1920–2008) was a French Trotskyist leader.

There were agreements [like] the vote to the liberals at the beginning of the century or the end of the last century. In 1890, Engels advised the vote for a bourgeois, in England. In Germany [this] was permanent because there were two ballots, and in the run-off, the Liberals were voted against the reaction, against the monarchist party. I point it out only [as an example], I do not think it has to be our policy today, not at all. The only thing I want to say [is] that in the history of Marxism there have been agreements of all kinds. And we want to teach that to our comrades, who have to learn to make electoral agreements, agreements for events, [agreements] for the application of our program, look for the broadest agreements for the points [of our program]. For example, if today the defence of Nicaragua and the Central American revolution is an essential point of the International, around that point [we have to] join with God and with the devil. We are in favour of making any kind of committee, unity of action [with] anyone who [opposes] the Nicaraguan Contras and for aid to Nicaragua.

This is a rather pedagogical issue because we believe we will not move forward if we do not open up. We have discovered a strong sectarian tendency: we are right and we look over our shoulder at the rest of the workers' movement and the different sectors. We are against acting this way. We believe we must act as Trotsky did, who believed that the Stalinist militants were revolutionaries and they had to be treated as such. Ultimately, we try to show our comrades that we have to have great trust in the class and that every member of the class is a future candidate to be led by the Trotskyists or to be a Trotskyist, and we have to treat him with that perspective of the future.

And the same regarding the whole revolutionary process where the people participate. Because every revolution is popular, except for some exceptional countries where most of the population is working class, but in general, and much more in the countries of the Third World, every socialist revolution is a popular revolution, where all segments of the exploited population participate.

## CHAPTER 4

# Letter from Nahuel Moreno to Simon

Buenos Aires, 30 August 1986

My dear Simon,

I take advantage of your request that I criticise your military work to send you a more extensive letter in which I will touch in passing on the subject that interests you.

I am frankly afraid of any friction or misunderstanding between us. And the “we” extends to you and Alberto. I am afraid the brief letter by Carmen [Carrasco], which was written without my knowledge, coupled with the possible friction caused by the discussion on the Colombian situation, may cause a certain estrangement (in the Hegelian sense). For me this would be an incalculable personal misfortune, leaving aside the political. It would mean nothing less than a distance with one of my most beloved comrades and friends. I do not have the perceptiveness of our former friend Camilo, that intuition in full bloom which allowed him to capture as a seismograph the lower moods of his interlocutors but it seemed to me our telephone conversation did not have the degree of warmth with which we usually treat ourselves. Almost certainly, an old man’s foibles, since I have learned by medical means that old people, as the years go by, we become much more sensitive.

That’s why I spent two weeks making all kinds of efforts to locate you so I could talk to you when I heard from Carmen about her letter. You have to give it the merit it has because it was her, after sending the letter, who felt she was too abrupt and too concise for her to be understood. I do not extend more on this subject, because Carmen will give you all you the explanations and reasons she had to send that letter.

The report by Negro E ratified what he repeatedly told us on the phone, that your attitude, especially of Alberto and yours, was ultra-fraternal towards him and of extraordinary respect, discipline and fraternal attitude towards the IWL and its leadership. We knew this too well, we had never had any doubts about it, but it was comforting for him to officially ratify it to us. In this sense, a small sector of the Mexican leadership has a diametrically opposite attitude.

The serious and responsible way in which we are facing the discussion is doing a lot of good to IWL. That there is a discussion, in itself, is already great progress for IWL and, if this is carried out in a fraternal environment and without the least danger of rupture, we are in a political-organisational paradise. The Swedes have started another theoretical discussion with us, which I think is published in the next issue of the magazine. If the English come in, of which there are many possibilities, there will be many more discussions, especially about the role of the national bourgeoisie, as they will also confirm in the next issue of the magazine.

This leap in IWL that a generalised discussion on different issues and problems has begun is also being reflected in the EC [Executive Committee] and the CC [Central Committee] of MAS, mainly in the EC. How glad Alberto would have left the last EC meeting where they argued strongly against me in no fewer than three points on the agenda.

Without being exactly a discussion but as part of the same process, the IWL Secretariat and the Argentine Party CC were informed that comrade Alberto [Frank] had been right in his thesis of the impossibility of Reagan’s goal of Star Wars for at least two or three decades. We also noted the exhaustive documentation the comrade handled in his report. Something similar happened with you: it was reported in the same organisations that despite the little documentation you provided,

your interpretation of the Central American situation and the importance of Nicaragua was closer to the truth than ours, according to our latest exhaustive analysis. You will have the opportunity to read in the next magazine how we believe the centre of the Central American revolution is again the Nicaraguan masses and that there is a colossal revolutionary rise of the masses against Sandinismo, much like the one that opened after the defeat of Kornilov in Russia (in this case as a result of the defeat of the Contra). If there were a serious revolutionary party with some influence in the mass movement, it should be considered how to lead the masses in the insurrection against the Sandinista government, an insurrectional process that has already begun and which only lacks a leadership.

I tell you all this for several reasons but one that is decisive: as part of the development of our international organisation, the false and nefarious ideology of my infallibility has begun to collapse. It has begun to be understood that one thing is experience and respect and another unconditional support. You, my fraternal friend, are doing a lot to make this fight come out victorious. In this sense, I humbly request a front-row combat post in “your tendency”.

Clarified all these issues, very much on the run, to comply with the agreement to wait three months before holding a discussion to have tangible results that allow us to facilitate that, I will go to Colombia.

Regarding your work on military strategy, I will tell you I consider it confusing and contradictory. It mixes two lines: urban guerrillas with the scientific armament of the entire working class. That is why I consider its strong point is the theory and the weak point is the practical-conjunctural aspect. Specifically, a small party must have only one decisive and fundamental task. It is secondary whether or not the other tasks are done and sometimes it is very good not to do them. A little party like yours, of 200 or 300 militants, has to resolve what it concentrates on its activity and not on how many objectives the historical reality raises and how we do to face them all. When the three months have lapsed, I will stop more extensively in this and your other documents.

Ultimately, this military discussion, like all the others we have to carry out, is a subsidiary of a very deep discussion we may have to carry out on the strategic line and the most important aspects of your policy. It is likely not to happen because we see important elements of improvement in recent weeks, such as the publication of your newspaper; yet, we still have big doubts that in principle we believe are because we have two antagonistic lines. Specifically, we have not yet been convinced you do not capitulate to the vanguard and the petty-bourgeois guerrillas.

Thus, it seemed wise for you and Negro E. to postpone the discussion for three months.

The goal of postponing the discussion for us carries a meaning and an enunciation that, it seems to us, is the opposite of yours. For us, existence conditions consciousness. Therefore, all our opinions arise from a consciousness conditioned by the following existential elements: we live outside Colombia; although we know her a lot, although we were the champions of the work on the independents, we have not been there for several years and our experience is infinitely less than yours in working with them. From all these underlying Marxist premises, we are totally and absolutely convinced that at least we have some serious tactical errors or of concrete analysis and that we are very likely to be wrong.

We do not get the impression you will postpone for three months based on methodological and deeply Marxist premises like ours. These premises, for us, should be just the opposite of ours: “As we live in Colombia, and we are every day with collateral, friends, relations of guerrilla organisations, that is, this is our life, in Colombia and with those organisations, we are absolutely sure some important sectors of our party have a provincial, empirical (concrete in the worst sense of the word) and pro-guerrilla mentality. We want to spend three months to discover what these currents are.”

There is another reasoning that we believe implicit in you, not explicit, with the best goodwill and with a high dose of modesty but not for that less harmful: “Our party does not suffer in its conscience any negative impact from the country where it lives nor of the places where it works.” In



other words, you have achieved the miracle, so sought after by the idealists against Marxism, that existence does not condition consciousness.

This extremely serious methodological fact predisposes me against you and goes against the whole tradition of our international tendency. We are tired of telling at the level of the international tendency that when we worked closely with the 62 Organisations<sup>1</sup> we asked the entire Trotskyist world movement to please follow closely our publications because inevitably, given the youth of our organisation and our leadership, we were going to capitulate repeatedly and systematically to the 62 Organisations.

So far we have not read a single document from you where this alert is made and the systematic, continuous and unavoidable capitulations to the environment in which you militate are pointed out. This makes us fear you are making it a matter of prestige, since for us these capitulations are sometimes truly exaggerated, bordering on awful words that I do not want to use so as not to offend you. An example of this is your performance in the *A Luchar* Convention, which to us seems bad or worse if it is true you voted or did not make a fuss about the resolution on the Pope's visit. You yourselves say in the newspaper the Pope is an envoy of Reagan. We believe it is a wrong characterisation: the Pope is Reagan with a cassock; he is much more than an envoy. What would you think of organisations that claim to be part of the workers' and popular movement and that if Reagan comes to Colombia, say and do what the [Guerrilla] Coordinating Board did?

The discussion on this problem, if you consider *A Luchar* a revolutionary united front and a project of the revolutionary party, should have led to the split around this issue, and not to a centrist, sweetened resolution, to hold together what should not be together. Do you think if the CP had made the declaration of the [Guerrilla] Coordinating Board and assaulted churches to hold masses you would have signed the same resolution or had fought it with such diplomacy?

Take a test: take the resolution of *A Luchar* on the Pope and the end of your article on the same subject and put the word Reagan, or Barco,<sup>2</sup> or Alfonsin,<sup>3</sup> or Stroessner,<sup>4</sup> to see how it sounds to your ears and to see what policy you think should have had to face that statement.

Another contradiction, almost comical to us, is the following: if we are not misinformed, you say *A Luchar* is a revolutionary united front, a political organisation, and that one or more of *A Luchar*'s strongest organisations are totally against making a revolutionary workers' political party of *A Luchar*. But the revolutionary united front is the previous step to the revolutionary united party. How can there be a revolutionary united front, project and process towards a revolutionary united party, a prelude to the latter, with those who don't want to do it? We categorically believe *A Luchar* will never, ever be a revolutionary workers' party. It is possible we will travel this path with some splints of *A Luchar* but never with the majority and we have doubts about the minorities.

That is why we find very interesting the discussion about whether the most important thing is *El Socialista* [the newspaper of the Colombian PST] or *A Luchar* [the newspaper of *A Luchar*]. For us, it will be a decisive test in these three months.

For *A Luchar* to be a test in favour of your policy, it must have fulfilled three conditions within three months to be a revolutionary workers' front or a hint of such. Those three conditions are:

1. That *A Luchar* be sold by almost all the militants who claim to be part of it and not given away or that the guerrilla organisations pay us their quota through methods other than sales. We

1 The "62 [Peronist Trade Union] Organisations" were the organisation of struggle of the Argentine workers' movement against the regime of the "Liberating Revolution", born from the coup d'état that overthrew Peron in 1955. Later they transformed themselves into a grouping of the bureaucratic leadership of the Peronist trade unionism.

2 **Virgilio Barco** (1921–1997) was a Colombian Liberal Party politician and civil engineer, a director of the World Bank from 1969 until 1974, and President of Colombia serving from 1986 to 1990.

3 **Raul Alfonsin** (1927–2009) was one of the main leaders of the bourgeois Radical Civic Union (UCR). He was the president of Argentina between 1983 and 1989, following the military dictatorship.

4 **Alfredo Stroessner** (1912–2006) was a Paraguayan military officer, politician and dictator, who served as President of Paraguay from 1954 to 1989. He ascended to the position after leading an army coup in 1954.

are against unfair theft methods for newspaper publication. To be a collective organiser it must be sold collectively and massively purchased.

2. There must be numerous organisations or organised groups common to all the tendencies and organisations that make up *A Luchar* to, at a minimum, organise the sale of the paper, also tending to discuss weekly the political and union problems.

3. A fight without quarter, issue by issue, against the ill-fated policies, not just against the Pope, of the [Guerrilla] Coordinating Board. We would settle here with a polemic, but very wide, where our attack would be relentless. By the way, why have you not yet started a fierce campaign against ELN because one of the great transnationals in Colombia has raised to the Betancur government that who best defended their interests against the workers, fulfilling a magnificent role of cop within the company, was this organisation and therefore they refused the police to enter and the army to defend it?

Will you make a systematic denunciation of this unqualified betrayal in *A Luchar*? Because the thing about the Pope is not accidental, it has a lot to do with this policy of years perhaps in relation to this policy with the transnational.

I could dwell on the general strike, in your documents, and what we know about the discussions in your Congress but again I insist the purpose of this letter is not to argue but rather to explain why I do not want to argue until the lapse of these three or four months of grace that will very likely lead you to adjust your policy in a sense close to ours, as you have already begun to do to some extent not just with the publication of the newspaper.

Well, Simon, I send you the *Logic* you asked for and which I liked so much when you gave it to me. As always I send you the most fraternal greetings, which I want you to extend to comrade Alberto.

Hugo

## CHAPTER 5

# Conversation between Nahuel Moreno and Alberto Frank

### November 1986

**Moreno:** Let's go to the political problem, which is very serious. If we are a Leninist party, [on the face of] every kidnapping [our newspaper] has to go out with a headline saying that it is a new nasty trick of the guerrilla. [I'll read you] the line of the III and IV [International], summarised by Lenin:

“Expropriations’ of private property were not to be permitted under any circumstances; ‘expropriations’ of government property were not to be recommended hut only *allowed*, provided that they *were controlled by the Party*” — not of the guerrillas themselves, it has to have the party — “and their proceeds used *for the needs of an uprising*” — you can do them only when you are close to the insurrection—. “Guerrilla acts in the form of terrorism were to be *recommended* against brutal government officials and *active* members of the Black Hundreds, hut on condition that 1) the sentiments of the masses be taken into account; 2) the conditions of the working-class movement in the given locality he reckoned with, and 3) care be taken that the forces of the proletariat should not be frittered away.” [VI Lenin, “Guerrilla Warfare”, *Collected Works*, Vol 11, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972, footnote by Lenin on p.222.]

I can read you the other quotes of Lenin: “The party of the proletariat can never regard guerrilla warfare as the only, or even as the chief, method of struggle; it means that this method must be subordinated to other methods” [Ibid., p. 221].

This is the other discussion I want to make with you, to see whether we reach a political agreement.

**Frank:** For me, there is no position by Simon and his sector to become guerrillas or to consider guerrilla as the fundamental method.

**Moreno:** But they are next to people who do consider it. They do not fight them minute by minute. If you want, we bring you Lenin's quotations about what is to be done with guerrilla organisations: they are respected but independence must be total, there can be no unity of any kind. Because [the party and the guerrillas] are contradictory things and, in the agreement waiting for the break, there is the danger of making a POUM (Marxist Unification Workers Party) or the possibility of making a revolutionary party. So there are huge differences, of principle.

**Frank:** When the national document says we support all guerrilla actions, it gives a polarised and unilateral version of the matter. But do we condemn all guerrilla actions?

**Moreno:** In principle, yes, because they aren't accountable to the party or to the mass movement. All those they have killed over there are not hated by the people as a whole because the people as a whole are liberal and conservative.

**Frank:** As far as I understand, some guerrilla actions can be defended, many of them condemnable.

**Moreno:** Almost all.

**Frank:** Now, in a country where guerrillas are a traditional method of struggle, it's an everyday occurrence, what difference does it make? Do we defend all the actions of FMLN in the civil war of El Salvador?

**Moreno:** I don't know. I don't know if Lenin's conditions are met. It seems to me the FMLN is a thousand times stronger than the entire Colombian guerrillas together, because FARC, which is a power, only got 300,000 votes.

**Frank:** So what conditions our position on the guerrillas is if there is a military camp of a certain strength that implies that war rules are followed...

**Moreno:** We are against the military camp, we are for the party. In this we are with Mao: the one who must handle the guerrilla is the party. Mao used the guerrilla because they defeated him.

**Frank:** In this, we have no difference: the party must preside over everything. We cannot be part of a revolutionary party if the guerrilla that subsists is not under its strict authority.

**Moreno:** But none of that exists. ELN includes *A Luchar* as its mass organisation and I believe that is their plan.

I will give you my impression, let's see if we can discuss. They don't have a Simon or a Miguel Angel to run the newspaper, nor do they have 200 or 300 organised militants like us, accustomed to selling newspapers: so, to get their newspaper, they have to make us concessions. They are not for making a party or anything because what they want is already done.

This does not mean there are no contradictions or crises. There is a crisis and it will get worse and maybe even guerrilla organisations and even civilians disappear. All I tell you is there is no party, there is the guerrilla organisation, for the moment, to which there is a greater or lesser subjection of organisations formed by them, which are not working class or revolutionary or anything because they do not say the guerrillas have to be subject to us. Not saying so, it is as if they were Peronists or Sendero [Luminoso] militants, more or less intelligent.

Within that guerrilla, there are some intelligent [organisations], such as ELN, that support more the development of the mass movement thanks to the fact they do almost no guerrilla [actions] at the moment, which [is] very good. M-19 does the opposite and causes a disaster, a pocket war, like the one caused by Tupamaros<sup>1</sup> and Montoneros. In Argentina, there would have been no *coup d'état* if Montoneros had not existed because one of the fundamental principles of the guerrillas, a basic principle, is that it is necessary to make strenuous efforts for a *coup d'état* and that is why they have to be a nuisance, kill and kill.

For us, the basis of everything is the proletariat. When the proletariat understands what armament means, it is armed, else it isn't, we have to wait five, 10 years. For example, I see the Peruvian proletariat now weaker than when Velasco Alvarado<sup>2</sup> fell, because I see it doing fewer barricades. It has lost nothing of its potential or ceased to be revolutionary but they have managed to deflate it a bit. There were uprisings on all sides and they defeated it.

Now there is a danger that [the comrades in Colombia] make a POUM-like party because [such a party] is great, it is good, we have no principles, and we have principles sometimes and sometimes not. We have to learn from Nin.<sup>3</sup> Simon's case [is the same]. Simon will be taken as

1 **Tupamaros** was a left-wing urban guerrilla group in Uruguay in the 1960s and 1970s.

2 **Juan Velasco Alvarado** (1910–1977) was a Peruvian General turned Dictator. He directed and executed the *coup d'état* of 3 October, 1968, overthrowing Fernando Belaunde and exercising an absolute dictatorship until 1975.

3 **Andres Nin** (1892-1937), was a Spanish unionist and politician. While in Russia, he was won over to the Left Opposition which confronted Stalin's rise. He briefly worked as secretary to Leon Trotsky. Returning to Spain, Nin participated in forming the Communist Left of Spain (ICE) affiliated to the International Left Opposition (ILO). However, Nin had a number of disagreements with Trotsky in this period, specifically when Trotsky advised him on entryism into the Socialist Youth of Spain. Nin rejected this with sectarian arguments and advocated forming a united party with a popular-frontist organisation, the Workers and Peasants Bloc (BOC) lead by Joaquin Maurin. Eventually, Nin broke with Trotsky on this question and the merger went ahead. Together with Maurin, he formed the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) in 1935. POUM capitulated to the Popular Front. Nin took up the cabinet post of Minister of Justice in the government of Companys in Catalonia. He was assassinated by the GPU when the civil war began.

secretary general, like Nin. Nin [in the POUM] voted in the majority many times and in the big things he voted in the minority. POUM said: “Why should we have Nin on the on the other side of the road? Let’s have him in the party, as we have a majority [anyway].” Then they lost a lot of votes and Nin won and said: “Why should I leave? Trotsky understands nothing.” Andrade, being very honest, keeps saying this. He says that how we can lose a party of 20,000 militants.

But when the Popular Front arrives, at the time when Companys<sup>4</sup> calls all the leaders of the workers’ movement and tells them: “Catalonia belongs to you, I give you Catalonia”, the POUM and everyone responds by telling him to remain in government. Then, the right fulfilled the role it wanted and continued with its great slogan: “Dictatorship of the proletariat.”

The explanation they gave was that Companys did not rule over anything, [which] was true, because all the factories were in their possession. An economic commission was made with Diego Abad de Santillan<sup>5</sup> and Nin to direct all of Catalonia. Then, POUM used to say they were the kings of Catalonia. And it wasn’t like that; the six or seven Trotskyists were right. This is why the Trotskyists made their way to CNT<sup>6</sup> and the POUM did not. If the revolutionary rise had continued in Spain, the Trotskyists would have swallowed everything, as in Bolivia, because the anarchist youth and the Friends Durruti<sup>7</sup> began to snap out of it and realise that the question was to have a principled policy.

So, the problem of making big parties, the problem of shortcuts, is very dangerous. I think the guerrillas are the biggest obstacle to the formation of a revolutionary party in Colombia and that there are no systematic strikes in Colombia as in Peru. I don’t know to what extent the bourgeoisie lets it [run]. Carmen [Carrasco] congratulated me on my [assertion that] the guerrillas play the role of destroying the vanguard because she has spoken with a party comrade and he told her all the brightest [fighters] of his generation have died, all. For the [Colombian] bourgeoisie it is a joy because, unlike Peru, where all [the fighters] go to the workers’ movement to make general strikes and insurrections, [the guerrilla in Colombia] takes them out of the workers’ movement, or makes them logistic, a support base, [it tells them:] “Hide such a person, keep such weapons, for 12 days do not militate so hard in the workers’ movement.”

