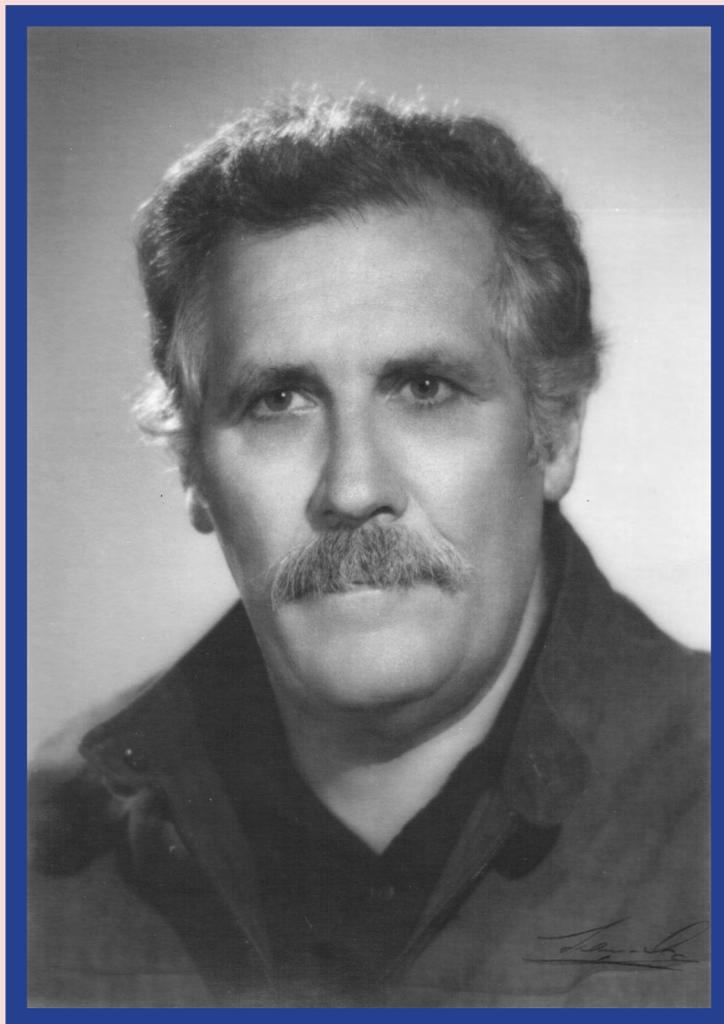




*Conversations
with*

NAHUEL MORENO



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Interviews carried out by Daniel Acosta, Marcos Trogo, and Raul Truny
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English translation: Daniel Iglesias

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www.nahuelmoreno.org

www.uit-ci.org

www.izquierdasocialista.org.ar

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cehus2014@gmail.com



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Foreword to the First English Edition

Conversations was the last book published by Nahuel Moreno before his death on 25 January 1987. We reissued it in 1995. Since 1986, this text has been circulating among new and old members of Trotskyism and also has served as pleasant reading for many people curious about socialist ideas.

Nahuel Moreno was one of the main theorists and politicians of the Trotskyist movement. For nearly half a century of uninterrupted militant activity, he was in constant contact with the workers' struggles, their advances and setbacks, and the different experiences of Latin American and world revolution. In his consistent fight against Stalinism, he was instrumental in driving the formation of Trotskyist parties and groups, mainly in Latin American countries, and one of the top leaders of the Fourth International.

In Argentina, Moreno drove the sector of Trotskyism which linked to the workers' movement since the 1940s. His name is linked to the formation of the *Grupo Obrero Marxista* (Marxist Workers Group, GOM) in 1944, later the *Partido Socialista de la Revolucion Nacional* (Socialist Party of the National Revolution, PSRN) under Peronism, *Palabra Obrera* (Workers' Word) during the resistance to the right-wing reaction, *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores* (Revolutionary Workers' Party, PRT) under the dictatorship of Onganía, *Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores* (Socialist Workers Party, PST) in the 1970s, and then, from 1982, *Movimiento al Socialismo* (Movement Towards Socialism, MAS), which disbanded in the early 1990s.

Moreno fought tirelessly for the workers to defeat imperialism and all bourgeois governments. He did so not only encouraging them forward towards class political independence (overcoming their adherence to Peronism) but also towards the fight for workers' governments, for socialism and the building of a revolutionary internationalist party. He also became known for his research and papers on history, logic and various political issues.

Just two years after his death, in 1989, major changes shook the world, symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall. Revolutionary mass mobilisations were defeating the one-party dictatorships imposed by bureaucratic communist parties in Eastern Europe, reaching to the USSR itself, which dissolved in late 1991. A new situation opened, which turned red-hot old and new questions and their answers. The Trotskyist movement maintained its dispersion, with different policy approaches and in some cases antagonistic.

Our current were defining such changes as revolutionary victories — with the bloody exception of China — which managed the huge step forward of defeating the one-party dictatorships in most of what was called “actual socialism”, or, in the words of Moreno “existing workers' states”. The first democratic gains of a political revolution which, in the absence of revolutionary leaderships, wasn't enough to stop and defeat the capitalist restoration processes that had been developing, with the help of the bureaucracy and imperialism, in those countries where the bourgeoisie had been expropriated, i.e., in the former USSR, Eastern Europe, China, or the former Yugoslavia.