We are discussing different conceptions. I do not say I am right but I ask you an effort so you understand how we see [this] ourselves. We do not see the party fighting this, and we see the biggest obstacle to the revolution is the guerrillas because it attracts young people. Of that youth that they will work in common [with the other organisations of *A Luchar*], the party will win no one because that youth agrees with the guerrilla that shoots. We can only convince them if we shoot or through a polemic and a contradiction. What M-19 does is causing the deaths of hundreds and hundreds of militants who could be great militants of the workers’ movement. Like the thousands and thousands of working class activists the guerrilla [has brought to death].

The Chinese Revolution won not because of the guerrillas but because they gave land to the peasants and Chiang Kai-shek was left without support. It was a mass movement. Before [that] the CP and the guerrillas were liquidated. When they reached the north they had lost nine tenths of their strength. The famous Long March is [actually] the long retreat. They had the great “luck” that Japan invaded and spontaneous committees emerged throughout China — which had nothing to do with the CP because it was destroyed — of resistance to the Japanese invasion, and the CP was revived. They were lucky that the little they had left was in the north and the Japanese invaded the north. Getting into the resistance committees — which were spontaneous, where even the village’s rich were involved — merging with the mass movement was a political success. They are two major social operations.

4 **Lluís Companys** (1882–1940) was a Catalan politician. He was the President of Catalonia from 1934 and during the Spanish Civil War.

5 **Diego Abad de Santillan** (1897–1983), pseudonym of Sinesio Vaudilio Garcia Fernandez, was an author, economist and leading figure in the Spanish and Argentine anarchist movements.

6 CNT: National Confederation of Labour, the anarchist workers’ central.

7 The **Friends of Durruti Group** was an anarchist group in Spain. It was founded on March 1937 and named after deceased anarchist hero Buenaventura Durruti.



That does not mean we are not smart and we expect the crisis but in Simon, we see the opposite: that the guerrillas are positive in themselves, although he states they aren't. He does not consider the capture of the Palace of Justice [by M-19] was a tragedy because 11 possible great, heroic revolutionaries died. For what? Did it raise the morale of the working class? Did it go on strike? Did two or three banks stop? What did the independents do? The assault was a totally isolated event, a disaster. We have substantive, not formal differences. [With that conception] they lead the party to complete destruction.

The operation of dissolving [in *A Luchar*] is very positive to the extent there is a focus that distributes the newspaper against the guerrillas and is truly Trotskyist. But [the comrades who propose we dissolve] comply with us only formally because their true position is to dissolve and not muck around anymore because, for them, in six months or a year we have a great party.

That is what they believe. And if they achieve a great party, it will be the same as POUM. There will always be the same problems: they will say we should make careful statements to prevent them from breaking; in their eagerness of unity, they will say that we do not attack the guerrillas.

For six months there must be flyers, brochures or whatever, saying the guerrillas are agents of the Pope, without ever [using the word] "agent". It is typical of the petty bourgeois: [one day] he has been an agent but [another day] isn't. Because [the guerrilla] is petty bourgeois: it goes towards the proletarian or the bourgeois, there is no petty bourgeois line. Hence the surprising changes because they obey a social law. It is the opposite of the worker, who is consistent even when he is reformist. You can anticipate what he will do.

I cannot foresee, on the contrary, what Shining Path will do in a year or two. Ricardo [Napuri] insists, and for me it is a huge theoretical possibility, saying they are part of the backwardness of Ayacucho. But beware, because they are entering Lima and any day now they show up with something peculiar in relation to what they have said before, [something] like the axis is the urban masses or anything. And, maybe, they prepare [to] join the CP and stand for elections. From Shining Path I believe anything because it has a small, bland, unstable leadership. Like M-19 [did]: it agreed with the government, [later] it broke up. Because it is petty bourgeois and petty bourgeois is between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. And this is reflected in politics.

ELN for me today is brilliant, although I do not agree with its strategy, but it is fulfilling a positive role because they are shooting a few bullets, they are letting their militants organise *A Luchar*. I would say the opposite: ELN is not an obstacle today, despite its guerrilla theory, because they are not shooting like crazy. But M-19 is because it has managed to crush the neighbourhoods of Cali. In Bogota, there is no defeated neighbourhood and in Cali, there is because it is a pocket war.

It differs from Naples, which defeated the Wehrmacht<sup>8</sup> without arms. You can't fight the people. If Cali is with M-19, this shitty army is liquidated, there is nothing left. Which means M-19 has no support of any kind; as the Montoneros did not, who had between 10 and 15 per cent, that is, they had 85 or 90 per cent against it. This is why Cesar Robles fell because he was in a lower middle class and working-class cafe and everyone at the cafe started pointing out to him for the police to chase. We are afraid the same thing is happening in Colombia.

Why did the general strike fail? We have doubts they are nothing more than increasingly minority actions, and [we think] the Argentine party realised that. We do not see [M-19] as we do FMLN, not [even] close.

If the party is serious, it has to be dissolved carefully. This is why we must avoid the factional environment because the experience of risking to make a party by dissolving has to be very controlled from the outside. That's why I'm against six or eight left inside. First Miguel Angel and Simon and see what is achieved.

You also have to see the dynamics. For example, the organisation of *A Luchar* you told me that has resolved to pay for the newspaper. This is extraordinary now. But if in two or three months this

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<sup>8</sup> The **Wehrmacht** was the unified armed forces of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1945.

organisation does not dissolve it is negative because it means it prefers its sect. This — that they buy the newspaper centrally and pay for it — which is positive today can be negative tomorrow because it can mean they don't want to dissolve. So this positive fact, that they pay for the newspaper and they distribute it to their people, can be very negative tomorrow. Today, it is a proletarian attitude, but [I speak] in [function of] our project. If no grassroots organisations arise, nothing happens.

That is the discussion in Argentina with the CP that, as soon as the elections were over, proposed we make a front. We said yes, but that we made grassroots organisations. And it gave us an impressive result. Maybe it didn't work for us, and after a month or two we would have concluded that it was objectified and we would have said no more grassroots organisations be made. But we find dynamic grassroots organisations; everywhere we are recruiting, we are recruiting great leaders of them. And the CP woke up: they, who were the champions of making a front, gave the order not to make a front anymore and to do only rallies.

This is what we should chat with you.

**Frank:** Totally agree; it's what I've always believed.

**Moreno:** But do you accept that [the comrades in Colombia] go overboard?

**Frank:** I accept that, as things are, there are reasons to worry, but there are also many reasons to take a chance on.

**Moreno:** I agree, but you have to take assurances.

**Frank:** If we achieve a base of principles from which it cannot leave, on that basis we can allow the rarest audacities, theirs and others. The disastrous thing is the guerrillas have that strength in the workers' movement, that there is no revolutionary party...

**Moreno:** Not revolutionary [right now], not even an opportunist one, because it is much more difficult for the proletariat to overcome the guerrillas than an opportunist party, it is enough that it be of masses. When shooting, [the guerrilla] takes him out of place, out of the class. On the other hand, an opportunist party, because of the pressure from the ranks, is often forced to go on a general strike even if it does not want to. But a guerrilla can go on a general strike that nobody wants.

**Frank:** Now, let's go to some definitions. For example, are *A Luchar's* organisations working class revolutionary?

**Moreno:** For me, the trade union ones are. I don't know if all of them are but the programs and fights they've given have been revolutionary.

**Frank:** When CUSI [Independent Committee of Trade Union Unity] was reconstituted, it became what *A Luchar* was before. It is a union agreement with elected leadership, with a class platform. And *A Luchar* remains as a political [organisation]. The trade unionists meet separately and, although they are all from *A Luchar*, they are the trade union arm of a more political agreement.

**Moreno:** I think they are tactical mistakes. We were interested in a union organisation as independent as possible and not receiving orders from *A Luchar*, which in turn receives orders from the guerrillas. My plan was that, if the working class began to push, the class struggle process would produce a crisis, and the trade union current — I don't know whether we catch it all or not— goes to a crisis, goes to the [same thing that happened to] Paez [in Argentina]: there comes a time when the guerrilla gives an order to the union leader, he says no, and [the current] is broken.

**Frank:** The facts are, then, there is CUSI, it has its given policy, and there is *A Luchar*, which is also made up of working class leaders. The entire leadership, the 28, are working class leaders. So, now that *A Luchar* as a political organisation already exists, its proposal, its great ambition, would be to seek the leadership of CUT or fight for a revolutionary program for CUT. There will be a fraction of *A Luchar* in CUT that has to aspire to lead it, to be the revolutionary wing of the CUT. So far this is enough to keep the agreement with *A Luchar* as an immediate perspective until the CUT Congress. After the Congress will come what does *A Luchar* do as a current? Following on the strategy of aspiring to the revolutionary leadership of CUT...

**Moreno:** And how will it aspire to be the revolutionary leadership of the CUT if [*A Luchar*] is not revolutionary? This is where the problem comes from.

**Frank:** But the definitions... The components of *A Luchar* are working class revolutionary. *A Luchar*, is it working class revolutionary?

**Moreno:** Well, it depends on the program. If it is against the Pope and for denouncing the guerrillas it is revolutionary, no argument. If it is not yet for denouncing the agents of the Pope, it is not revolutionary. For example, for me, it is a crime we have not had [during] the last year the line of [going to] CUT instead of all the things that Simon says. And we did not have it until the guerrilla gave the order to be in favour of united unionism. We never fought [for that,] so we blurred. And I think this is systematic. [Ours] was once a small party [that] came to make parades with 1,000, 1,500 [people]. [This] now surprises, [as] when the Socialist Bloc itself had 1,500, we were the second or third column after MOIR and the CP, distinguishing ourselves by the line, the response, taking advantage of all the opportunities. That is, I see *A Luchar* as a problematic, hypothetical, opportunity, which must be used with our all. [But] we must lower the tension of the discussion to avoid from all points of view that, if it fails, some begin to tell Simon: “What a disaster, you are a catastrophe of leadership”, and so on, and so forth. This is why I give so much importance to reach [an agreement] and also to convince Simon, not towards the past but now in the present. Simon has shown he knows little about Lenin and Trotsky because these questions are very well studied and Simon has skidded a lot, has said and written many barbarities. What I am telling you is real: where did they campaign for CUT? They lost [several] buses; this is a very large bus. And previously the Colombian party lost almost no buses.

**Frank:** Going back to the previous reasoning. What is *A Luchar* right now? Is it the sum of revolutionary workers’ organisations?

**Moreno:** It’s an agreement of the top leaders.

**Frank:** We had already advanced on that agreement at the summit. It would be silly to believe that an organisation that explodes, for example, for a denunciation to CNG [National Guerrilla Coordinating Board] for their position of capitulation to the Pope, is a revolutionary party. So, being an agreement at the summit of workers-revolutionary organisations, since it does not have that finished program, it cannot consider itself as a revolutionary workers’ organisation. So as long as there is no programmatic purge — in the hypothesis that it is possible — it is a centrist organisation.

**Moreno:** If you want, let’s forget about Colombia. If they were large mass organisations with a very advanced centrist program like *A Luchar* has, we would define them as revolutionary. We would demand internal democracy and denounce the Pope but we would not break even under cannon fire, we would be unconditional patriots. If it is of masses if it drags the third part, the sixth part of the proletariat politically. But I suspect the drag [of *A Luchar*] is union. And this is very important, it will be one of the fundamental points I will discuss with the English. Trotsky says — it is not my idea, it is Trotsky’s genius — that because it is of masses there is a control, [and in this] control, which does not take you to a revolutionary line right away, there is the class guarantee you will succeed if you’re right. Instead, when organisations are small, the delimitation is fundamental because any confusion causes [the party] to weaken. They are small [organisations] and have to fight while continuing to do unions and doing everything the Colombian party has done.

It is no accident that Simon is the brightest and the boldest, although I think he missed the target a little. Because the Colombian party has been bold, it has been a great party, everything they say is true, they threw themselves into the Labour Party, but it has lost some reflexes; [before] we were more experienced, more careful.

[Anyway] we used to risk our necks. For example, the case of the Simon Bolívar Brigade. The whole idea, the whole plan of the Brigade is mine, the name too, but I was against doing it. It went well, but I still defend my method. The true story is that I insisted I had to work in Venezuela, Venezuelans were the ones who took most notice of me; Colombians didn’t. I spent over six months insisting on the Brigade, so I depended on Nicaragua, etc., and they pay me little attention. I fought

for six months, even [had] the name: Simon Bolívar Brigade. And suddenly Simon and Negro E woke up: the Secretariat met and we agreed; we had to [convene a] Central Committee, we had to discuss. But they released it [without waiting]. I wake up in the morning and see it in the newspaper. I was furious: “But you’re irresponsible! How do you release the line of a brigade? We have to take the pulse a little, [take] 10, 15 days.” A day or two later, [Daniel] Samper<sup>9</sup> publishes a tremendous article in *El Tiempo* saying, more or less: “Sign up to [fight] for freedom”, or something like that. And it becomes the most important political event in Colombia. It’s all their credit. I was against doing it that way. That’s the truth. They were bold, had tremendous bravery and went ahead. I am pondering about this feature of pushing, which is national and Simon reflects it; Black E. at the time also [reflected it]. It was them and not me.

I still defend my way of acting. What would it cost to wait for 10, 15 days, to take the pulse a little better? [They should] have chatted with Samper before [running with it] and not after because Samper could have told them no. Regarding the Malvinas (Falklands) War, Samper was against [our policy]. He wrote three or four articles against Argentina and in favour of England. One day, Mario and I don’t know what other [comrade] accidentally find him on a soccer field and they start shouting at each other. They were there three or four hours [arguing]. Samper changed the line thanks to that monster mess that took place but could have been against it. If he is not in favour, the Brigade does not have the success it had.

It seems to me this method is safer. One has to always think as party leader. I think between Lenin and Trotsky there was this difference. Trotsky had intellectual characteristics and that screwed him up. Lenin was more empirical, [more] careful. You have to think you manage people who demoralise if the operation goes wrong and this is the capital of the party. Then one has to be careful, test, and so on and so forth.

All the new lines we are giving now in Argentina, we have been testing them in all the regions, in a small local branch, seeing whether it works out or not, without saying there is a new line. There, Simon is risking all or nothing, including his prestige. I am fighting to save Simon’s prestige because he may [lose] it all.

But, beware: you say there was a change. I accept it must be exploited to the end. I accept we must work fully on this phenomenon. I accept it is a phenomenon and that the guerrillas are in crisis. I accept everything, everything you say. But I, as Piagetian, think we also have to put a feedback mechanism on it because I am not sure where it is going. The mechanism of feedback is that Trotskyism continues to act in full, I don’t know by what means, but the principle is that. So, if things are going well, it is pushing; if things are going badly, it is feedback. So we lose nothing, we always win — even if we lose — if we achieve a united party, if they don’t hate each other or hold a hatchet waiting to see whether in January the thing about *A Luchar* fails instead of staying outside publishing a top notch newspaper and saying: “I hope *A Luchar* goes out to fight because we will sell our Trotskyist newspaper more” (or our *Bulletin* or magazine, I don’t know, it’s complementary).

If there is a factional fight and Simon wants to get everyone in, quickly [in *A Luchar*]. If we can break that, the party unites and we overcome the whole problem. And we can only do this if we make a document together, or even with Ricardo, calm, sitting all these things and not arguing anymore. Taking many sentences from what Simon wrote in the midst of the morass, so he doesn’t believe it is a controversial [document]. We don’t have to say [*A Luchar*] is centrist. Let’s not discuss names for a while. Or let’s discuss for names [but] in the general theoretical document. Not in Colombia. In Colombia the front is this, this, this and wants to do this, this, this. And it seems to me that from there we get a thesis of one, two or three pages —not many — that it may possibly unite the party.

**Frank:** How would you define *A Luchar*?

**Moreno:** For me, it is an agreement of centrist leading members. However [CUSI], being trade unionist, is of class because it is for trade union democracy, for confronting the bosses, for going against imperialism, and so on and so forth. So the problem of the Pope involves it less, it is

<sup>9</sup> **Daniel Samper** (b. 1945) is a writer, columnist and journalist of much prestige in Colombia. Elder brother of Ernesto Samper, president of the Republic in 1994-1998.



less important, because the problem of the Pope is political and this is union. Thus we insisted: “Do not go from the union to the political because if you go to the political, not as agreement [but] as an organism....”

Thus, there was always a contradiction, which they have solved very, very well, [so] brilliantly, it had not occurred to me — [although] they solve it and they go to [the other] side —, which is to split *A Luchar* from the union. Because then, [the newspaper] *A Luchar* is also positive but [through] agreements. They all meet once a week, which points are resolved by a majority and which points are not accepted [to resolve] by the majority and everything is discussed. [Then] you can discuss [and anyone] can say: “The guerrilla is a disaster.” In those conditions, you don’t break *A Luchar*. Under the other conditions, with voting, you do. Win or lose, Simon makes a huge mess as soon as he starts [talking]. Instead, [doing] what I tell you, I assure you *A Luchar* does not break or anything happens, and it is resolved to get a nice newspaper from *A Luchar*, stating that you have to join to sell it, and so on and so forth. Because if they join, it is [something] great, huge as a possibility of work for us. If we manage to gather 200 or 300 hundred of our militants with 700 or 1000 of *A Luchar* we are left with 50 per cent of everything not in crisis, which is militating in the teams. [But] I see this will not be easy.

**Frank:** How does *A Luchar* come forward among the masses?

**Moreno:** As an agreement, with a name. We can put “Front” on it. What is the problem with the name? It is the same as now. Put “Revolutionary Political Front”, something that sounds good to the ears.

**Frank:** Isn’t it a matter of principle that we call them so although we believe it is not a revolutionary front?

**Moreno:** Not at all. Everyone considers themselves revolutionaries. “Revolutionary Front”; why not?

**Frank:** If I understand you well, the problem is not the name.

**Moreno:** No, but maybe that name is the best. I take you to the extreme: maybe it’s the best name to dissolve. And it is great that Pan y Libertad [Bread and Freedom] dissolve and we see who [we send to *A Luchar* to] dissolve. But I would send them little by little, I would see what happens. Especially, what happens at the leadership level in a thorough discussion, almost like the one we are having. A year and a half ago they were on the verge of doing it, that’s why we were so happy.

**Frank:** Well, that discussion is scheduled for December or January.

**Moreno:** They already agreed on it once and I told them: “This is the greatest thing there is: discussing. Discussing, without pressing, but thoroughly: ‘Who agrees, who disagrees.’ But don’t do a program; don’t try to close [the discussion] because they close the cage. Leave the cage open.” They will leave those sects more open, those terrible sects [like Pan y Libertad]. I do not know whether they enter with the discipline to *A Luchar*. Maybe they say yes but, as soon as they are given a line, they don’t comply with it. And it’s very nice of them to come in.

**Frank:** They are already inside.

**Moreno:** Yes, they are inside, but I do not know whether they will abide by the discipline when something is resolved, I have my doubts, it is very complex. Instead, I like that they are in [the role of] leaders. I don’t know where the hare will jump. I like that the discussion is coming, I love it. And I would love for it [to be] in Barranquilla, where they are strong. Holding in each region or in each town a meeting similar to what will be done [at the national level]: “We meet to discuss as a previous step to see whether there will be agreement or not, with whom there is agreement.” And then we make tendencies. [A discussion] very open and with us [being] the most open, the most centrist, to be able to put all the ideas. But Simon has already discussed everything with these people, he has discussed with them about the IWL, he has discussed everything and they never fought. They didn’t fight because there was no majority [voting], they were not afraid. A year ago, Simon would have yelled at them for the religious problem, I’m sure. Instead, as it closed...



**Frank:** No, the reality is we don't even attempt to discuss that but there are possibilities to discuss everything.

**Moreno:** For me, yes. Then, I would apply as much discipline as I can on the union arena and [with] *A Luchar* [I would] go calmer. The newspaper yes, as a collective organiser, it will [give the position] without making a fuss or anything. And thus the party doesn't suffer at all. It wins. The failure of the newspaper [of *A Luchar*, if we do it] as I say, is a win, it is what gains more contacts.

**Frank:** All this may happen if there is partisan unity but if it is a fight of majority and minority...

**Moreno:** Oh, no, the other way around, it isn't applied it well and everyone is screwed. Well, it's the same opinion that I have. We must stop the factional struggle; when we go to discuss, we have to stop the ball. And we have to think about the mechanism: whether you go there with the thesis and you discuss, whether someone else goes, whether we quote them here. You have to think about it, and [you have to think] how we do the thesis that, for me, is short. That is the key, the true arrangement.

**Frank:** What I would then raise with Simon is that he has developed a path of a total impasse that will reopen the factional debate and will lead the party to the disaster if we do not enter into precise agreements. And, above all, we must take all the necessary precautions because the problem is we can have the hope of winning the entire ELN for the revolutionary party but it is very likely we will not succeed. Then we need to have feedback mechanisms for the eventual failure.

**Moreno:** No, it's the opposite. For me, if there are feedback mechanisms there is no failure. The newspaper [of *A Luchar*] in four issues, arranged with the minority, which sells it with enthusiasm and uses it to touch people, and with Simon telling [the minority]: "If you fail, boys, it's nothing because you will have more contacts for our newspaper when it comes out again, [and] *A Luchar* died." And they the other way around: "No, Simon, we have to kill ourselves so that *A Luchar* wins because it gives us more and more contacts." This is the environment we have to aim to achieve. And there is no loss in failure, really, by feedback. Instead, if we send the whole party there and they don't get ELN...

**Frank:** Let's see, then the steps would be to make a document and bring proposals for agreements.

**Moreno:** Oh, yes. If so, it is very simple, we go almost to the heart of the talk we had. The discussion to be done with Simon is similar to what we did when I told you: "Well, Alberto, let's discuss thoroughly. We are afraid you have this position and this one and this one." What we have to try to stop is the factional struggle, this is tactical, short-term, and it is definitely stopped if this substantive discussion is achieved.

I would start by [defining] what is *A Luchar*: write honestly everything, everything we said here. Don't let the minority say: "You're giving us half a definition." And you paint everything, about the crisis, that the crisis of all these organisations is an irreversible historical process; the phenomenon that they have a workers' rank and file, that they lead progressive forces (others will go home to rest), and that it is a phenomenon the party has not exploited thoroughly nor does it know thoroughly its depth, at its base, but which is profound because the crisis is irreversible.

**Frank:** Is ELN as an army-party antagonistic to the proletariat?

**Moreno:** Antagonistic depends on what [meaning you give to] "proletariat". It is very abstract [to say] "the proletariat". It is antagonistic, or different, from the revolutionary socialist party — that quote from Lenin that I gave you. From the moment they consider the guerrilla to be the fundamental axis of the activity they are no longer revolutionary Marxists.

**Frank:** They can't be called revolutionaries then.

**Moreno:** They can be called petty bourgeois revolutionary.

**Frank:** And ELN for you is a centrist?

**Moreno:** I don't know that [but] but if it does have a petty bourgeois leadership, I'm already inclined to define it as a centrist.

**Frank:** In any case, will it be a progressive petty-bourgeois centrist?

**Moreno:** Almost everything that fights against the regime is progressive.

**Frank:** But how far are they progressive? To become, for example, a workers' organisation even if it involves a crisis?

**Moreno:** No, it is already progressive by itself even if it does not convert but inevitably it has to have a very serious crisis because sooner or later it has to go towards the bourgeoisie, so there may be a break towards the proletariat of only one sector.

**Frank:** So at the moment we can say it is crystallised centrist?

**Moreno:** Crystallised in the sense it has existed for a long time. [By saying] crystallised we mean it has not been resolved for long either for Trotskyism or for this or for the other in depth, but it oscillates, has different stages and has crisis even when it seems solid.

**Frank:** Could a centrist party be built then with a guerrilla where the right to a faction is preserved with respect to international affiliation and politics and problems of principle and programmatic issues pertaining to the national when divergences persist? Can a centrist party then be made with a centrist working current led by the guerrillas, as is the case of CTS, which is led by ELN, where our political-organisational independence is explicit, although we know the direct or indirect political influence of the guerrillas persists?

**Moreno:** Yes, but as long as we say that in our opinion the guerrillas must depend on the party. As long as we make it clear that we comply but we do not agree. You say: "Whenever international principles are defended." One of our principles has to be what Lenin says: "The guerrillas are circumstantial and subject to these principles."

**Frank:** Yes, but there will never be an agreement if they keep the strategy of prolonged popular warfare, which is a complete schema where guerrillas are always privileged.

**Moreno:** Ah, but we are not interested in them changing. If we have the analysis that there will be a crisis, at one stage we can reach a party with them to see whether we tear their proletarian wing from them, for tactical reasons. There is no reason for us not to. There may be analytical reasons; maybe that crisis is further than away we think.

**Frank:** For example, the theoretical hypothesis of making a party with the guerrillas causes terrible hassles in the meetings of the Central Committee and it is easy to address if one starts, as here, with common principles.

**Moreno:** Oh yes. But if you say the revolutionary party, it isn't.

**Frank:** No, I didn't say revolutionary, just party with the guerrillas. That is an equivalent, it parallels our other experiences: a party with Carrillo, or with the MAP<sup>10</sup> when we had the hypothesis that a social democratic wing was to emerge. So we had always had experiences.

**Moreno:** No, but the point that shocks Simon is that we have to do factional work. I don't know whether he agrees.

**Frank:** Factional work in what way?

**Moreno:** The external and the internal. The internal [sector] appears as not doing factional [work] but it has to. You have to move this way, [in a] principled [way]. Then we will truly make a party but we will do it with a petty-bourgeois, progressive or fighting leadership where sooner or later a crisis has to take place. We do not believe they as a whole will come to Trotskyist or Trotskyist-like positions. Then we enter and privilege the working class wing, based on the premise there is a crisis and that it is very possible that perhaps an important sector of the working class will leave with us. In addition, we have to wish the crisis of all of them.

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<sup>10</sup> MAP: Political Action Movement; an attempt to build a Labour-type party, in which a sector of UTC and PST (C) — whose representative on behalf of the Executive Committee was Simon — participated.

**Frank:** There's a weird phenomenon there: everyone in *A Luchar* is in crisis. This proves there is something unresolved at the core. The January meeting came up on our proposal. We said: "Let's get three, four days to see where this is going." Because we are all getting into it, and we don't know where this is going.

**Moreno:** But we [are in crisis] for the same reasons as them; because we are having an inappropriate policy. We have got into something...

**Frank:** Yes. And, from their point of view, their reassurances are much stronger than ours.

**Moreno:** Sure, it's a guerrilla of years, it's more dangerous. That is why we have to enter with more principles. If *A Luchar* [works,] for them it is formidable, and if it doesn't they are lost, they are the same as before. But they are still in crisis. That is our definition. Everyone, everyone is in crisis, and this opens up enormous possibilities. Going to the most abstract terrain, as I like, to move forward: they are all in crisis, with workers' ranks, with union work, then it is the privileged place of our attention and our politics. Privileged does not mean that we make a common party or anything [like that]. This is already part of the tactic. Privileged [means] we sell newspapers and we go to them, and so on. We study it later; it can change in three months. We must avoid dogmatism, see reality.

**Frank:** How can the components of *A Luchar* be characterised, if we have said that three of them are politically led by member organisations of the National Guerrilla Coordinating Board? Are they revolutionary working class currents with petty bourgeois leadership?

**Moreno:** They are not revolutionary working class components insofar as they respond to the guerrillas. For me the revolutionary working class components are those that are part of the union organisation, they are part of a class-struggle and revolutionary union organisation.

**Frank:** But they are the same.

**Moreno:** But, although they are the same, in one [of the organisations] they are in a political project. For example, I am totally against FAI.<sup>11</sup>

**Frank:** And thoroughly for CNT.

**Moreno:** Exactly. Do you understand me? And yet [in] FAI [were] the same as [in] CNT. But deep down they weren't the same; otherwise, we are not dialectical.

**Frank:** So, for you, CUSI is [of] revolutionary workers' currents.

**Moreno:** Oh yes. And I would bust my guts there to achieve [a common organisation]. We'll have to think about whether the newspaper is not of CUSI. *A Luchar* is essentially a guerrilla organisation, in crisis. What you consider to come almost certainly to us, essentially [reflects the] crisis. It may come, but it may not. [We must act] with the care we [had] in Argentina regarding the CP. We define: it is essentially crisis, does it come this way? If it does, the danger [exists] that [the] party will get excited. Then, *A Luchar* reflects the crisis. On the other hand, CUSI, for the moment, is also in crisis [but] a positive, very good one: we must participate. It releases forces but we don't know how much, maybe young, or something. We still do not have it well defined; it is one of the weak points. But the general definition [exists]. Instead, CUSI is working class, very working class. It has much more autonomy. Among other things, because the others, for being petty bourgeois, are not specialists in workers' issues nor are they very interested; fall on your backs. They are much more independent.

**Frank:** What really complicates things is that the characters are the same. By acting as CUSI, they do it as a revolutionary working-class current even if they are the same characters.

**Moreno:** That's what FAI was like. And not only FAI, but Durruti's group was also a totally terrorist group. Durruti was a close friend of Di Giovanni,<sup>12</sup> they fought for the same. But Di Giovanni

<sup>11</sup> **FAI:** Iberian Anarchist Federation, the political organisation of Spanish anarchists.

<sup>12</sup> **Severino Di Giovanni** (1901–1931) was an Italian anarchist who immigrated to Argentina, where he became the best-known anarchist figure in that country for his campaign of violence in support of Sacco and Vanzetti and antifascism.

was a pure terrorist, and Durruti was the height of contradiction because along with it he was a union leader. Durruti met all the conditions, and along with it, he had bureaucratic procedures taken to the extreme, because he argued by machine-gun force. So it is contradictory, there is a Durruti who is a monument. He is the one who says: “The unions”, “The working class has to take power”, “We will make a revolution”, and so on. That is one Durruti. And there is the terrorist Durruti; this terrorist Durruti connects with the mass movement and becomes an immense figure of trade unionism and mass movement, and he was not.

Di Giovanni didn't but he rather connects towards the law of the gun. He dies as a true terrorist revolutionary because the guy pays dues like crazy, but he even adopts gunman habits, he wears silk shirts embroidered in gold thread, all dressed in black, impeccable, [with] patent leather shoes. But he still contributed most of the money. In our courses, Mateo Fossa told us every time the guy came to contribute to the cabinetmakers' union there was a tremendous silence for fear of controversy because Di Giovanni had settled controversies by killing adversaries. The guy entered and, in the middle of a tremendous silence, without speaking or greeting anyone, bang, he threw a little black bag full of money, turned and left, like Sicilian bandits. Even the police were terrified of him; they knew where he was going but they didn't lay a trap because the guy came with 20 or 30 men willing to stick their neck out. I tell you [this to show you] how there can be different personalities; even if they are the same person they play a double game. This happens many times, in Stalinism now we also [see] it. We have trade union oppositions where there are Stalinists who play a very progressive and very class-struggle role and elsewhere they don't.

**Frank:** CTS is now a political current. It is a political current of workers and is centrist for its subordination to ELN. If CTS were dissolved with the other components of *A Luchar*, with the approval of ELN, could we qualify *A Luchar* as an organisation under the leadership or under the influence of ELN?

**Moreno:** Oh, no, if they allow democracy, no. [What you say] is their policy, yes, but it is not achieved. Fundamentally from the moment that we are there, we will face that policy, of course. That is, if we fulfil our obligation — not only us but others who are there — to oppose, not to agree with them on fundamental points, even on the right, it is not theirs even if they have a majority and manage to impose their line.

**Frank:** So you can't say that *A Luchar* if dissolved in CTS, even if it is half, can be considered collateral of the guerrillas, even if it's not a revolutionary workers' party.

**Moreno:** That's right; if you have 50 per cent you cannot consider it collateral.

**Frank:** You can say it is a mess, whatever it is, but cannot say we have entered a collateral of the guerrilla.

**Moreno:** Not at all. We can say [the guerrilla] dominates it, that it has a majority. But also, even if it were collateral, the definition of crisis is decisive. What's that got to do with it? All [Peruvian] Trotskyism, against Trotsky's opinion, emerged from APRA.<sup>13</sup> Instead of having emerged in the wild. As Trotskyism emerged from APRA, it would be much better if it had come out conscious. Already between 1946 and 1947, you could see the crisis coming in APRA. It would have been very good if the conscious Trotskyists, five or 10, no more, had said: “A sector inside APRA, a hard-line magazine, two or three outside to make contact” and whatever. For me, Trotskyism would have been a focus [of attraction]. All the great figures on the left of APRA went to the guerrillas, all of them. It was worse, it was direct in APRA. All Peru was Aprista except Cuzco. I don't know why the south, especially Cuzco, was never Aprista.

**Frank:** If the currents of *A Luchar* dissolve and the centralised life, the democratic centralism is strengthened in depth?

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<sup>13</sup> APRA (American Revolutionary Popular Alliance) was a Peruvian bourgeois nationalist party in its origins in the 1920s and 1930s. 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.



**Moreno:** No, we must tend [for it] not to [be centralised]. That is a serious tactical error I notice the comrades have. There is a tendency for Simon to take everything there.

**Frank:** In a meeting, a member of Pan y Libertad [Bread and Freedom] spoke pointing out that he had presented a proposal that was defeated, but that their defeat is great because then it starts working by majority and minority.

**Moreno:** Ah, no, but [in] that I am totally for it. What I say is if we give it a very, very centralist tone. First, it is decisive for us to merge, to work, to vote. Otherwise, the *A Luchar* plan fails. It is extraordinary that they mix, that they work, that there are cells, that the best leaders of the cells are us. That is a colossal success. In six months I think everything blows to smithereens and we are left with the best. You can't imagine how it will blow!

I do not believe this story of two, three or four years living together like this, if they stand firm in [their adherence] to the IWL, if they stand firm in [not wanting] anything with the Church — with the priests yes, no prejudice, if the priests want to enter our party they enter, and if they want to be Bolsheviks they are Bolsheviks, we do not make any issue of their religious belief. But we should give it a tone that is as little centralised [as possible]. Centralised yes, but I am [saying] what the pole is. The pole has to be the democratic issue because as for us it is not a [Bolshevik revolutionary] organisation, the more centrist [the better, because] it allows the existence of factions, to grow. For us, it would be ideal...

**Frank:** For example, in the statutes, for us, it would be almost a matter of principle the right to form trends and factions and for then to endure.

**Moreno:** But to the bitter end, and permanent, not [only] during congresses. It is dialectical, the ideal for us is dissolution on the one hand, and on the other hand centralism, yes, the lines are voted, and so on and so forth, but the fundamental tone [is] democracy, the right of tendency, the right of faction, the right to publish newsletters, the right to everything, including up to the right to defend IWL.

**Napuri:** They don't have this tradition.

**Moreno:** Not at all. Which is why I see the dissolution as difficult and I see [what I just said] as difficult — fall on your back — because their tradition is guerrilla, which is why they will tend to centralism. But I hope not.

**Frank:** If the organisations dissolve, the centralised life is strengthened in depth with what interests us, so that there are express guarantees of the right of tendency, faction, etc.

**Moreno:** And guarantees of rank and file teams with democracy. Rank and file teams.

**Frank:** *A Luchar*, which would not have a finished, Trotskyist, revolutionary program, would be centrist because of the lack of a revolutionary international project for the influence the guerrilla organisations exert on their components.

**Moreno:** Ideological influence, not just discipline. It may be not disciplined to the guerrilla in the sense that it gives little attention but to be guerrilla in his thought. That's why it is centrist.

**Frank:** It is improper to say we support all guerrilla actions and also that we condemn them all.

**Moreno:** Ah, yes!

**Frank:** You say the vast majority are condemnable.

**Moreno:** Well, yes.

**Frank:** But, for example, a town occupation...

**Moreno:** And what do I know. If the town is in favour it is fantastic, and if the town is against it, [it isn't].



**Frank:** Alas! The people witness from afar how things are. These arrive; they shoot with the police for 20 hours, assault the Agrarian Fund, leave slogans, make a rally, and leave. It is the typical action of territory control, harassment of the army.

**Moreno:** That seems to me a stupid thing to do. That's terrible. Alberto, our great task is to tear out the working class from liberals and conservatives. We have to think about how we rip that town off the liberal and conservative chieftains' hands. And there are no shortcuts.

**Frank:** And what about the liberated areas? Is it progressive that they control geographical areas?

**Moreno:** Ah, for me, yes! It is very progressive. If they really control them and distribute the land, it is extraordinary; not [just] good: it is extraordinary. The entire deviation of the line is that: why, after the truce, we did not do an interview or a series in the newspaper saying how big were the areas released by FARC?

**Frank:** What do we think of the truces?

**Moreno:** Well, that the truce is a problem to study. It's tactical, [of] war. That the attitude of FARC not to hand over weapons is very positive and we defend it, and that it has the right to [make a truce], what it does not have is the right to do it as it did.

**Frank:** We condemn the truce. Shall we salute, then, that the fighting continues of the guerrillas that do not agree to the truce?

**Moreno:** No! Because maybe the truce is great. We make a different discussion: "... under the following conditions: 1) taking into account the opinion of the great masses; 2) taking into consideration the conditions of the workers' movement in the locality in question; 3) trying not to squander the power of the proletariat." We believe the guerrillas and the actions of the guerrillas must be subject to the needs of most of the workers' movement, which has to feel them as their own. Then there should have been a meeting of all trade union organisations, to have sought a way to express the will of the working people [in] general. Taking it to the ridicule, we should have discussed or voted: "Do we make the truce or don't we make the truce?"

What I do not accept, even by a majority, is that they hand over the weapons. Because there can be no vote that requires me to commit suicide, nor can there be a vote that goes against a strike, a fair action taken by the masses. Is it clear or not? We are against the vote of the white teachers in New York against the strike of the Puerto Rican teachers, even though [the whites] were the vast majority of teachers in New York. We are against compliance. I don't know whether you understand me. In the same way, to take it to the extreme and it is well understood, we are for CUT to the bitter end, to abide by the discipline of CUT to the bitter end, but if the son of a bitch achieves a congress and he says: "The farmers of Uraba are the ones who are screwing the most. Let us vote to hand over the weapons and turn them over to the government to be judged", we, in block letters, [will publish]: "Disobey the line of CUT."

**Frank:** The slogan that the guerrilla subordinate to CUT seems complicated to me to get down to earth because of the composition of CUT: two thirds are for the truce and peace in the manner of FARC. Carrillo goes further: he would prefer that there be no guerrillas, and he would be happy if we gave him the opportunity to weigh in a congress to ask for the cessation of the fighting. How can the guerrilla that was not part of the agreement be subordinated to the workers' movement?

**Moreno:** To report that, that they will not hand over the weapons and that they want, they request that a CUT defence committee be made to guarantee the victory of strikes and land occupations, to defend them from attacks by the landowners and the far right. That they want a united command to be made, that they invite FARC to follow their example and make themselves available, and then ask that a general guerrilla committee be formed to coordinate the actions with the leadership of CUT. And this will have as a result that the leadership of CUT will reply that it is against; it will not be in favour. And it opens a field of precious controversy, fabulous, against Carrillo and against the guerrillas if [they are opposed]. But, if we were lucky that [the guerrillas]

were in favour, there would be no danger [of] being ordered to disarm or anything because Carrillo will not accept or [even] talk to the guerrilla if they previously do not abide by the government's line. He will not accept the defence committee either.

**Frank:** So, it is more problematic for him if the guerrillas subordinated.

**Moreno:** But it is what he will want, that they do not bother him. It is a very good line. But it is also a two-edged line because I am sure [the guerrillas] will not accept it, although you explain it is Carrillo who gets screwed. Now, suppose Carrillo accepts. Heck!, a defence committee formed by FARC and the other guerrillas, reporting: first point, every strike that is done now has to know there is a defence committee that will help it; the second point, every strike that is held knows that its strike-fund will be filled by the CUT military apparatus. God forbid! We are one step away from taking power. And it is also a beautiful discussion. Beware, unfortunately, I do not believe any of this will happen, either by the guerrillas, who are petty bourgeois or by Carrillo, who is bureaucratic.

**Frank:** Don't think this debate is so far away. Suddenly CUT rises like a strong pole...

**Moreno:** Ah, the debate can be a great mess and maybe we win it. It is a beautiful debate [to do in] CUT. Moreover, if we ask the guerrillas and they do not accept, we ask CUT to invite them.

**Frank:** It seems to me, personally, that the tendency is to stagnation, to the bogging down of the guerrilla struggle. But suppose not, that there is more and more guerrilla fighting. That there is a situation of widespread siege and the institutional crisis is becoming stronger. If there were a situation of great guerrilla fighting, dominated by the guerrillas, would the slogan: "Government of CUT and CNG" or "Government of CUT-CNG-FARC" be licit?

**Moreno:** Ah, it may be, to distribute the land. Yes, all the way. Based on three, four slogans. [It is] workers' and peasants' government.

**Frank:** How would you rate CNG by having that military defence program of the organisations facing the army? Is that agreement progressive?

**Moreno:** Ah, of defence yes, extraordinary.

**Frank:** What do we think of CNG?

**Moreno:** That, from the point of view of the guerrilla's conception, it is positive. They are consistent with their position. We are not guerrillas, so we would not be for guerrilla unity, but it seems extraordinary...

**Frank:** Wouldn't we be for the unity of all the guerrillas under a unified command?

**Moreno:** Ah, no, because we are anti-guerrillas.

**Frank:** If that fact takes place, do we say it is unfortunate?

**Moreno:** No, no. We are Marxists and we point out it is contradictory. It is not our policy; it is their policy. Within their policy, it is progressive; they get stronger against the government. We do not want the defeat of the guerrillas; we want the guerrillas to win when faced to the government.

**Frank:** Are we for the military victory of the guerrillas in Colombia?

**Moreno:** Without any argument. [What] we believe is that the victory of the guerrillas does not lead to the government we want. We don't want the guerrillas [to lose.] We even think it's very good that they fight, and so on, and so forth. We believe they do it with the wrong method and a wrong program, nothing more.

**Frank:** If FARC broke the truce and there was a large guerrilla unity...?

**Moreno:** Well, I consider it extremely progressive. But progressive in this sense. It is not our policy but, since they are guerrillas, they fight with their regime and they risk their lives to go against the bourgeois state, and so on, and so forth, we find it extraordinary that they are unified.

**Frank:** If the truce is broken, the guerrilla unifies and the crux of the situation was the defeat of the army by the guerrillas, would we raise the slogan "All power to the guerrillas", as in El Salvador?

**Moreno:** But in El Salvador, there is no CUT.

**Frank:** Are there no [strong] worker centrals?

**Moreno:** Yes, but only now. That should now be studied. Fascism existed in the cities. On the contrary, I think the guerrillas are a consequence of the defeat of the cities and the lull. It is similar to the Maoist guerrilla in southern [China] when it is defeated by Chiang Kai-shek and [similar to] how Mao arises.

**Frank:** That is, for the fact of the existence of CUT, although the guerrilla in Colombia is predominant, we would maintain the combination of the slogan...

**Moreno:** To the bitter end! Because we want the proletariat to be hegemonic. This is why we are totally against all that Simon wrote in the Thesis; for us, it is revisionist, horrible. Because, how do we see the relationship with the peasantry and its organisations? [We say] the proletariat must have hegemony; it must be the class that directs the peasantry, disputing the leadership to the peasant currents. Or joining with them, it is dialectic. I am surprised that Simon, who has studied dialectics, does not realise this. If there is an alliance, it means there is separation, they are two antithetical terms. According to Hegel and dialectics, all antithetical terms come together; if one exists, the other exists. So, if you talk about an alliance, it is only an alliance of the different. There is only an alliance of the antithetical, of things that are not equal. Else, if they are equal or tend to be, it is not an alliance, it is a process of unity. Thus, if there is an alliance, the permanent danger of rupture and confrontation flies over that alliance because it is an alliance of the different.

So Simon's entire analysis is terrible because he says that to make an alliance the peasant leadership has to remain permanently as the peasant leadership and we [do not have] to get involved in disputing the peasant leadership. When, [on the contrary,] we want to get in to organise the rural workers and dispute the inconsequence of this ally. It is an ally because at any moment it goes to the [side of the bourgeoisie], which is the problem of the petty bourgeoisie. We return to the first characterisation. To such a degree is this process of petty bourgeoisie — which Trotsky touched on thoroughly but very abstractly, did not take it to its final consequences —, so much it oscillates between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie that at some point it can expropriate the bourgeoisie, which is what has happened in the deformed workers' states. Ultimately, this does not deny Marxism. Trotsky did not see this. He saw it as a sociological definition, he said: "It cannot have its own policy; it goes here and there, here and there." The definition in the abstract is perfect. But in Trotsky, there was rather a tendency that it always went towards the bourgeoisie

**Frank:** Yes, it is the famous phrase of the Transitional Program where he states that only in exceptional conditions it can be forced to go beyond.

**Moreno:** Sure, the exceptional. So, it is not so exceptional, it oscillates: suddenly it goes for anti-bourgeois or anti-imperialist measures which are quite consistent to go back immediately. The petty bourgeois has no sense of organisation, of continuity. [It is like this] for reasons of life, because he does not get up at the same time, he does not go to the factory, he is not attached to other people, he is not accustomed to working in a team, to respond to discipline. He is petty-bourgeois, he is used to getting up one day at one hour [and another day] at another. We are Marxists: existence conditions consciousness. Then you have that permanent swing.

**Frank:** Simon says there are allied leaderships and that you have to respect their camp, and so on and so forth.

**Moreno:** So all of what Simon says means there is no oscillation, that the guys increasingly go to the left. If there is an alliance there is a dispute; there can be no alliance without dispute. The attitude of the Argentine party with the CP demonstrates this. I think we are giving an example of how an alliance is made — which in this case is an alliance, not a front, but with elements of the front — that we push, push and push, and perhaps we get a front somewhere. The CP immediately recoils. At first, it accepted everywhere, and then gave the order: break, break, break the front. But we are also learning and progressing permanently.

There is a tremendous theoretical problem, which Trotsky neither solved nor raised. (This is why I want to study whether there are certain mechanical elements in Trotsky's mentality.) The same mistake he made in relation to the working class he makes it again regarding allied classes of the proletariat. Later he learned from Lenin, but Lenin did not elaborate much on this either, which is the tremendous problem of the political subject of the ally — I believe in some of my works I touch on this in passing. Because Trotsky said: "Unity between the workers and the peasants, and for that, we must defeat all the parties that reflect the peasants." But this is a historical truth. How do you join the peasantry if it is not through their organisations if you do not make an alliance? It goes against the Russian Revolution itself, which was a political alliance with the left Socialist Revolutionaries. And neither in the *History of the Russian Revolution* nor in the Theses [of the permanent revolution] nor in the text of *The Permanent Revolution* does Trotsky say: "There is a sociological problem, which is how the peasantry unites" — and I add: the urban population, these tremendous cities of today, without workers, with fewer and fewer industrial workers — "to the proletariat. Thus, it is a problem of life or death for the revolution of how these people socially unite with the proletariat."

That is a plane. But there is the other plane: how this unity takes place politically. A plane that Trotsky never touched and therefore we have terrible gaps. For example, I think defining the Sandinistas as permanently counter-revolutionaries is an atrocity because it is an abstraction. Because it is true their path, because they are petty-bourgeois, inevitably leads to a counter-revolutionary closure. It is a process that from revolutionary leads to counter-revolutionary because of its petty bourgeois limitations. But also in this, we are not quite dialectic, because one thing is its limitations [and another thing is the role they played]. It is my defence of the Sandinistas when I attack them more than ever in the controversy with Simon. What do I say?: "They are heroes of the fight against Somoza, they are heroes of the democratic struggle, we honour them as heroes. [But] in government, unfortunately, they will begin to have a policy that will make them our enemies, adversaries." This is another issue that has to do with this of the allies, but already on the political plane. You cannot say: "To make the alliance with the peasantry you have to break with all the peasant organisations." But the other way around: "It is very possible we will have to unite, make very serious and deep alliances."

**Frank:** Life defeated the schema of that thesis of Simon because *A Luchar* itself will be the leadership of many peasants.

**Moreno:** Ok. I think life has been defeating all of Simon's schemas; with the aggravating fact that he doesn't realise it. Someone has to tell him: "Put the brakes on". Starting with the general strike, which was delusional. Here we deal with a group of crazy people and they infected us, including me.

**Frank:** I gave 20 or 30 talks with the topic of Colombia...

**Moreno:** And me at Central Committee meetings! Carmen toured the entire party. When she returned, everyone [asked]:

"How are you? How about that general strike that was going to be bigger than the Civic Strike?"

"Uh, I have to confess they worked more than ever."

Well, Simon has grabbed several buses like this. He has a tendency, because of his personality, to grab them. Because he doesn't have the tendency, like you, to sit quietly and say, "Well, let's ask." What is great about him is that can withdraw the position, but it would cause a terrible discussion.

**Frank:** I think we had defined *A Luchar* as a revolutionary united front in its union sense.

**Moreno:** Up to the hilt. And now as well. This is why we said: "Do not take it to a political [front] because it is no longer the revolutionary united front." That was a great controversy: "In politics, make agreements, don't be stupid, stay as you are. If you want, create another organism. In politics, the only thing you have to do is a discussion, to see whether the unity really takes place, if the revolutionary united front is happening."



**Frank:** Our revolutionary united front policy is to achieve this centrist organisation of *A Luchar* with discipline, newspaper, common grassroots organisations. It obeys our revolutionary united front method of building a revolutionary party. *A Luchar* in itself is not a revolutionary united front, but we are there for the revolutionary united front policy.

**Moreno:** Yes, we have to look for a program. The first programmatic point towards the revolutionary united front in *A Luchar* is to dissolve and make cells. If we already achieved this, if we achieve 2000 to be organised — I do not ask you more — regularly to make a party based on the general program of *A Luchar*, although they do not denounce the priests or anything suchlike, we already took a big step. As long as a good Marxist you do not stay there because the great defect of those who generally call themselves Marxists is to stretch the truth beyond what it can give. So, this is extraordinary but, as soon as you achieve this, the brutal factional polemic opens up; your program has already changed. I don't know whether you understand me. There is a danger of [saying]: "We achieved this, 400 cells, let's see whether we get 500, let's see whether we get 600." No. It's changed. You are already stretching the rope; you are going from right to wrong. Because since you achieved a minimum organisation with 1000, 1500, 2000 militants — but actual militants: they get up in the morning and they militate, distribute the newspaper, meet with you weekly and discuss the national situation — then you start the mess for the breakup.

**Frank:** Or for programmatic demands.

**Moreno:** Ah, of course! Only programmatic demands. On the contrary, you are the champion in their defence, for now, until you notice that the right takes over. [Then] you say: "The experience is over; prepare to leave suddenly, even if they don't kick us out." Because there is that danger, the danger [that it will happen to you what happened to a union leader of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP)] who did not want to leave [his union position], and Trotsky said: "Beware, war is coming and they will dismiss you one by one; do not appeal or do anything; leave." Trotsky advises all SWP union leaders to resign. It seems crazy, [but he was] a genius because Trotsky took reality as it was. In California we were a powerhouse in maritime, in New York we were very strong, in Minneapolis, we were a power; we had great union leaders. There was bureaucracy on the left that defended us [rigorously] — Reuter was one of them. We were going to a great party, etc., and look at what analysis Trotsky does. He said: "The war is coming, when the war is coming you have to prepare for imperialist war, then this bureaucracy will be made to toe the line with the government policy, which leaves them no margin. Now it leaves margin for them because Roosevelt wants to win the elections, it is the New Deal and there is also a terrible economic crisis. But if war comes, the margin is over. And as I am a Marxist, I'm of the opinion that the bureaucrat, however left-wing and centrist, when they tell him: 'Old man, there is no more margin and if you do not start chasing leftists and throwing them out of the unions we will throw you out, the State will dismiss you as leader because we are going to war', [the bureaucrat will stop defending you]. Resign before they throw you out, because [resigning from union charges] you return to your workplaces; on the other hand, [if you stay] they will be forced to throw you out like dogs because you are in leadership positions." And he was on target because an incredible witch hunt came and many comrades saved their jobs. Trotsky was right; this is why Marxism is so complicated.

**Frank:** The conclusion of all this is that you have to prepare the party for a line of demanding more and more from *A Luchar*, to go to a revolutionary workers' party knowing it is impossible.

**Moreno:** Ah, I wouldn't pose it so. First to a super democratic party.

**Frank:** After that phase, we will have other new problems.

**Moreno:** Once we have achieved this phase, the great battle begins: to demand a revolutionary policy in all areas.

**Frank:** That means preparing the party to make the biggest audacity in order to become the champions of *A Luchar*, militate like crazy for *A Luchar* and sell the newspaper of *A Luchar*, get cells and be prepared for this to have a limit. There can be no inhibition of any kind in pushing the throttle fully to see how far the process goes. Along with the quest to achieve the maximum from *A Luchar*, first, there is a basis of principles that has to be very clear.



**Moreno:** Very well.

**Frank:** Regarding the publication, we will look for the most suitable medium that guarantees there is an independent Trotskyist publication that judges the whole process.

**Moreno:** [Those who dissolve] have the right to disengage. They have no obligation to distribute it because their great task is to make *A Luchar*.

**Frank:** For this, the party has to be prepared for the failure and not for the win of *A Luchar*. Can I sum it up in that formula?

**Moreno:** Yes, perfect. And, if *A Luchar* wins, [be prepared] to go later into a second phase, in which the whole party is dissolved, or almost everything. Because that's the way it is, with the knife in the belly.

**Frank:** If we are going to the organisational dissolution and to make *A Luchar* cells from January, suppose, what percentage of the party would it be convenient to put in depth in that project?

**Moreno:** And, for me, it has to be almost half of the party and then include as you see fit.

**Frank:** Isn't it an operation that involves the whole party except a small group that is left out?

**Moreno:** That seems to me a mistake. There are comrades who think — suppose it is totally false — that they have had a large and important growth in all the places where they fought *A Luchar*. Then you can't get someone who is completely convinced that outside of *A Luchar* he grows and inside loses what he has...

[They will be] wrong but they give examples. Mercedes, the [comrade of the steel mill] of Paz del Rio, hates *A Luchar* because *A Luchar* has always betrayed them and screwed them up in Paz del Rio. The work on the Coast, for example, everybody is against *A Luchar*: everybody, everybody who was recruited on the Coast is against *A Luchar*. They did all the work of Caracol against *A Luchar*. I don't think the comrade who did all that work is so wrong. They say they could do it by saying: "Those in *A Luchar* are all traitors." They say the party has not recruited anyone; since they are in *A Luchar* there are the same teachers everywhere. No one has been recruited anywhere. For example, Tolima, which is the best region, the one that more money contributes, [was] against *A Luchar*. Suppose everything is false, but many think so; that's a fact. Then you cannot convince a person who thinks the greatest thing there is to grow is to work outside [of *A Luchar*] because the only growth they had was by they saying: "Do not go to *A Luchar* because *A Luchar* is the worst thing there is", and so on, and so forth... Are you going to put them into *A Luchar*? Then the factional struggle begins again. As soon as any meeting fails, people begin to demoralise. That's how I see it. If we want to avoid the factional issue we have to say: "Look, let's start by placing each one wherever they want, let's all be very fraternal comrades, let's start by placing comrades where we see what works best." And what can we lose? One or two months? It starts going well, we start to team up. What comrade of ours will not want to go to a *A Luchar* team meeting if by the third or fourth meeting he starts to be the boss?

As here with the CP. At first, everyone was totally against seeing the CP, hated the people of the CP, they said it was a mistake to have made the pact, and so on and so forth. But as soon as we could hold one or two grassroots meetings and they, our rank and file comrades, were on top, they came over to the line [saying]: "How great it was to make the pact with the CP!" I don't know whether you understand me. And the party did not force them; it suggested them, it was patient, it kept the rhythm; there is always a vanguard and a rearguard.

When the Argentine PST achieved legality and became the largest Trotskyist party in the world, I started with a tiny minority, with the whole party against. Then I asked for permission to let me open a branch. And when they saw, in a little party like ours, of 150, 200 militants, a single course of 120 in an open and legal place... what the hell!: Everyone wanted to start opening branches. But [first] I set the example. I don't know whether you understand me. If I had forced [the comrades], if I had brought to the branch all those who thought there could be no legality because they would put us in jail the next day, they would never have convened a course of 120, because mentally they

thought they were all prisoners. Then they said: “Instead of recruiting we lose them because we bring them to a course, they all go to jail and when they leave they want to kill us.”

Then I see no problems. There has to be a control of the International that says: “Yes, this is going very well.” Then they begin to enter *A Luchar*. Let’s suppose the line of not entering wins. All the same, the entire minority enters; they all enter to make the experience. For me, this is the basis of the arrangement of super fraternal relationship because it is an experience worth doing. The minority enters and we think they are beginning to do well. [Then] we say: “Begin to come from the majority to the minority to do the work in *A Luchar* although it does not convince you.” If they do not accept, we ask for an extraordinary congress in two or three months and the IWL Secretariat has to turn everything in favour of almost the entire party entering and a small nucleus being left out. I believe that better is impossible, it is very serious and everything. As we did in Argentina with the legality. Because there were those who longed for clandestinity — there are people who like to meet in small meetings — [who] did not even [become convinced] with the win [of that policy]. The majority turned over but a minority remained. Then the party congress met and said: “Those who do not want to open branches we kick out because this is the official line of the party and those in the minority have to put up with it.” It is done.

[But] today, from what I heard, it seems like a mistake. [Because] they insist that we base all the work of the Coast on going against *A Luchar*. It is not my theory. I think they might have won but because they haven’t worked well on *A Luchar*. Because for me *A Luchar* has to yield something — little, much, and it can be very much — if raised as we are proposing. And I think it is a serious, Bolshevik way to carry things. It may be a little slower, but what if we press the accelerator and it doesn’t go, if *A Luchar* fights in three, four months? Instead, we have the other group; if everything flies we will have at least 500 or 1,000 contacts to sell the newspaper. It is the minimum we will have left.

## CHAPTER 6

# Open letter of the International Secretariat of the IWL-FI to the PST(C) about *A Luchar*

Buenos Aires, January 1987

Dear Comrades,

Soon your Congress will be held, which will address a historical discussion, the most important since the founding of the party because you have to choose between two lines: one that tends to dissolve the party in *A Luchar*, adopting its newspaper as the central instrument for our political activity, and one that proposes to strengthen the Trotskyist party more than ever, with its newspaper, its politics and its program.

If we are not wrong and the discussion is raised in these terms, our letter means to explain what our position is. To do this, we will address five central problems. First, the method with which the IWL–FI leadership has addressed this discussion. Second, the points in which there is a complete agreement between the International Secretariat (IS) and the whole of the party leadership. Third, the centre of the debate — whether we dissolve in *A Luchar*. Fourth, the analysis and main policies for action that the party has had in the last two years. And fifth, the current situation of the party and *A Luchar*.

Your country has brought to the Party and to the IWL–FI very complex political problems since 1977, the year of the party foundation and of the National Civic Strike. Since then, there has been a close collaboration of the national and international leaderships to attempt to answer the questions raised by the reality of this country that remains in a constant boiling point: the Civic Strike, the unsuccessful hypothesis of the emergence of a socialist current in 1978, the Simon Bolívar Brigade, the possibility of building a Labour party with UTC [Union of Colombian Workers] bureaucracy in 1980, the orientation towards independent trade unionism in 1982, the characterisation of the national situation as revolutionary, the position regarding the truce and the guerrilla organisations, implementing the revolutionary united front tactic, *A Luchar* and CUSI, the emergence of CUT, to mention only the most important.

The close collaboration between the leadership of the IWL–FI and the party has made many mistakes, but their enormous successes weigh most. Thanks to it, we have built a small party that began to break with its marginality and student character to penetrate some sectors of the worker's movement, such as among education workers. A party that today is located ideally in the strip of *A Luchar* and that has achieved such important victories as a deserved place in the direction of CUT. The Congress and the discussion you are holding now is part of that common path begun a decade ago.

In this rich process of construction of our Colombian party, we are going through a difficult stage. The party has had to respond to very complex political problems — guerrilla influence, truce, the founding of CUT, paramilitary violence — amid an acute revolutionary situation, and it has achieved some spectacular successes, such as *A Luchar*.

As always, the party leadership and in particular Comrade Simon, a member of the International Executive Committee (IEC), have consistently appealed to the leadership of IWL–FI to work together on the answers to these problems.

In this context, an in-depth discussion has been taking place in IWL and in the party on different aspects of the national situation and our political responses. Both the leadership of IWL and the leadership of the party have made very serious mistakes, such as the strike on 20 June 1985. This is not, therefore, a discussion between the good and the bad but between comrades trying to find the truth and achieve, among all, the best possible policy for the party.

For this reason, we do not intend to make an exhaustive discussion about who said what and what he did not say. The leadership of IWL–FI is far from considering its performance as flawless, and both the IS as a whole and its members individually have made big and small mistakes in this debate. But we do not believe this is the focus for the discussion in the current circumstances because the crucial problem is to resolve whether the party should dissolve in *A Luchar*. Therefore, we make all our analyses and arguments with the desire to shed light on this cardinal problem. This does not mean we do not have to take stock of our behaviour and our mistakes as an international leadership. The IWL–FI Congress is the best place to take stock, and as of now, we invite all those who have criticisms of this or that aspect of our performance to present it at the event and thus be able to learn together from our mistakes.

In this sense, our contribution to this debate is just one more. We do not intend, with this material, to impose any definition on the party, because we pride ourselves, as an international leadership, of not being vertical or totalitarian, of not imposing the politics or tactics of our parties, of not making the slightest personal attack on any leader to divert the discussion and of not doing the slightest persecution for political reasons. Our current is the opposite of the national-Trotskyism of Healy<sup>1</sup> and Lambert, who imposed true totalitarian and corrupt dictatorships in their parties, plagued by personal and moral attacks and persecution for political dissent.

For this reason, there is no questioning the role of any national or international leader. Comrade Simon, a member of the IEC, is one of the most valuable leaders of IWL and one of the most important leaders of the party. The IS will propose to the next World Congress his re-election as a member of the IEC, whatever the state of the party discussion. Other comrades, like Miguel Angel, have fulfilled an undisputed role of leadership in the party, being the vanguard in the development of *A Luchar*, beyond the political differences.

We are proud then that there is discussion, that there is no unanimity either in IWL or in the party, as long as each and every one of us respects the sacred principle that has been the key to the party's progress in its 10 years of existence: we belong to IWL and all our differences we solve in its bosom.

## I. The method of the IS and IWL

We want to dwell on one aspect that has worried us: criticisms of how the IWL leadership has faced the discussion, made by several comrades who have opposed the essence of party politics in the last period. We can summarise these as follows: During this period, the IS, despite not agreeing on aspects of party politics, has been washing its hands on the discussion and has unconditionally supported the leadership of the party.

Since this is a serious and repeated criticism, we must take it into account before moving on to the political aspects of the discussion.

This view of the comrades is, to a large extent, correct. The leadership of the IWL has unconditionally supported the leadership of the party. But for us, more than criticism this is a compliment because our method is to respect the national leaderships, beyond the political differences we may have.

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<sup>1</sup> **Gerry Healy** (1913–1989) was a British Trotskyist, co-founder of the International Committee of the Fourth International and the leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

We have applied to the letter the statutory rule that neither the IS nor the Executive Committee of IWL may impose a tactic or a national or organisational political line on the sections. They can, yes, give opinions, recommendations, criticise or approve, but cannot force.

This rule of conduct elevated to the international bylaws is based on the conviction that our international leadership is being formed and has not yet been tested in decisive events of the class struggle, nor does it represent strong national parties with mass influence. Therefore, the weak and in formation leadership can hardly impose mandatory political lines on the parties.

This is, of course, a temporary rule for the current stage of formation of the International. The Third International of Lenin and Trotsky, on the contrary, established as one of the 21 conditions that all member parties had to comply with the obligation to implement the national policy approved by the international bodies. But we are talking of Lenin and Trotsky, who had led the Russian Revolution, and who had great authority. As long as our International and its leadership do not have it, we will continue to apply the rule that the IEC may not take over any section or force it to adopt a particular national political line.

Second, both the IEC and the IS are based on deep respect among its members and towards all international and national leaders. We believe in discussion, in political agreements, and that all of us will put into practice the orientations we approve by mutual consent.

But in the criticism several comrades make of us, there is an aspect that is not true: the IS and the IEC have not washed their hands in the discussion. Quite the contrary, this has been on the agenda of the last IEC meetings and at the centre of the IS's concerns.

To illustrate the elements above, we want to recount the steps taken by this discussion. This is, of course, a short summary, because we do not want to overwhelm comrades with long quotations. In any case, the IS, at the request of any comrade, will send the documentation requested about these points.

At the World Congress in March 1985, we had discussed the possibility that *A Luchar* would quickly become a united revolutionary front or, in other words, that it would lay the groundwork for a revolutionary workers' party. But in the IEC of May 1985, we changed the characterisation and we concluded that *A Luchar* while being an extraordinary achievement, was a "revolutionary union phenomenon" or a "revolutionary trade union current".

The leadership of the party did not agree with this characterisation and gave more weight to the political character of *A Luchar*, relying on its development as a revolutionary united front, towards a revolutionary party or towards a common organisation. Despite this discrepancy, we agreed on the practical conclusions. The IS considered we were at great risk of making mistakes, because of distance and remoteness, and for this reason, was extremely careful on this discussion. Moreover, we wanted to be mistaken, we wished the leadership's opinion to be true, and that *A Luchar* really would become a revolutionary united front.

In the IEC of September 1985, the Colombian comrades raised the discussion about the characterisation that there was an ongoing civil war in the country. The document presented included valuable contributions on the characterisation of the revolutionary situation, on the need to have a "battle-hardened party" for action, on the urgency of responding to paramilitary violence, and so on. However, the IEC pointed out the fear that some characterisations of the document, such as a civil war, could lead us to the conclusion of politically subjecting ourselves to the guerrilla side, abandoning a class analysis.

In various speeches, members of the IEC, and especially Comrade Moreno, stressed that our goal is to convince the working class as a whole on the need for a revolutionary policy, emphasising that our policy is not for the vanguard, much less to win the guerrillas but to win the liberal, conservative, or communist working class. The point was made that the guerrilla must accept the discipline of the workers' movement, that we are in favour of defending it from any attack by the government, but we are against its isolated actions and its elitist character, since it never consults its actions, nor submits itself to the discipline of any democratic body of the working class. In



addition, we considered that the guerrilla does not have a backing of significant sectors of the workers and masses movement.

In relation to *A Luchar*, the IEC vindicated this immense achievement, raising at all costs its defence and development as a revolutionary trade union current, but ratifying, as we said, that we did not see as possible its evolution towards a revolutionary united front of a political type, that is to say, towards a revolutionary workers' party.

The conclusions of the ICE had the agreement of all those present, including the Colombian comrade, but it was totally explicit the IEC did not impose or vote the party line; that it only discussed and gave opinions, and the Colombian leadership was completely free to listen to or disregard those opinions.

The IS believed the agreements reached in the ICE would facilitate the political and organisational framework of the party and that upon learning the whole discussion the party would easily reposition itself. There were reasons to believe it, since it was, until that moment, the first serious discussion in which there were important political differences but on which agreement had been reached.

Regrettably, this was not the case, and the IS made a historic mistake: it did not attend the Congress. We did not believe in Simon's systematic calls or in the letters of other comrades insisting on the need to be present in the deliberations. We underestimated the dimension of the party crisis, which we believed to be in the process of being resolved, and we were totally wrong.

This mistake shows, by the negative, our over-confidence in the party leadership and in the delegates to the Congress. We applied schematically and mistakenly our principle that it is up to the national sections, their congresses and their leaderships to decide their policy and choose their leadership. We forgot that, despite maintaining this sacred principle, we could have contributed to the debate with opinions, ideas and suggestions that might have facilitated a better development of the Congress and a better overcoming of the party crisis.

In the IEC held in April 1986, we had an opportunity to discuss one of the crucial issues of the Colombian Congress: the class definition of the leaderships and the independent countries, noting M-19 and ELN, FSLN, FMLN, *Sendero Luminoso* [Shining Path], are all independent, revolutionary but petty bourgeois, non-working-class leaderships.

With this class definition, we wanted to say these are leaderships that despite wanting to make a revolution will lead, because of their class limitations, to a dead end, as demonstrated by Sandinism.

We said the definition of "popular" is insufficient to characterise a political organisation, because it is a "not-of-class" term, and the key factor is the class character of its leadership and its program.

We further pointed out that any alliance or agreement with these leaderships is temporary and on short-term problems, since the revolution they want is opposed to ours because they are against deepening the national revolution, developing the world socialist workers' revolution, with all which it implies, having as a priority the construction of the International, and fighting for workers' democracy at all levels and at all stages, before or after the taking of power. These fundamental implications are openly against the conceptions of the members of *A Luchar*, and primarily of its constituents, the guerrilla dictators, who solve everything according to their will.

Regarding the independent countries, we emphasised we could not consider them as allied nations because it meant forgetting the class characterisation of Nicaragua, Libya, Iran or Iraq as bourgeois states. We said we defend them from imperialism but we fight against their bourgeois governments.

The meeting concluded, again, in agreement by all those present, including the Colombian representative.

But after the IEC, the IS began to worry about the political course of the party because for over a year we observed that, at this or that point, there could be a tendency of the party leadership to yield to the inevitable pressures from the guerrilla. Therefore, when Comrade Negro E. travelled, at the request of the party leadership, the IS drew up a short memorandum with some concerns — not even positions — about the political course of the party. We put as a question the doubt that the party was capitulating to the guerrillas and that it had a vanguardist policy and not towards the whole of the workers' movement. We pointed out several items that reinforced our concern (our position on the general strike of 20 June 1985, on the elections, on the Pope's visit, on the isolated actions of the guerrilla, etc.). We wanted to know what the character and dynamics of the *A Luchar* Convention was.

In addition, we argued that for us the party's axis of activity should be trade union unity. As we will see later, the comrades of the party leadership did not agree.

The trip of Negro E., to our dismay, confirmed some of those doubts. But we decided to wait three months and not start any discussion on the whole of the party's policy so you could apply in full and thus we could draw conclusions from it. It was impossible for the IS, thousands of kilometres away, to take action to change the line being applied, running the high risk of being wrong and, above all, avoiding that reality itself supplies the answer on the correctness or incorrectness of the party line.

A few months after this trip, we ask you: who was right about the question of trade union unity? The IS or the leadership of the party?

At the end of August 1986, Comrade Moreno sent a letter to Simon. Moreno stated, first, that we were very careful in our assessments of the Colombian situation because the distance would lead us inevitably to commit serious mistakes, tactical or of concrete analysis. Second, it ratified our decision not to discuss for a period of three months, but again pointed out the doubts that assaulted the IS: first, the fact that the party had not criticised the CNG's statement about the Pope, and second, the definition and orientation towards *A Luchar*. Moreno said emphatically that "*A Luchar* will never, ever be a revolutionary workers' party". He added that to undermine this assertion, to show that *A Luchar* was moving towards a revolutionary united front or some such, it would have to fulfil three conditions: that the newspaper be sold and paid for by almost all the militants of *A Luchar*; that common grassroots organisations of all the tendencies that form *A Luchar* should arise; and that a fight without quarter against the CNG's policy be initiated.

Several months later, you must answer whether these three conditions were fulfilled. We will come back to this point later.

At the time, two currents of opinion began to take shape in the Central Committee: one that tended to politically dissolve the party in *A Luchar*, and another that opposed it. Unfortunately, the discussion began to take on a certain factional tone: there were rumours, comments that transcended the Central Committee and reached rank-and-file sectors, discomfort, personal criticism, and so on.

For this reason, the IS of the IWL proposed, first, to postpone any discussion in the rank-and-file of the party until the end of the CUT Congress, and called on the comrades who opposed the line to dissolve politically in *A Luchar* to facilitate the application of the party line, creating the best climate to facilitate the discussion of this problem, once the CUT Congress ended.

After the CUT Congress, the IS proposed to convene a party Congress, preparatory to the IWL World Congress, and to regulate a period of discussion with the broadest guarantees for comrades opposed to the policy of the majority of the leadership. For this reason, we proposed a Guarantee Commission, with representatives of the two positions and with a member sent by the IS of IWL.

Our concern was and remains to preserve above all the unity of the party and to facilitate this important discussion, crucial for the party and for IWL.

To contribute to this debate, we published the *Theses on the Guerrillas*,<sup>2</sup> by Moreno, Greco and Frank, and now we send this letter, which we hope will serve to clarify the discussion and to make a case for the unity of the party at the Congress.

## II. What is not under discussion

The aim of this point is to provide a little light on the discussion, specifying those issues that for us make up a decisive agreement with the party leadership. We want to attempt to separate the wheat from the chaff and to prevent the discussion from leading to secondary or false problems.

There is a basic agreement in four points: the definition of the stage of the class struggle in Colombia as an acute revolutionary situation, the work of the party in independent trade unionism, the defence of the guerrilla movement, and the tactics of the revolutionary united front. Let's look at them one by one.

### 1. An acute revolutionary situation

IWL was the first to define, perhaps a little late (1984), that the country had a revolutionary situation, arguing with the leadership of the party, who only approved this characterisation in the extraordinary Congress of 1985.

Subsequently, we have continued to advance in the characterisation, and we considered a revolutionary situation was a term too meagre to define the shambles of the class struggle in the country. We then said it was an acute revolutionary situation.

We can discuss a lot about when this stage opened, but it is ultra-secondary. The IS even has a more daring opinion, if the term fits, than the one held by the party leadership: we think the revolutionary situation began with the National Civic Strike of 1977.

But it does not matter. The fact is there is no discussion about the character of the stage, as we fully agree on its definition.

### 2. Work in independent trade unionism

Since 1980 the leadership of our international current began to raise the need to work in independent trade unionism.

The party was at the beginning of a serious crisis, despite the resounding success it achieved when, at the UTC Congress, the proposal to build a Labour-type workers' party was approved. However, the objective conditions did not allow this project to flourish, and the international leadership began to insist on the need to reorient the work towards independent trade unionism.

With a long delay, the leadership of the party accepted the proposal, and this positioning, which remains until today, allowed us to resolve the previous crisis and place ourselves in the most combative strip of the Colombian working class, beginning to overcome marginality, by our structuring in the education sector and in some other unions.

### 3. The defence of the guerrilla

It was the IWL leadership who, in 1984, got the party leadership to see it had a principled but sectarian position in relation to the guerrilla because neither its newspapers nor the documents gave importance to it, and rather it was believed the guerrillas tended to disappear.

The IWL leadership pointed out that the influence of the Nicaraguan revolution coupled with the guerrilla tradition of the country, the revolutionary situation, and the social crisis would give the guerrillas a great air.

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<sup>2</sup> Available for download in [www.nahuelmoreno.org/textos.php?i=en](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org/textos.php?i=en).

Comrade Moreno pointed out we should not speak only of guerrilla but of something even more important — the territorial dual power achieved by FARC fundamentally, and to a lesser extent by M-19, ELN and EPL (People's Liberation Army). He said these were huge achievements of the mass movement and that the party did not give them any importance. That from the newspaper we should make systematic propaganda comparing the living conditions of the territories controlled by the guerrilla with those of the rest of the peasants.

When FARC and the government signed the truce, IWL congratulated the party for its principled policy against the truce but pointed out it could not be sectarian with the guerrillas. It was an obligation to defend it from the attacks of the government, having signed the truce or not.

#### 4. The revolutionary united front

The World Congress of March 1985 approved in its Theses the tactic of a revolutionary united front “which consists of achieving political-organisational agreements based on common programmatic points that allow us to take part jointly in the processes of the class struggle and in the fight for the leadership of the mass movement”. The revolutionary united front was defined as “a transitional step towards a revolutionary mass party”.

The IEC of April 1986 evaluated the implementation of this tactic and considered that it had yielded important results so far. But unlike what we foresaw in March 1985, the revolutionary agreements that were reached were mainly on trade union ground and not with political organisations or currents to build revolutionary workers' parties.

This fine-tuning, however, was not to downplay the revolutionary united-front tactic but to broaden its field of application.

In fact, although revolutionary fronts have not yet emerged whose central objective is to advance quickly towards a revolutionary workers' party, in several countries we have achieved important revolutionary union agreements, or embryos of such, as in Colombia, and to a lesser extent in Brazil and Argentina. We have to study well the case of Mexico, where our party has reached a political agreement with an organisation whose centre of the action is the working-class neighbourhoods, forming a new party that has requested affiliation to the IWL.

Undoubtedly, the party and especially its leadership have been the champions in the implementation of the revolutionary united front tactic, and *A Luchar* was the most finished and complete expression of the revolutionary trade union front. This is an example for all the IWL's sections and for all Trotskyism.

Our next World Congress has as one of the main points of its agenda the evaluation of the tactics of the revolutionary united front, but we can already anticipate that the IS proposal will be to ratify this tactic, with the addition that its field of application has expanded greatly in the trade union arena, but maintaining more than ever the struggle to achieve true revolutionary united fronts in the political arena with working-class currents, as a precursor to the revolutionary workers' party.

### III. The crux of the discussion: the policy for *A Luchar*

The characterisation of *A Luchar* and CUSI, and the party's policy towards them, are at the crux of all this discussion.

In fact, this point should go in the previous chapter that deals with the agreements between the leaderships of IWL and the party, because we all take the words right out of our mouths to say that *A Luchar* and CUSI are the greatest achievements of the party in recent years as its members are workers activists who refused to capitulate to the government of Belisario Betancur and who have maintained revolutionary positions. Besides this agreement on the importance of *A Luchar*, after two years of discussion, we have managed to come up with a common definition of *A Luchar*.



We want to emphasise this aspect because, as we pointed out in Chapter I, lately there have been discussions about very serious programmatic points and matters of principles with the Colombian comrades in the IEC and IS. But the reality of the class struggle and the discussions we have had led us to agree, little by little, on almost all these issues.

For example, after a lot of discussion about the characterisation of civil war in Colombia and on the policy that emerged from it, we came to a common point of view. Later we discussed the class characterisation of the independent leaderships as the M-19 and agreed to define them as revolutionary petty-bourgeois.

The same thing happened with *A Luchar*. In May 1985, we began a discussion about its characterisation. During the previous months, we all believed *A Luchar* could move quickly towards a revolutionary united front, but after listening to the report of the Colombian comrades, the IEC changed its mind, as we pointed out above, and believed we were facing a revolutionary union current. We did not see that other members of *A Luchar* wanted to make a revolutionary workers' party, much less a party that forced the guerrilla to accept the workers' discipline, democracy.

The conclusion of this characterisation was to develop *A Luchar*, equipping it with a program and a revolutionary non-political trade union organisation, systematically discussing our deep discrepancies with the other members, but avoiding its transformation into a political organisation that could impose on us, by majority vote, the elitist, undemocratic line of the guerrilla.

For us, what was fundamental in the political field was the debate and the discussion with the guerrilla for being elitist, not accepting any class discipline, for being non-democratic, and for its popular-frontist tendencies and its refusal to build an international.

The leadership of the party, who continued with the old strategy of transforming *A Luchar* into a political organisation, did not share this formulation.

In April 1986, the IEC further refined the characterisation, defining *A Luchar* as the union-type revolutionary united front.

In the middle of last year, after so many and so complicated discussions, we began to agree on the definition of *A Luchar*, merit that belongs to the leadership of the party. The comrades made immense theoretical and political progress, achieving an impeccable definition.

In *Information Bulletin* No 30 they pointed out that *A Luchar* was the agreement of three currents "very dissimilar in their tradition, program, and method", that it operates "around political agreements of the leaderships without a democratic centralist type operation and without common grassroots organisations", that *A Luchar* is influenced by "organisations that define themselves as political-military", and that "it is not explicit in any of the forces (that make up *A Luchar*) the need for the construction of the revolutionary workers' party and the need of the world party of the revolution".

Subsequently, *Information Bulletin* No 43 says "most of their leaders (of *A Luchar*) follow politically guerrilla organisations", and "the character of the organisation whose program, strategy and method is based on the guerrilla, to which it subordinates tactics, including the tactic of party construction, is opposed to the character of the organisation for which we fight, which is that whose program, strategy and method is in function of the class struggle and the workers' revolution, to the which we subordinate all tactics, including the guerrilla" (*Information Bulletin* No 43).

We would add to this definition that the guerrillas are the enemy of workers' democracy and of subordinating themselves to a mass or of vanguard workers' organisation, a revolutionary workers' party. This is why it is elitist.

Our proposal or advice to the Central Committee, the party cells, and the Congress is to begin by voting for this characterisation of *A Luchar*. Among Marxists, the first thing, before policy, is characterisation. This is why the party has to begin, if it is serious, by defining *A Luchar*. We insist — our first and fundamental motion is to approve this definition now, immediately.



It is amazing, but in two years we have never agreed so much on the definition of *A Luchar* and, nevertheless, we have never been so far as today from an agreement in the policy towards *A Luchar*, because of this impeccable definition have arisen two policies opposite by the vertex. Someone is irrational because, normally, it is not so — from a common characterisation a common policy arises or with small tactical differences.

This irrationality explains all our controversies, all misunderstandings, and it is what undoubtedly causes a lot of confusion in the party, which does not understand how, by adopting a definition of *A Luchar* with two raised hands, there are two antagonistic policies.

You have reason to be confused because, truly, it looks like a Chinese hieroglyph. Therefore, we want to dwell on it to decrypt it, to attempt bringing some clarity.

### Who is irrational?

Despite this brilliant definition, the leadership of the party drew political conclusions diametrically opposed to those that emanate from it. Let's see it point by point.

1. In the definition of *A Luchar*, the comrades who are for the dissolution in that organisation said *A Luchar* is made up of three currents “very dissimilar in their tradition, program, and method”.

To justify the policy of dissolution, they also say the opposite: that “*A Luchar* is a revolutionary political organisation, configured for the struggle for workers’ and people’s power, with an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist program, a workers’ and popular composition and a proletarian leadership” (*Information Bulletin* No 30).

These comrades do not explain to us how it is possible to have in the same *Bulletin* in one page a “very dissimilar in their tradition, program, and method”, and in another page that *A Luchar* becomes a “revolutionary political organisation”, which means it has very similar programs and policies, not “very dissimilar” ones.

2. The comrades who are for the merger, dissolution or formation of a revolutionary workers’ organisation or party with *A Luchar* are proposing not only that we have this policy with “dissimilar” organisations and leaderships, but what is much more, with “opposite”, antagonistic ones, as we are told in the definition. Let us recall it: “The character of the organisation whose program, strategy and method is based on the guerrilla, which subordinates tactics, including that of party construction, is opposed to the character of the organisation for which we fight, which is that whose program, strategy and method is in function of the class struggle and the workers’ revolution, to the which we subordinate all tactics, including the guerrilla.”

The comrades we are writing about discovered the squaring of the circle in politics: merging, dissolving or integrating with the “opposite” to us.

3. In the definition, we are told that “it is not explicit in any of the forces (that make up *A Luchar*) the need for the construction of the revolutionary workers’ party”.

But in the same *Bulletin*, they assure us that *A Luchar* is “inscribed in the process of building a revolutionary party with mass influence”. We do not see or understand the miracle that those who do not see the “need for building a revolutionary workers’ party” are building “a revolutionary party with mass influence”. Someone is insane: either those of *A Luchar*, who do exactly the opposite of what they want and program (not to build an independent revolutionary workers’ party) or the party comrades who want to dissolve, merge or make a party with *A Luchar*.

4. In the definition they tell us that in *A Luchar* there are “organisations that define themselves as political-military”, and in another *Bulletin*, they are more explicit: “most of their leaders (of *A Luchar*) follow politically guerrilla organisations”.

But in the same paper (*Information Bulletin* No 30) they point out that the leadership of *A Luchar* is a “proletarian leadership”. This would mean the guerrilla leaders are, for the comrades, revolutionary proletarians, since “the majority” of the leadership of *A Luchar* “follows politically” the

directions of the “guerrilla organisations”, and *A Luchar* is “a revolutionary political organisation” with “proletarian leadership”.

Time ago, the comrades defined the guerrilla leadership as popular and not working-class; then, we believe, they accepted the definition of the petty bourgeois. If they are now revolutionary working-class leaderships in the process of becoming a “revolutionary party with mass influence”, there is no explanation for the support they gave to the Pope, or for a single phrase of the brilliant definition of *A Luchar* made by the leadership of the party.

How can we have “very dissimilar” “traditions, programs, and methods” and [be] the “opposites” in everything with revolutionary working-class leaderships?

5. The questions we face, amid so many contradictions, are: if “*A Luchar* is a revolutionary political organisation, configured for the struggle for workers’ and people’s power, with an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist program, a workers’ and popular composition and a proletarian leadership”, and “its leaderships follow politically the guerrilla organisations”, what is this organisation? Is it a revolutionary workers’ organisation, or organisation collateral to the guerrilla? Who controls whom: the guerrilla controls *A Luchar*, or *A Luchar* controls the guerrilla? If the guerrilla leadership is the one in control, will this be the one to build the revolutionary workers’ party, whose first measure would be to prohibit the actions of the guerrilla unless they are authorised by the party? Will the leadership of the guerrillas form a revolutionary workers’ party of masses where everything is democratically resolved, including the suppression of guerrilla actions when it deems it necessary and convenient? To state this another way: will the guerrilla leadership commit suicide by developing a workers’, revolutionary and independent organisation with democracy, that dominates it on all four sides, as a revolutionary mass workers’ party must do? Will the leadership of the guerrilla leave its leadership position in a democratic debate?

### Who is rational?

We and a group of party leaders want to be consistent and draw conclusions from the teachings and mistakes, and especially, we want to apply to the end the brilliant definition of *A Luchar* made by the leadership.

We are against merging, dissolving, forming a front or party with *A Luchar*, or that this be the central axis of our activity because:

First, because there are “very dissimilar programs and methods”, and in both physics and politics dissimilar or opposing forces cancel each other out, according to the parallelogram of forces law. Second, because *A Luchar* is influenced by “organisations that define themselves as political-military”, and therefore we must define it essentially as collateral of the guerrillas, and not an independent revolutionary workers’ organisation. Third, because “it is not explicit in any of the forces (that make up *A Luchar*) the need for the construction of the revolutionary workers’ party and the need of the world party of the revolution”. Fourth, because guerrilla leaders who have a total or almost total influence on *A Luchar* are petty-bourgeois, lumpen, peasant, but not a revolutionary workers’ leadership; for this and for no other reason, they are so “dissimilar” and “opposed” in almost every aspect to our party. Fifth and fundamental: because no one in his right mind merges with his opponent in almost every field.

Specifically, our line of not merging politically with the components of *A Luchar* is consistent to the very end with the definition given by the party leadership, which we subscribe to and which we have quoted in the six points.

Many comrades, impacted by the trade union successes of *A Luchar*, wonder with some fear whether we are for the breakup of it. On the contrary, we must continue in *A Luchar* more than ever but as a political agreement and in the trade union arena, now basing ourselves on CUSI, which prevents us from confusing the political with the trade union. We must be clear and fraternal with the comrades of *A Luchar*, and tell them we cannot merge for everything that is in the *Internal Bulletins*: that we are “dissimilar”, “opposites”, that we are against the leadership of

the guerrilla, that the guerrillas must subordinate themselves to working-class organisations — of mass or of vanguard — with workers’ democracy, and that we disagree completely about the need for international and militant internationalism and about the character of a revolutionary workers’ party, which must be at least democratic centralist. In other words, we have to say to *A Luchar*’s comrades we wish to have our hands free to criticise them fraternally but systematically and that our priority task is to strengthen our party, from finances to newspaper, to growth and consolidation. We want to have our hands free to criticise the inevitable support of the guerrillas to the different popes who live in or visit Colombia. We must point out it seems to us quite right they have the same freedom to criticise us, since while we work together on the points that unite us, we want to follow this political discussion from our press organs and also orally, given the innumerable differences we have.

### What is CUSI?

After the *A Luchar* Convention, CUSI occupied the place *A Luchar* had before when grouping its trade union current.

We have the impression that CUSI is, like *A Luchar* before, a union revolutionary united front because it groups the activists of the different currents with the clear and only shared goal of making a revolutionary union tendency, with autonomy from *A Luchar*, with certain workers’ democracy, and where, it seems, there tend to be rank-and-file bodies or currents by trade union, which democratically decide.

The discussion to elect CUSI members in the CUT is an example: there was no agreement on who should go, but it was put to a vote and decided in a democratic and centralised manner. On another occasion, before the *A Luchar* Convention, this mechanism had been applied in connection with the election of the members of *A Luchar* in the leadership of FECODE [Colombian Federation of Educators], and we understand there has also been a vote on other occasions.

We are very careful with the definition of CUSI because we do not know its dynamics with certainty. To define it precisely, we would need to know whether in the different guilds, such as teachers, for example, trade union tendencies have been formed that democratically decide or whether there is a trend for them to be formed.

If so, then we are facing a union revolutionary united front. If, on the contrary, this is not dynamic, if each CUSI force acts separately in different departments or guilds without submitting to democratic voting or forming common trade union tendencies, then it is likely that we should define CUSI in a similar way to *A Luchar*, as a trade union agreement. But we do not know, and we believe it is up to you to specify its true dynamics.

We note this because, in other countries, such as Brazil and Argentina, union tendencies have been formed by guilds, which, without being nation-wide or covering all trade unions, as CUSI does, begin to be trade union revolutionary united fronts. Besides their incipient anti-bureaucratic and anti-government program, they hold democratic votes. Their policies and tactics are not the results of imposition by our parties, much less of political agreements, but true trade union currents with autonomy and internal democracy.

## IV. The policy of the party and *A Luchar*

Now we have to see what the concrete policies were, for action, which emerged from the irrational policy towards *A Luchar*.

This intimate brotherhood between our party and “dissimilar”, “opposing” organisations, subordinated to the guerrillas, produced, as it could not be otherwise, a common policy for the main facts of the class struggle in the country.

For a revolutionary party, elaboration and political work go through three stages. First is the characterisation of the concrete situation and the elaboration, based on it, of forecasts or hypotheses. Second is the definition of a policy to act on reality, based on these characterisations and forecasts, which takes into account the whole of the workers' movement. Third, later on, is to corroborate whether our characterisations and forecasts were verified and to take stock of our activity and of the strengthening or regression of the party.

Our parties are not commentators of the class struggle, hence, we will not dwell on post-event analyses, even if they are important, but, fundamentally, in the points, we pointed out earlier. This is why we want to see, in light of the main facts of the class struggle in the last two years, the political activity of the party and of *A Luchar*.

For us, these facts are: the general strike on 20 June 1985, the taking of the Palace of Justice, the elections, union disputes and strikes, the Pope's visit to Colombia, and the founding of CUT.

Let's look at them one by one.

### The strike of 20 June 1985

As we pointed out at the outset, we do not want to start a polemic of "I said—you said". With the June 1985 strike, for example, the IWL leadership believed in the party leadership's analysis, which said we would assist to an impressive general strike. In Argentina, we got tired of giving lectures throughout the party, making propaganda in favour of the general strike, saying it would be totally different from the Argentinean peaceful strikes because there it would have characteristics similar to those of the National Civic Strike. As they say in Buenos Aires, "we pumped up" the strike.

The party leadership said "the 1977 civic strike was a general rehearsal for the next national strike"; that unlike 1977, when all the pro-bosses bureaucracy and the CP made the strike, this time the bureaucracy refused to take part, the CP has stifled its realisation for over a year and, in spite of having finally approved the date, the CP "remains stronger than ever supporting the Betancur government".

But despite all these factors against, "the fundamental, decisive, differentiating element between the two strikes is the participation of the guerrillas" (*Internal Bulletin* No. 248, 3 June 1985).

Based on this characterisation, the party leadership made a prognosis and defined a policy of participation: we had to "fight to turn the strike into a true worker and popular general strike, stimulating its possible semi insurreccional, spontaneous and geographic insurreccional outbreak".

On 20 June, the day of highest workers attendance in the country, there was no "semi insurreccional outbreak", not even a peaceful and dull general strike, nor did any major production sector stop. Nothing happened. The leadership of the party and of IWL were mistaken from beginning to end.

It was such a scandalous mistake that it is almost a model to start our cadre schools saying: "We foresaw a semi-insurrection and that day no one missed work. Let's study why we made such a big political mistake."

It is not a question of not making mistakes because we live off that. In our international current, we have made much bigger mistakes than this. The problem is to find the reasons and explain them exhaustively, publicly and internally; it is to have the self-critical attitude of systematically reminding the militants of this mistake, to alert them of our weakness as leaders.

The balance-sheet of party activities presented for the 1986 Congress states that "the mistake we committed has to do precisely with the problem of the CP", because "we did not take into account the CP", and did not notice that the strike "ran a very serious risk of not being realised because of the CP's truce policy and its line to stop it".



For a time, the IWL leadership shared this self-criticism, but now we believe it to be wrong. It is true the party leadership undervalued the CP, but this was not the fundamental mistake because all documents before the strike warned a thousand times the CP was against the strike, despite having approved it. The central mistake of characterisation and prognosis was to have overestimated the guerrillas, to have said that “the fundamental, decisive, difference between the two strikes (1977 and 1985) is the participation of the guerrillas”. For the leadership, this participation was enough counterweight to the boycott by the bureaucracy and to the opposition by the CP for a whole year. Because of this weight of the guerrilla, the strike of 1977 was to remain only as the run-up or preview of the 20 June strike.

But just a few days before the national strike, M-19 picked up all its camps in all the popular neighbourhoods, entered the bush, and did not shoot a single shot in the national strike. The other guerrilla organisations did almost nothing, and the planned semi-insurrection became a hard defeat.

The party’s balance of activities does not say this. The party newspaper does not say this. This error of prognosis and characterisation gave rise to a much more serious one, the mistake in the political line to be carried out: fighting to convert the strike “into a true worker and popular general strike, stimulating its possible semi insurrectional, spontaneous and geographic insurrectionary outbreak”.

Nor does the balance-sheet of party activities make a self-criticism of this concrete policy, for action. On the contrary, it concludes by saying we should have noticed the strike was in danger of not being realised, but despite this “we committed to the bitter end to the strike, and that if it was done it was against the CP”. Does this mean it was good to have committed to the strike, even if we had characterised that it would not happen? What method of doing politics is this? To characterise we are going to a defeat and despite that to push to the maximum?

What would the party say if in Paz del Rio or in Satexco the comrades of the cell approved that the axis of the party is to strike at a certain date, not only to strike but to occupy the factory and have strike pickets, and on the day of the strike not a single worker stops working? What would the party demand from the Satexco or the Paz del Río cells? Would it not demand a self-criticism, not only internal but public, informing the workers the cell was never so wrong?

What would the party say if that same cell, in taking stock, acknowledges the strike would not happen because of the bureaucracy, but despite this, it was “committed to the bitter end to the strike”, and in the event of being done it was against the bureaucracy?

The mistake was not to take into account the conditions of the whole of the workers’ movement but only those of the popular, non-working-class vanguard, and to define a policy for action — to stimulate the semi-insurrectional outbreak — for the vanguard and not for the workers’ movement as a whole. It was an adventurist and ultra-leftist action, totally disconnected from the whole Colombian working class.

Third, it is necessary to take stock of the party’s activity with this policy. As far as we know, militancy was committed to the strike and put all its energy and enthusiasm to its service. However, there was almost no political presence of the party: from February to June no issue of *El Socialista* came out. There were five [issues of] *A Luchar* since February, but it seems to us quite a little, considering that the party was preparing for a semi insurrectional outbreak.

Finally, we want to know whether our strike policy strengthened the party. Do we leave with a bigger political presence? Did we recruit comrades? Or did the opposite happen? The comrades who throughout the day of the strike walked through Bogota, Cali, Medellin, and Barranquilla trying to take part in some demonstration, exposing themselves to the police repression totally isolated from the masses, what do they say?

Let us note, by the way, that this second prognosis or characterisation is totally opposite to the one we always held about abstention in Colombia, which we always defined as backward, depoliticised, unconscious and non-combative.

But everything can change, and it was possible that the abstention of 1986 would turn 180 degrees, becoming “conscious, qualified, combative and radicalised”.

From these characterisations, a policy emerged: “The only political line truly revolutionary, unitary and of mass in the electoral arena is the call for a national campaign for the masses to protest and not to vote” (*El Socialista* No 296, 31 January 1986).

And from this political line emerged an “anti-electoral political campaign” with *A Luchar* of “national character” that “covers the months of April and May, subordinating other tasks”, with two central slogans: “For life and freedom: National Popular Assembly” and “Do not vote, *A Luchar* for workers’ and popular power”. “Central events for 14 May” will be scheduled in many cities, and in the meantime, “forums, seminars, and activities”.

As instruments: *El Socialista*, *A Luchar* and a National Manifesto of 50,000 copies.

Now then, what happened?

First, the party will have to study and revise its characterisation of the “abstentionist behaviour of the majority” of Colombians, taking into account the 1986 parliamentary and presidential elections registered one of the lowest abstention rates in the country’s history, about 50 percent, as much or more than the percentage of voters in the United States.

Second, was it verified that abstention was more conscious, qualified, combative and radicalised? If so, how many abstentionist mass rallies were there in the country? How did this “strip of millions protesting against the regime through conscientious abstention” express itself? How many abstentionist rallies did we do and how many thousands and thousands did we gather in them? How many thousands and thousands did we recruit for *A Luchar* or for the party out of that “strip of millions”?

Now let’s move on to the policy of the party. Is it true that the “only revolutionary, unitary and mass policy” is abstention? It has never been like this for us. Our party was born by breaking with the infantile and ultra-leftist positions of the Colombian guerrillas that placed abstention as a principle. Lenin said that although elections are a tactical matter, the vast majority of the time we must be involved, to contend for the masses with bourgeois and reformist parties unless they can be boycotted to make the insurrection.

It is another matter if for weakness, technical or tactical reasons (in this case, not to break unity with *A Luchar*), we do not take part, but this does not mean it is politically correct.

Did we have a Leninist policy for the elections in Colombia? Did we battle in *A Luchar* against the criminal abstentionist principle of its members? Were our militants armed to argue with those of *A Luchar*? Did *El Socialista* devote articles and articles to show that there is no worse political crime than to leave the workers to the bourgeois and Stalinists in the elections? Did *El Socialista* say we were against abstention but we agreed to abstain because we had not convinced them?

Nothing was like this. Not only did the party do nothing of this but it made a campaign of praises to abstention.

We gave in to the guerrilla who heads *A Luchar*, which is the enemy of doing a patient political work to convince the whole working class, liberal, conservative and communist, of a revolutionary policy. The guerrilla believes in its exemplary actions, distrusts the masses, and therefore refuses to politicise them.

But in addition, the guerrilla refuses to go to elections because it is terrified of being counted, and to prove it represents a tiny minority of the population.

If, as comrade Luciano Casas says, we accept FARC is at least 50 percent of the guerrillas in the country, and they took 5 percent of the vote in 1986, we must conclude that all the rest of the guerrillas have at most an electoral support of another 5 percent, which is a tiny minority.

In conclusion, our party misjudged two electoral forecasts — maintenance and qualification of abstention — and had an ultra-left abstentionist position because it did not elaborate its policy for the whole of the workers’ movement but for the guerrilla vanguard led by *A Luchar*.

## Participation in workers' disputes

The other fact of the class struggle has been labour disputes. As we are so far away, it is difficult for us to know the number of strikes that took place in these two years and the participation and politics of the party towards them. It is up to you to evaluate in depth how our participation in them was.

But for what little we know, the party had outstanding participation in the Caracol strike, which seems to have been one of the most important in 1986, and achieved very important successes in the ADE [District Association of Educators] elections in Bogota, and advances in ports and railways.

The party's turn towards the Caracol strike was very important, as reflected in the newspaper and in the *Internal Bulletins*. We know that, because of this participation, we recruited a good team of comrades in Bogota, and that this activity allowed us to start the recovery of the party after the crisis.

We also know we had outstanding participation in ADE, because our slate was the one with the highest voting, above all the old leaders of the teaching profession, reinforcing one of our main union works.

We were informed that in ports we achieved the vice-presidency of the union, and we understand we have had outstanding participation in the railway struggles and a good party team has consolidated in this sector.

This participation in the workers' struggles is very important and shows us that the decisive axis of partisan work is the structural worker fronts where we participate, and we have the impression it is this participation that most enables us to recruit and consolidate the party. It seems to us, moreover, that it is precisely the structuring that we have achieved in some sectors as in teaching, which has allowed us to cope with the crisis and begin to recover from it.

## The Pope's Visit

What characterisation did the party make regarding the Pope's visit before his arrival? What political course did it propose against the visit? Which party campaign did we decide on? How many rallies, flyers, newspapers, press releases, graffiti were made as part of that campaign?

Was there systematic propaganda pointing to the workers the Reagan in cassock would visit the country? Was the Pope condemned as an enemy of the Nicaraguan revolution and confessor of *gusanos-contras*?<sup>3</sup> Was the FSLN defended from the papal accusations? What did the party say about the CNG [National Guerrilla Coordinating Body] declaration of December 1985, which wanted "the best development of the papal visit" and to this end proposed a meeting with the bishops "to make such an exceptional spiritual moment the search for a climate and opportunity for life and human dignity"?

Well, the party did not say a word about the papal visit, either before or during his stay. It did not make predictions or characterisations, it did not define a policy to take part or made any campaign. It did nothing, faced with a decisive event in national politics: the visit of the Reagan in a cassock.

Only after the visit of Negro E., who formulated on behalf of the IS a harsh criticism of this absence of policy regarding the visit of Reagan in a cassock, the party brought a resolution to the Convention of *A Luchar* and published an article in the newspaper when the Pope had already gone.

3 *Gusanos* (worms) is the term Fidel Castro used to describe the wealthy white former landowners who fled Cuba after the overthrow of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. Since then it has become a scornful term to designate counter-revolutionaries in exile. *Contras* were the various US-backed and funded right-wing rebel groups active from 1979 to the early 1990s in opposition to the Sandinista Junta of National Reconstruction in Nicaragua.

But our parties are not commentators of the class struggle; they do not make journalistic articles after the facts but act upon them. Therefore, it is very serious to note the party was silent about the papal visit.

If we agree the Pope is Mr Reagan's envoy, as *El Socialista* says, or that he is a Reagan in a cassock, what would you have said if Reagan were to go to Colombia and the party neither says anything nor makes a political campaign against him, nor calls the whole left to protest?

The party not only did not say or do anything during the papal visit, but it refused to condemn CNG for its support of the Pope. When he had left, under pressure from IWL, it published in *El Socialista* No 302 an article where it says: "it is really incomprehensible that... there were sectors of the left that held attitudes of expectation in face of the results of the papal visit, or that they encouraged among workers hopes for his efforts in Colombia. In this camp are some of the declarations of M-19 and CNG in which the alleged papal virtues are put in place in the search for peace." Why did the party not say this before and during the visit? If you regard *A Luchar* as a revolutionary political organisation, why did you not propose to them a campaign against the Pope and call them to condemn that CNG statement as well? Do you not think this a criticism with silk gloves? What would you say if we replaced the Pope's name with Reagan's? Listen to what it sounds like: "It's really incomprehensible... that there were sectors of the left that held attitudes of expectation in the face of the results of Reagan's visit, or that they encouraged (...) hopes for his efforts in Colombia."

Finally, why did you publish a special supplement to the 1,000-person *A Luchar* Convention (which seems fine to us) but did not publish a single leaflet to address the millions of workers who went out to meet the Reagan with cassock?

## CUT and trade union unity

Of all the facts of the class struggle we have mentioned, the decisive, the enormous, the most important of all is the founding of CUT, which brings together more than half of the unionised workers' movement in Colombia, and which results from profound unitary processes, of rupture with the old centrals of the working class. It is, let us say, the greatest achievement of the country's revolutionary situation and one of the greatest workers' achievements in decades, which will certainly allow the working class to become the main protagonist of the class struggle in the country.

Now, what did the party foresee, and what line did it have to take part in it?

It is a fact that, since the National Seminar on Trade Union Unity organised by FECODE in February 1986, the party approved, together with *A Luchar*, a policy of union unity, proposing a class-struggle, democratic and revolutionary Central and participating in the unitary process that began to take place between independent trade unionism and CSTC [Union Confederation of Colombian Workers]. The IWL leadership had not clarity on this but the party leadership was correct.

However, the party had only a policy of union unity for a section of the working class, independent trade unionism and CSTC, and not for the working class as a whole. The party did not foresee or predict the process that led to CUT, and did nothing, no political campaign calling for the unity of the entire working class in a single central. The party came late to the political fact of the most important class struggle in many years and had no policy-prior to the fact. It is telling, for example, the National Document adopted at the Party Congress where the only thing said about union unity, is the following: "First, faced with the bureaucracy and Stalinism, the policy of unity of action and eventually united fronts around certain disputes must be taken into account. Second... we must study how we deal with tactics of union unity that take into account both the situation of Stalinism and independent trade unionism."

But in addition, IWL proposed in July 1986, during the visit of Negro E., that the axis of party politics should be union unity. This was a month before Jorge Carrillo called to the foundation of CUT.



The Report to the International Secretariat, written by the party Secretary, points out that “after this discussion, we note there is a difference with the comrade, who insists that the focus at the juncture should be union unity”.

This report notes the set of slogans for the juncture: fight against the government; defence of wages; participation in the process of union unity that is promoted through CUS [Committee of Trade Union Unity], in the process of democratic struggle, and in the campaign of solidarity with Nicaragua.

The report says, verbatim, that “from this body of slogans we privilege the first”, later pointing out that “union unity, a process in which we are participating and for which we have a policy, although it is a process with objective seat (...) we still think it is managed at an entirely superstructural level and without a certain and clear dynamics”... This, a month before the call to found CUT!!!

Furthermore, *Information Bulletin* No 34 of 20 August 1986 notes that a meeting of the expanded Executive Committee of CUSI was held one week before the convening of the CUT Congress became known. The *Bulletin* says: “Although the hypothesis of a central in which the three currents converge was considered the least likely, in fact, it was raised because the first superstructural talks already existed...”.

A week before the emergence of CUT, it was considered as the least likely!!!

Neither CUSI, nor *A Luchar*, nor the party, were the vanguard in this process. On the contrary, as the *Bulletin* says, “it is a fact that the most audacious and dynamic proposals come from Jorge Carrillo and the CP...”.

That the call to the CUT Congress caught the party totally unprepared is expressed in the language of the same *Bulletin*, which states “there is an *unforeseen turn* of events that places us at the gates of a new worker central”. And in terms of the national document published in *Information Bulletin* No 40 of 23 October 1986: “Unexpectedly, FSD [Democratic Union Front] blew up in the air...”; “an unexpected pole of union unity”; “the outbreak of FSD placed in the forefront the uncertain unitary process led by CUS” (our emphasis).

So, for the leadership of the party, the call to the CUT Congress was “an unforeseen turn”, “unexpected”, that was not part of any of our previous analyses.

Despite the foregoing, the party, CUSI, and *A Luchar* had outstanding participation in the Congress, having carried about 300 delegates (some 30 of the party), and achieved four members in the leadership. We must emphasise the fact our party has won a place in the leadership because it is historic and deserved to win for so many years of struggle to build a revolutionary workers’ party in Colombia and of work on independent trade unionism.

But we are sure if the party had predicted this unitary process and made union unity of the entire working class its political axis throughout the year, we would have capitalised enormously on this process. Unfortunately, the vanguard was Carrillo and the CP, and we, CUSI, and *A Luchar* were on the tail end.

Let us remember, otherwise, the tremendous political success of the party, before its foundation, when preparing the National Civic Strike. We were the ones who proposed the formation of the National Trade Union Council, who held the banner of the unity of the working class, and who for months we had our focus in this unity and the Civic Strike.

Its results did not take long to be seen: seven days after the Civic Strike, the party held its foundation rally with 3000 people, the largest number of people we ever gathered. We made the best electoral campaign in our history, despite the factional struggle existing at that time, and our columns in the rallies of the following May Day were of 1000 to 1500, the third largest after the CP and MOIR.

## ANP [National People's Assembly] and the Unity Congress

The party has approved the National People's Assembly as its central political campaign for the coming months. We do not want to dwell on the political discussion about the meaning of this slogan because we have read a very good document that you have published for the pre-congress discussion.

We just want to ask a series of questions: Does the political campaign around ANP take into account the state of consciousness of the broad worker, liberal, conservative and communist masses? With this campaign, will we be able to attract a few hundred of them around us and *A Luchar*? What sectors of the masses, independent of us, raise it? It is obvious that no mass sector is currently taking up by many of the slogans of our program, such as workers' and popular governments. But the difference is that no one is proposing the central political campaign of the party for several months to be around "workers' and popular government", for example.

Are we not, again, facing a vanguardist policy, elaborated only for *A Luchar* and not for the whole workers' movement?

But in addition, we have read in *A Luchar* and in an *Internal Bulletin* of the party that, as part of that campaign, *A Luchar* will attend the Congress of Unity, which according to the call "it intends to be a leap forward in the formation of a political and mass alternative" against bipartisanship, with a democratic and anti-imperialist program. This Congress should serve to "really advance in the construction of the mass alternative the people claim, to constitute an organised expression of popular and democratic confluence."

According to the *A Luchar* circular, Emilio Urrea, a bourgeois of renown with titles, lineage and everything, and some democratic personalities like Eduardo Umaña Mendoza will attend this Congress.

This worries us because, as always, we believe from ultra-leftism to opportunism there is just one step, and this call to the Unity Congress is opportunism and popular-frontism in a chemically pure state because they call for a political alternative with sectors of the bourgeoisie. What do you think, comrades?

If *A Luchar* is a revolutionary united front, why does it call on Emilio Urrea to "really advance in the construction of this alternative of masses that the people demand"? Is this a policy of a "proletarian leadership", of a "revolutionary political organisation"?

### What causes the mistakes?

For us, there is common a thread to all these political mistakes, which is the capitulation to the guerrilla, produced by that intimate brotherhood with *A Luchar*, for having lost all political independence from them, for considering that *A Luchar* is a "revolutionary political organisation" with a "proletarian leadership".

This lack of independence led the party leadership to elaborate its entire political course with its eyes on the guerrilla and *A Luchar*, without taking into account the whole liberal, conservative, communist and backwards workers' movement. This is why we predicted and fought for a semi-insurrectionary general strike that did not take place. This is why we forecasted abstention would continue equal to itself and we did an ode to abstention. This is why we abandoned criticism of the isolated actions of the guerrillas, such as the attack on the Minister of Government, to mention just one case and our criticism of their elitist character. This is why we did not strongly criticise the popular-frontist positions of CNG, such as the statement about the Pope. This is why we did not make any political campaign against the Pope's visit, addressed to the whole workers' movement. This is why the leadership of the party could not foresee the most important event of the workers' movement, the founding of CUT, nor did it make union unity of the whole working class the central axis of party activity.

This is why, ultimately, our party is lurching from ultra-leftism to the most abject opportunism, launching a political campaign around the National People's Assembly, and the "revolutionary political organisation", *A Luchar*, is eager to participate in a Congress of Unity with distinguished bourgeois to seek a "political alternative".

## V. What is the situation of the Party and *A Luchar*?

After so much discussion about characterisations and policies, the time has come where words die. As Marxists, Leninists and scientists, we believe we measure the correctness of a policy in its practical results. Here, we measure it by the state of the party and the main tactics of building the party promoted during these two years — *A Luchar*.

How is the party today? How many new comrades do we have? How many have we lost? Are there political campaigns? Is there guidance for the fronts? Are there rich political discussions that would arm all militants to participate in the class struggle? Is there a permanent international discussion about *Correo Internacional* and the IWL documents? Are there party cadres' schools? What is the political presence of the party in the country? How many people do we carry in the partisan columns to mobilisations? How many banners and placards of the party do we carry? How many partisan leaflets do we hand out? How many partisan press releases do we issue? How many newspapers do we sell? How are our finances?

In short, is the party better or worse than two years ago?

You will have to answer all these questions in the upcoming Congress, in the light of the main orientation to build the party during this period and the political lines coming out of it.

### The result of irrationality

The axis for the construction of the party in the last period was, as *Information Bulletin* No 30 says, "to affect objectively and subjectively in the space of the new organisation (*A Luchar*) so that this takes the path towards the construction of the revolutionary workers' party with mass influence".

According to this *Information Bulletin*, the participation of the party is to "consolidate and develop the organisation that has emerged, to extend it and centralise it, to give it coherence, ultimately, to make it a solid revolutionary workers' organisation with mass influence."

As a conclusion, "our fundamental obsession must be to fully get the organisation (*A Luchar*) to do politics in the country (...) to take it and for it to be present in the political superstructural events of the country; to earn it a legal space; to build local leaderships; to place it in the disputes and the struggles, and especially that all this policy be reflected in the national circulation of a good fortnightly magazine of *A Luchar* (...). In these aspects, *we will emphasise* the period that has opened" (emphasis in original).

For us, the application of this policy, totally opposed to the definition of *A Luchar* in the same *Bulletin*, and the consequent and pernicious political errors derived from it have had as a result that our Trotskyist party was increasingly less "present in the political superstructural events of the country"; its banners and posters began disappearing from the demonstrations, its leaflets became increasingly scarce; the party lost "legal space" and went into clandestinity; *El Socialista* became monthly, and the party dedicated itself less and less to "doing politics in the country", that is, to propagandise the whole of its Trotskyist internationalist program, and to endow itself with a policy for the entire workers' movement.

And, above all else, the party abandoned a fundamental programmatic point of principle: our permanent criticism of the petty-bourgeois and guerrilla leaderships, their isolated and terrorist actions, their opportunist and popular-frontist policies, and their elitist character, detached from

any democratic control by the organisations of the working class or of a revolutionary workers' party.

But besides losing our identity as a Trotskyist party in the national political life, and abandoning decisive programmatic points, this policy provoked a brutal setback in all aspects of party activity. Let us see, then, the raw data of newspaper sales and party finances.

During 1984, the party sold 41 issues of *El Socialista* and one of *A Luchar*, to an average of 2,000 copies per issue, which gives a total, in a year, without *A Luchar*, of 82,000. The newspaper was financial and gave a tiny profit.

During 1985 and 1986, the party published 21 *El Socialista* and 14 *A Luchar*; a total, between *El Socialista* and *A Luchar*, of 35 issues. If we calculate a sales average of 1,500, in two years 52,500 would have been sold, that is, 26,250 per year, less than a third of what was sold in 1984, is optimistic. We have joined *A Luchar* and *El Socialista*, to measure the whole outwards political activity of the party; and with everything included, in the last two years this activity was reduced to a third.

## Finances

In December 1983, the party made a financial campaign in which about 5,000 raffle tickets were sold. Between the internal and the external campaigns, over two million pesos were collected (discounting prizes and expenses), about US\$22,000.

In December 1984, the party sold 5,375 raffle tickets, which reported \$1,624,350; in addition, teaching sold 2,109 raffles (*Internal Bulletin* No 231, 31 October 1984), which gives 7,484 raffle tickets. The total of the internal and external financial campaigns, not including that of teaching, is \$2,201,910 (*Internal Bulletin* No 238). In dollars, it amounts to about US\$18,000.

Moreover, by the end of 1984, the party had a reserve fund. There was a deficit in the ordinary finances, but it was covered with the financial campaign and IWL was paid dues without difficulty. The party had very few debts.

During 1985 and 1986, the party went through a catastrophic financial situation. If we remember correctly, at the end of 1985 no financial campaign was held, or it was suspended. In the two years, the reserve fund of the party was spent; we have been informed contributors have reduced to less than half, and that there are many debts. We do not know the exact situation, but we do know although the party made an extraordinary effort and paid its contribution to IWL, it had to ask for a loan of \$400,000 (US\$2,000) at the end of the year to finish the year.

We still do not know the results of the financial campaign. We have been told that, despite not achieving the targets, it was more or less good, but we understand that its result is below those of 1984 and 1983.

## What is the situation of *A Luchar*?

Those who pushed this policy never gave us a guarantee certificate on *A Luchar*. They were careful to warn us there were many difficulties in transforming it into a political, centrist or revolutionary, party.

But you told us that, despite all the inconveniences, the “dissimilar” character of *A Luchar*'s organisations, of the tremendous strategic differences with them, of their subordination to the guerrilla leaderships, it was entirely permissible to raise the hypothesis of building a common party with the guerrilla. You told us we should bet everything on this “theoretical hypothesis”; that we had to gamble all our capital on roulette, on the number called *A Luchar*.

And indeed, you gambled all our capital on that number. You gambled our party, our militants, our newspaper, our finances, our legality, our political presence, to “consolidate and develop” *A Luchar*.



There is no doubt the party came out very battered from that bet, as we saw before. But these comrades would score a very important point in the discussion if they showed us that it was worth it, and that, at the cost of a brutal party crisis, we have managed to “consolidate and develop” *A Luchar*, to make it “take the path towards the revolutionary workers’ party with mass influence”. Even then, we are not sure the political differences between us would end, but we would have to acknowledge that, this time, you were right.

If we are serious Marxists, let us apply the same objective criterion we had with the party, to see how *A Luchar* is today.

Comrade Moreno, in a letter dated August 1986, said that to check whether *A Luchar* was marching towards a revolutionary workers’ front or an outline of such, it had to fulfil three conditions in three months. First, that the newspaper be sold by almost all the militants who claim to be of *A Luchar*, that it not be given away, and that it be not paid by methods other than the sale. Second, that numerous organised groups, common to all the tendencies of *A Luchar*, emerge, as a minimum, to organise the sale of the newspaper and discuss it. And third, to carry out an uncompromising struggle against the policy of CNG, that is to say, that *A Luchar* show its independence from the guerrillas.

Four months later, we want to know the balance-sheet about the development of *A Luchar*. According to some reports and data collected from the *Bulletins* of *A Luchar* and the party, we have the impression that none of the three conditions has been fulfilled.

In Circular No.33 of *A Luchar*, we read that “the most important cities, such as Medellin, Cali and Barranquilla, have not paid a single peso of the three newspaper issues that have been sent”, and this is leading the newspaper to a “total illiquidity”, reason for which they approved “to suspend indefinitely the sending of the newspaper to all who do not catch up”.

What is the imposing conclusion, when the three cities having the most important work of *A Luchar* — Bogota is not the strongest — have not paid a single peso of the last three issues and they will suspend its shipment?

Second, how many cells or rank-and-file groups common to all the organisations of *A Luchar* have been set up in the country? We are not talking about coordinations from above because that is the typical procedure of the guerrilla, but of rank-and-file groups that vote and resolve.

We would also like to know how many delegates of the other components of the agreement raised in the *A Luchar* Convention the need to build a revolutionary workers’ party. As far as we know, no one, except our party, pointed out the problem, but we may be misinformed.

Regarding the third condition, we would also like to know how many non-party delegates to the *A Luchar* Convention made a strong condemnation of CNG’s methods, its isolated actions, how many called publicly to repudiate their communiqué on the Pope. As far as we know, none; but we may be wrong.

In short, we want to know how many *A Luchar* militants are today closer to building a revolutionary workers’ party and demanding that the guerrillas be subordinated to it and to the discipline of the working class.

We believe that none, or very few because we have seen no evolution of *A Luchar*, no change reflecting they begin to break with the guerrillas to embark on the construction of that party with us. As a sample, just look at the latest newspapers of *A Luchar*. Not even with a magnifying glass can you find the slightest differentiation, delimitation or condemnation of the isolated and elitist actions of the guerrillas, of their front-populist and opportunist policies.

To continue with this scientific analysis, we would like you to make an effort to objectively measure the influence and weight of *A Luchar*. For example, we would like to know why so few people attended the National Convention. Only 1,000 people, of whom about 800 were delegates, attended the installation rally and the majority came from the interior of the country.

For us, this figure is tiny and is far behind what our own party alone has mobilised. Many of you certainly attended the party's foundation ceremony in 1977. The Lux Theatre was packed with over 3,000 people. We also recall our columns of May Day 1978 and 1979, in which, alone, we mobilised in Bogota, with no one from the interior, many more than the *A Luchar* Convention, which mobilised the whole country.

Let us also compare the results of the mobilisation on 26 September for the foundation of CUT, with those of the *A Luchar* Convention. At that demonstration, the column of CUSI and *A Luchar* led 5,000 people, while at the Convention, with the people of the interior, there were only 1,000. What explanation is there for this?

For us, all the above data shows that *A Luchar*, as a political project, mobilises very little, while CUSI, as a revolutionary trade union current, does have a considerable influence.

In conclusion, what did the party get out? It gambled everything on a "theoretical hypothesis" of building a party with *A Luchar*, went into crisis, regressed, and, to date, *A Luchar* does not gather people in its political events, its newspaper is not charged for in the three main cities, there is no significant current of *A Luchar* breaking with the guerrillas and proposing to build a revolutionary workers' party with us, to which the guerrilla is democratically subordinated.

### Resuming the principled course

During the previous period from 1982 to early 1985, the party had a principled, but sectarian policy. Since the assumption of Betancur, it placed itself in the opposition, it was the first to declare against the truce, which allowed the formation of *A Luchar*, we participated in the 1984 elections with a principled policy in agreement with the CP and the leadership of FECODE, we participated in teachers, ports and other struggles (although in some extremely slow), which allowed us to consolidate, especially in teaching and other sectors such as ports. The party published a regular newspaper, made major financial campaigns and cadre schools. Of course, it was sectarian. It did not give importance to the guerrilla, did not believe there was a revolutionary situation in the country, and did not place much importance in *A Luchar*. But it was a principled party, and so, despite many mistakes, the party progressed.

Then the party went into crisis because it deviated from the Trotskyist principles, moved politically away from the working class as a whole, approaching the petty-bourgeois leaderships and their policies.

The conclusion is evident: we must retake the principled and internationalist course, the path of revolutionary politics for the entire working class, overcoming the previous sectarian stage, and without abandoning what has been won in the last two years: the characterisation of the situation of the country as acute revolutionary, the defence of the guerrilla, and to keep those immense conquests that are *A Luchar* and CUSI, but without deceiving ourselves about their character.

Our party is small. It comes from a student current, which is why we have been marginal for a long time. But on account of having a principled policy for the working class as a whole, of being internationalist, and of working alongside our world current, we gradually inserted ourselves into certain workers' sectors and consolidated a few hundred valuable orthodox Trotskyist militants.

It is natural that in this country many comrades are impacted by the guerrillas, which received a strong impetus after the Sandinista revolution. But unfortunately, there are no shortcuts for the construction of the revolutionary workers' party or for the national and world socialist revolution led democratically by the proletariat. It is possible that in Colombia the guerrilla will one day make a revolution. But it will not be the socialist revolution led democratically by the proletariat that we want. It will be like the Nicaraguan revolution, and there is the example of Nicaragua today, and its dire Sandinista leadership.

Today, there is no more urgent task in Nicaragua, in Colombia and around the world, than to build and strengthen our Trotskyist parties and our IWL, to prevent petty-bourgeois leaderships

such as Sandinism or the Colombian guerrillas from ending up leading the revolution to a blind alley, as they are doing in Central America.

But unlike Nicaragua, we have the impression that in Colombia the process is more in our favour. The foundation of CUT is a decisive step of the working class to take charge of the class struggle. And if there is uprising and workers' struggles, our party, if it has a Trotskyist and principled policy and if it continues, as it has until now, inextricably linked to IWL, it will inevitably be strengthened.

Else, let us remember the founding of the party 10 years ago: the foundation rally and the huge May Day columns were possible because its baptism of fire was the greatest day that has been waged by the working class, the National Civic Strike, and because, thanks to the close collaboration between the party and the leadership of our international movement, we had a correct analysis and policy, directed at the entire workers' movement.

Well, today we are 10 times better placed than 10 years ago from every point of view. The entire world situation is in favour of the working class and Trotskyism: the struggle of the working class in the Southern Cone of the continent, the spectacular railway and state workers strikes in France and the beginning of the political revolution in the USSR with the demonstrations in Kazakhstan and of the Chinese students.

IWL begins to be an international pole of attraction; its parties have become more proletarian and have consolidated, we began to regain old comrades, like the Italians, and we have established relations with other Trotskyist groups, like the English WRP [Workers Revolutionary Party]. We begin to be an objective pole, a factor of weight in world Trotskyism.

And in Colombia, we are better placed in the working class, and the working class is, for the first time, coming to the fore of the class struggle.

Therefore, there is no objective or subjective reasons for despairing or disbelieving our class, Trotskyism, IWL, or our small but great Colombian party.

## VI. Conclusion

To complete all this discussion, we allow ourselves to present four motions to the Central Committee and the Party Congress:

1. To confirm the characterisation of *A Luchar* made by the party leadership with the addition made by the IWL Secretariat on pages 5 and 6 of this letter.<sup>4</sup>

2. The main task is to fortify the party, since between us and the other components of *A Luchar* there is an "opposition" in almost all fundamental theoretical, political and organisational aspects, despite the important political and union agreements we have arrived to. This means we give full and absolute priority to the publication and distribution of the partisan newspaper, to our own finances, to the use of legality for the construction of the party, and to the opening of branches and the internationalist formation of our ranks. The fundamental slogan of the next party stage is: "to grow and consolidate the party".

3. To reaffirm the political agreement or agreements existing with *A Luchar*, without advancing beyond them, preventing any unification or any attempt by the political agents of the guerrilla to integrate us consciously or unconsciously to a unified organism that would be, by fact or by right, a guerrilla collateral. On the contrary, in relation to CUSI, we will try to develop it as a union revolutionary united front, which means we will tend to make union tendencies, by guild and from the grassroots, of CUSI. If these tendencies are not achieved in the short term, that is to say, that the basis of the tendencies is that everything is decided democratically, dissolving as fractions, we will re-examine the CUSI case, not to abandon it but to draw conclusions.

<sup>4</sup> See heading III. *The crux of the discussion: the policy for A Luchar*. p. 75–76.

4. To make up a Commission composed of three comrades — one representative of those who do not want to dissolve or merge in *A Luchar*, another representative of those who do want to merge or dissolve, and a member of the IEC, accepted by both sides, to discuss in what way will be tested the hypothesis that *A Luchar* may transform, from what it is today, into a revolutionary workers' organisation.

Of course, we recommend this Commission authorise at least Comrades Simon and Miguel Angel, together with a small group of comrades completely agreeing with them, to have a six month experience, controlled by this Commission.



## APPENDIX:

# Discussion on Mexico (1986)

## International Executive Committee, April 1986

(The Socialist Workers Party (POS), which was the Mexican section of the IWL-FI, adopted a party building policy that meant to unify with NAUCOPAC, a neighbourhood organisation whose top leader was America Abaroa. NAUCOPAC developed mobilisations of the inhabitants of Naucalpan, one of the “colonies” (neighbourhoods) adjacent to Mexico City, for its neighbourhood problems: land ownership, street paving, sanitary conditions, etc. This policy was promoted by the leadership of POS — one of whose members, Raul, was a member of the International Executive Committee — and by Nicolas, leader of the American group of IWL-FI, who also participated in the International Executive Committee of April 1986. Both defined this policy as the application in Mexico of the tactics of the revolutionary united front. This appendix presents the debate in this regard.)

### The situation in Mexico and the Revolutionary United Front

**Moreno:** As this tactic is so new, I will bother the comrade with some questions, almost a dialogue, if you don't mind.

First question: in concrete, now, how many comrades do you have to take courses to win them for Trotskyism?

Second question: in concrete, now, how many militants do you have on this work and what do they have, each one of them?

[Third question: the comrade who reported] spoke of 100 militants and 100 sympathisers. Is this what the whole party has, 100 militants? (...) The whole party? Very well. Ok, [these] are the three questions but I want the answers to continue talking.

**Raul:** We can already do a course on Trotskyism with those 125 or 130. In addition, we have the elementary course on revolutionary socialism, which could not be implemented because it was not organised well but to which 1000 registered, many of whom began to study.

**Moreno:** And you think you can recruit 60 or 70 of those 125? Yes or no?

**Raul:** Sure. These are the main leaders, who drag 150, 200, or 300 each of them.

**Nicolas:** Between 26 and 235 each.

**Raul:** Winning one of them is [winning] a large group of people.

**Moreno:** But [win them] for Trotskyism? I mean, through them can you also win more people, and militants?

**Raul:** Sure. That is what we want.

**Moreno:** But is that feasible?

**Raul:** Yes.

**Moreno:** What kind of human is it? Is it old people, who can become a good Trotskyist militant, disciplined? Or is it people who can be convinced, but populist, who goes anywhere?

**Raul:** We believe they are fighters and radical but with a low political level.

**Moreno:** No, [I don't mean the] level. I mean for social reasons. Could they be unstable?

**Nicolas:** I went to a meeting, for example...

**Moreno:** I want concrete things.

**Nicolas:** I went to a meeting of 70 of these leaders. Each of these leaders is elected in their neighbourhood at a table of between five and 12 people, who are the leaders of the neighbourhood and meet weekly. Each of these tables also organises its neighbourhood assembly.

The assembly I attended, in which delegates were elected to the congress (one in 25), had 33 activity reports. Of all the reports, on average, it is clear that 70 per cent of the members attend meetings when invited. They have between 6,500 and 6,700 members.

I spoke with 68 of those 70 leaders. There were 15 women, 15 youth, and 15 between 30 and 40 years old; 18 of the 70 were workers, of between one and five years working in their factory. There are, then, 20 or 25 per cent of structured workers.

**Moreno:** The rest, what [are they]?

**Nicolas:** The rest are housewives, a few, a small group of neighbourhood youth, and the rest are marginal elements or small street traders.

What surprised me is the change of line here of the Mexican leadership. What we had discussed in Mexico was the recruitment work on that 20 or 25 per cent. That is the goal to win because it is not worth being there to win 120 or 125. I do not see the sense to risk a party of 200 to win 100. For that, we continue as a propaganda group and we win them anyway in one or two years, one by one.

**Moreno:** But I think much more than that will not come out. However, I am in favour of this experience. I really liked what the comrade said that we are going there [to the working-class neighbourhoods] for a lifetime. That makes me approve the report. For me, the most substantial part, the essence of his report, is when he said: "It is the most important part, the backbone of the proletariat, and through a neighbourhood, we enter there; we enter and we do not leave anymore." From there we will change the tactics, we will see. And I do not care if they recruit 100 of them, for me it is qualitative.

**Nicolas:** Yes, but not only 125 or 130 leaders...

**Frank:** We changed 200 weak militants, of plebeian urban layers who walk on Saturday and Sunday through Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico, for 100 leaders of proletarian neighbourhoods.

**Moreno:** That's it!

**Nicolas:** No, but the core is those who are workers.

**Moreno:** No, but I would not make such a mechanical, unilateral question: only the workers. Because being in the neighbourhood we can get very good militants who are not workers. The important thing is we are entering... I would not enter with the criteria [of recruiting only workers]. It is a mediation to enter the workers' movement, yes. But the mediation can be one that sells fried things, which are sometimes extraordinary; they are very, very good. The big problem is whether we make him a serious Trotskyist militant.

**Napuri:** They kill presidents, like Villarroel<sup>1</sup> in Bolivia.

**Moreno:** Of course, and they can become... Because the phenomenon is individual, subjective, it is not of the workers. I am in principle in favour, precisely, if we give it that modest limit. Beware

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<sup>1</sup> **Gualberto Villarroel** (1908-1946) was the head of state of Bolivia from 20 December 1943 to 21 July 1946. A reformer, sometimes evaluated by his fascist sympathies, sometimes by his links with the Argentine president Juan Domingo Peron and his allegations of third position. But, above all, he is remembered for his tragic death, the day a mob deposed him from power, murdering him and then publicly hanging his corpse.

[of that] that they move many people because one of these days you are left with nothing, like water in your hands. What is very important is that: what they [the comrades of the party] do, how they are educated as Trotskyists and how they educate there [in the neighbourhoods]. A question. How many people from the party live in the neighbourhoods?

**Raul:** Of the party none. The party was in the city, in the schools. We are in a campaign to start moving [there].

**Moreno:** Well, comrades. I will make a somewhat unorthodox approach because I believe the situation and politics are very heterodox. First, I will state what I want to raise because then I will make a strong criticism of the comrade.

First of all, I am in favour, but I totally reverse the terms. I am in favour of everyone moving to those neighbourhoods, that they all live there. And then, God will see what happens with these people, what happens with everything: whether it will be of masses, or not, and so on.

The real [positive] fact is to change and go to the workers' movement in the way we are given today. There is a lot of unemployment: instead of going to work [in the factory] we go to live [in the working-class neighbourhoods] (it's a bit unorthodox, really), and then we discuss.

The rest is very confusing. By them signing the program, we would not have to do [even] entryism. And if they adhere to IWL, we cannot do entryism on an IWL organism. In other words, surrealism begins here, complete surrealism. Everything, everything is surreal. We paint that and what about the great impressionists! God forbid! Total madness.

Then I reverse the whole process. What do I vote for? Go there.

The analysis I do has nothing to do [with this policy] either. The first analysis I do has to do with the fact that to me that your party, Nicolas, is a party in crisis and that you have been acting empirically — as [Comrade] Jesus put it very well — because of the facts. You have been noticing the crisis, have started to grab [of what you could] and have begun to make characterisations in a serious attitude. It seems to me that with the terrible blow of PRT<sup>2</sup> [advance], of [it achieving] legality, the terrible blow that for years you have said [you] were progressing, that you were getting better and better and the PRT was almost on the verge of disappearance [when it was not like that], there came a point that took you to a crisis. This for me is very positive because you show you have serenity and you make an objective analysis, you can change, you show that in your party there is resistance, discussions and that you support the discussions and the resistance.

But I get the impression you are in crisis, or very confused at least. That for something you have lost 100 militants because you had 200 or 210. Because I do not see why you have to lose them and that they remain as sympathisers. You could have allowed them to choose: all those who want to go and live there, go, and the rest continues active where they were active.

So I think by a very twisted, empirical way, with a wrong methodology, you have a correct orientation, which is to go towards the workers' movement. It is what I vindicate, within all the empiricism; I find it extraordinary. What you said, which is tending to everyone moving, is colossal. I think that's where the overcoming of the crisis in our party comes and possibly the liquidation of the PRT. It comes in this way.

Then it becomes a tactical question of the fifth order, [for] people who have just arrived in the working class neighbourhoods, see where they get in because that's how you may get into any place (it has happened to us).

What you cannot [do] is to get in and dissolve. This is very dangerous. The very dangerous thing is that each one goes and does what he can, without discipline, without a strong discipline,

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2 **Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores** (PRT, Revolutionary Workers' Party) was the Mexican section of the Unified Secretariat, headed by Mandel. Before forming Partido Obrero Socialista (Socialist Workers Party, POS), the members of IWL were within the . It was they who fought, against the ultraleftism of the Mandelists, for the PRT to achieve legal recognition and participate in elections; they took charge of the task and were a decisive factor in getting the endorsement required by bourgeois legislation. When POS broke with PRT, the legal recognition was for this one, and POS, on the other hand, did not have it.

and without newspapers, without propaganda, which is just the only thing that can identify us from America Abaroa. For example, I would be very much in favour if we were active in this party and there was that press conference,<sup>3</sup> to make a strong criticism of it.

What happens if we take out a flyer saying: “We are the Trotskyist faction of such a party and we call for the party to make a stern reprimand to our Comrade America, who is a great comrade, and so on, and so forth, for the line she had at the press conference?” What happens? Do they kick us out? Does it all break?

**Raul:** Probably.

**Moreno:** Probably? Or they don't? Can they stand us?

**Raul:** Sometimes she can take criticism.

**Nicolas:** It is tolerated if they are made in the Executive Committee.

**Raul:** She has withstood strong criticism in Congress: that she was a chieftain and bureaucratic. She withstands some things but not all. In Congress, she withstood our criticism that she was a chieftain.

**Moreno:** And we won the Congress? Do we have a majority?

**Raul:** Not us.

**Moreno:** Let's see — can we win the party quickly, in one or two months, against America, or not?

**Raul:** In one or two months, no.

**Moreno:** If she calls a congress and we win and she goes on to do another General Secretariat, another [party as a] whole, why can't you?

**Raul:** Because she is the one who has built that organisation, she has 10 years of tradition, and we are just entering, we are just assimilating.

**Frank:** Can 20 or 30 come to our party?

**Raul:** If it is now, no.

**Moreno:** And at what time?

**Raul:** Maybe in a year, a year and a half, we can already dispute the leadership.

**Moreno:** And why do we publish a [common] newspaper then? Why do not we go on with our [own] newspaper?

**Raul:** We do the newspaper.

**Moreno:** We do it but it's as if we didn't because it's from the neighbourhood. We do it, yes: our comrades [do it]. [With this criterion] we have the largest newspaper in Argentina, the one that sells the most in the morning, *Clarín*, and we forget to report that in the activities report.

[You say] “it is yours” [but] it isn't yours. It' isn't yours because, among other things, you cannot write a report in the newspaper saying there's a reverend bitch that makes press conferences like that woman. Then it is not yours.

**Raul:** We adapt to the situation.

**Moreno:** Ah, well, that's why I say [what I say]. And the very important thing is precisely a newspaper that does not adapt, to educate. Because she signing our program means nothing; it's her plan to sign [anything] from us. If the Stalinists come, the CP, and they tell her “in this whole region you will be our candidate”, in a fraction of a second there is a declaration that there is nothing worse than the Trotskyists and our party — that is my impression— and she signs absolutely everything.

[?]: It almost happened.

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<sup>3</sup> At a press conference, America Abaroa had made statements in a line of class collaboration and negotiation with the bourgeois government.



**Moreno:** Is it true about the negotiations she did? Is it right? And where will we denounce it?

**Raul:** We have to denounce it in the assemblies.

**Moreno:** Ah, will we denounce it?

**Nicolas:** In a sector where she has no control, it was — I was there — to negotiate water for 2000 families: it is her way of entering those new sectors where she has no influence.

**Moreno:** Why “her way”? Is it because she sells them water cheaply? What does she do?

**Nicolas:** No, because she is the one who will appear to distribute the water in a sector where she has done nothing or they don't know her.

**Moreno:** And who gives her all that?

**Nicolas:** The government.

**Raul:** She takes it away from the government with the mobilisation of the people. She gets the prices down.

**Nicolas:** And besides, if there are three budgets, she tells the guy she gets any of the three voted.

**Moreno:** And they give her a bribe. Well, but then you cannot prove anything.

Because here is where I see the danger: that you take on huge prospects, that you think you can make a mass party, and that you think you can win a lot of the vanguard. As you are, if you win 100 or 200 good militants, it is an extraordinary success. And if not those, they will be others.

I would reverse the order of your report: The Mexican party is in crisis and to overcome the crisis it has to go to the workers' movement, and today there is no other way to go to the workers' movement than to go live [in the working-class neighbourhoods] because there is a very large unemployment. The possibility of this movement opens up to us; then it is tactical, circumstantial, of the very short term: a murky business and ours. It will go down in the history of IWL as “the murky tactic”. In the courses we will have to incorporate “murky tactics”, which are the “agreements to make parties with sons of bitches with whom we will not make parties”, or suchlike definitions.

And in this sense you have had a positive intuition; it is what we have to rescue from you, that you have gone against staying put with 200 [militants], and so on, and so forth, and see what we can recover.

And you have to move fast. What is the atmosphere in the party? Or will the move mean the total crisis?

**Nicolas:** Those who are involved in the work are very well.

**Moreno:** And are they happy?

**Nicolas:** They are very excited, they are happy.

**Moreno:** That's great.

**Nicolas:** They are more active than before, because before they were not militants.

**Raul:** Yes, before the party was a party of students, who were active from Monday to Friday outside, on Saturdays and Sundays the picnic...

**Moreno:** Well, that's positive.

**Raul:** ... and now it has been reversed.

**Moreno:** And they see workers, they do not have [only] the photo [of the workers].

**Nicolas:** They stay 12 hours in the neighbourhood, 12 hours on Saturdays and 12 hours on Sundays.

**Moreno:** [That] is great, it was always great. And also that they go to live where they work. Because then that “has not loss”, as Comrade Ricardo says. Because if it is not through their organisation, it will be through the social life of the neighbourhood, which is what I want to say.

[?]: And they have girlfriends

**Moreno:** Very good, very good. Then I know one or two who we can send from IWL and we can grow abundantly. Courtships serve to grow. Well, I see the problem like that. Afterwards, the rest is very complicated to define what it is. And you have to be there and go every month or every two months there and discuss, and after a month or two that you have moved in and we are working, we see.

Now, I would not lock myself in the neighbourhoods. That's why I insist on the courses and insist on the newspaper. I would not lock myself in believing this is our place, like [if it were] a union, which is mandatory. I would see what opens up in those neighbourhoods. This is the first instance, but because it is the one we know.

**Frank:** And about the proletarian sector?

**Moreno:** To make a union organisation of that? I do not know what it can come of it.

**Nicolas:** The other question is: first, the workers are the most active; second, the few we have recruited in the party are workers.

**Moreno:** Perfect. But we recruited them through propaganda and not through the union. What is the neighbourhood is propaganda, not union. If we make a union organisation, it does not work because it does not interest them, because today there are no demonstrations or anything. So if those we recruit are workers it is the best, extraordinary, but still, if we can recruit a good one who sells fried food, we also [have to recruit him]. The work is in the neighbourhood. We are entering the workers' movement because we are entering geographically. I stay in that.

Then, about this infernal discussion, about whether it is entryism, and so on and so forth, I insist again that it is a "dirty tactic", and let us define it later. I see very difficult that a party may come out of it, except for many individual recruits. That's how I see it.

**Frank:** I was struck because it was said that, the more the Zapatista Workers Party extends, the lower are America's chances of controlling. And it also catches my attention the fact that people take off their hats before the posters of Emiliano Zapata. My hypothesis is: if this continues to take flight in the communities and 10 or 15 of our comrades become natural leaders of this extension of the party, in a convention that brings together 500 or 600 people within six months, couldn't the majority be achieved and in this way kick out America and keep the Zapatista Party?

**Moreno:** Yes, but we'll not get any votes.

**Frank:** Oh, no, but [we kept the party].

**Moreno:** Yes, it can be.

**Frank:** What I say is based on objective phenomena: "Zapatista" is a great goal.

**Moreno:** [We must] give ourselves [a] tactic and at the next meeting discuss: "Do we win the 400 or not?"

**Frank:** I want to know whether this whole operation, which can be a much bigger thing...

**Moreno:** I think that starting with them, [the Mexican comrades,] we know nothing. All we answer is pure nonsense.

**Frank:** But there is a concrete fact because they speak of several colonies [neighbourhoods] that are not those of old Naucopac. From there we can win 10 or 15 per cent of its old apparatus, of those 200.

**Moreno:** Excuse me, allow me, [let's continue] discussing. The case of the peasants of Hugo Blanco. I always thought Hugo Blanco was a great politician because of this:

I managed to place him in Cuzco, after almost a year when he was not found, in a very cinematic thing; a house under construction, with candles, [we spent] all night arguing because he wanted to come to Berisso and leave the peasant work. Then he tells me:

"I have to go or turn to the communities."

“Why?”

“Because my social base is over.”

“But how, Hugo, if it’s in its heyday!” (Later Hugo Neira wrote in a book that in the valleys 15,000 peasants shouted in Quechua “Long live Hugo Blanco”, etc., etc.)

And he tells me:

“Because I have already achieved, with my land occupation policy, that the ‘*arrendiles*’ — that is, those who lease the land — “the government has given them the [property] titles, and they have already won that battle. Then I will be a great memory but nobody will follow me. No one else will follow me because there is a total change: we have liquidated the landowning class.”

That’s why I say he was a very smart fellow. None believed him, starting with me. The other who saw clearly and alerted from Lima — who I also think was a great politician — was Hernan Bollo Allende. He was the only one; neither we, nobody in the Fourth International [saw it]. Hernan Bollo Allende, in Lima, said: “Beware, this is not working anymore.”

And I saw Hugo and he said: “It’s not working anymore. Either I return to the south of Cuzco, to the communities... but what I most want is to return to [Argentina]. It was the entire discussion and I [trying to] convince him to stay.

[?]: But there had already been clashes with the government in the neighbourhoods.

**Moreno:** Ah, well, but that’s what I say. There are clashes around this problem. Perhaps they give them the land and it ends, or perhaps is the fight. Which is what we see here, in Argentina. There are fights for water, for this and for the other, a great movement [is formed] and suddenly shhhhhh, shhhhhh, [it deflates] and [one] is left with nothing.

**Frank:** In Venezuela, in 1970-1971 we occupied about 50 neighbourhoods. We named them “Barrio Camilo Torres”, “Barrio Che Guevara”, and so on. There were great demonstrations and we packed them with red banners. In three or four months they were “Barrio Simon Bolívar”, “Barrio Francisco de Miranda” and the neighbourhood committees were taken over by Democratic Action.

**Moreno:** That’s it!

**Frank:** We ended up being a ridiculous minority because the normal temptation of the neighbourhood activist is to get in good relations with the government. America, in the final analysis, acts very cleverly as a great agent of the government being the transmission belt of all the aid to make it her social base this way.

**Moreno:** Very good.

**Frank:** That’s why neighbourhood work is really bloody awkward because, ultimately, there is always the temptation to blend into the ruling party.

**Moreno:** It’s really bloody awkward if it is neighbourhood work. It can be extraordinary if it is propagandistic, to win [comrades politically].