These processes confirmed many of Moreno forecasts. Others weren't. But all his thoughts in this book, both those fulfilled and those not fulfilled, are a rich contribution to the debate. What happened in countries dominated by counter-revolutionary bureaucracies? What are the chances of progress for humanity under capitalism? Does that inescapable definition of “socialism or barbarism” remains valid? Why is it so necessary to build revolutionary parties?

Of all the issues, perhaps the most current has to do with the importance Moreno gave to the question of the leaderships of the masses. The “subjective problem”, in his words. Around the world the waves of struggles and mobilisations don't stop, dictatorships are still falling — as in the Arab revolution —, as well as capitalist governments of all kinds, and the acute peaks of the economic crisis of imperialist capitalism become recurrent. If the bourgeoisie

still keeps its dominance of the planet, with the help of politicians, recycled bureaucrats and treacherous leaders of all kinds, is because of the lack of consistent and revolutionary leaderships with a weight of masses, the “leadership vacuum”, said Moreno.

Moreno devoted his life to the building of revolutionary workers’ parties. Today, the old bureaucratic apparatus of “pro-Moscow” or “pro-Beijing” CPs have lost their old and nefarious prestige, which for most of the twentieth century usurped the place of the genuine revolutionary party. This party had existed in the early decades of the emergence of the revolutionary movement of the working class, inspired by Marxism and had as its leaders Lenin and Trotsky; it was democratic and flexible, but tight in unity to fight the class enemy. This theme of the bureaucratisation of the Soviet Union and other countries that managed to expropriate the bourgeoisie and the need of the party develops through the whole book but gains a particular weight in the last chapter. Many young fighters today question and reject the party, in an understandable and healthy repudiation of bureaucratic monstrosity. In Moreno’s reflections, we find a fresh approach to this issue, through comments on the party life, in which we’ll also see he was a great human being.

The Editors

January 2013

Foreword to the 1986 Spanish Edition

The main recipients of this work are the many workers and students who in recent years have joined the ranks of Trotskyism and the thousands of men and women who are sympathetic to the revolutionary socialist cause.

They are all united by the awareness that “something is wrong” in a society and in a world where, despite the bombastic promises and plans of governments, poverty is flourishing, working hours lengthen and wages decrease, quality of life drops precipitously, and life goes under the black shadow of “Star Wars” and the nuclear holocaust.

These new members and sympathisers, in their overwhelming majority, are making their first forays into revolutionary socialism with their head buzzing with questions. Is it possible to improve capitalist society to live better or perhaps is there “something” wrong in society itself and then you have to change it? And if so, why hasn’t this happened yet? Have the exploited enough strength to transform society, considering the military might of the bourgeoisie and imperialism?

Or else, can the imperialist government of the United States press the “button” of nuclear war? Who can stop it, and how?

Still, others wonder about the peculiarities of the life of revolutionary militants — isn’t militancy alienating? Or, taking another aspect, why are Trotskyist parties so insistent on the need to build an international organisation?

All these questions and others equally important shape the agenda for this book.

The first chapter deals with the world situation and the big alternative of our time: either the workers of the world defeat the imperialist capitalist system or the latter will throw humanity into the abyss of misery and brutalization as it hasn’t been known throughout history and perhaps even lead to the destruction of life on earth.

The second and third chapters develop the problems of the revolutionary organisation of the workers, in their countries and internationally, with the thesis that the revolutionary party is the indispensable tool for workers to overthrow capitalism.

The fourth and fifth chapters concern the workers’ states: not just the “currently existing” socialism, as a journalistic phrase, in fashion in recent years, states but also what we Trotskyists want. Socialism with workers’ democracy, where the organised workers resolve all problems of politics, the economy, education, etc.

Finally, the sixth chapter develops aspects of the daily life of a revolutionary militant, in other words, the party as a “group of people”.

One may say this work has two authors. One, a collective, they’re the members and supporters to whom we address this work, those who have asked the questions. The editors’ task has been to sort and group them by topic.

The other author is Nahuel Moreno, head of the International Workers League (Fourth International) and the Argentine party, *Movimiento al Socialismo* (Movement Towards Socialism, MAS). No one is more qualified to answer these questions than Moreno, with his history of almost four decades in the leadership of world Trotskyist movement and knowing by his own experience the workers’ movement in many countries.

The questions were planned in the manner of a journalistic interview, tape recorder at hand. Afterwards, Moreno reviewed his answers and without modifying them in essence, he added a few paragraphs as he deemed necessary for greater clarity and rigor of his exposure.

Besides, the editors added some out of text notes to clarify certain facts and historical personalities. Needless to say, the notes are solely the responsibility of the editors and don’t compromise the late Nahuel Moreno.

We can only express the hope this book will serve their recipients as a stimulus to and guidance in these crucial years of the Argentinian and world revolution, now that they have incorporated into the revolutionary cause

to which Nahuel Moreno devoted himself from the beginning of his political life: the struggle for a society without exploitation and alienation, the struggle for a socialist society.

The Editors

Buenos Aires, March 1986

To comrade Elias Rodriguez,
an example of a life
in service of the working class.

CHAPTER 1

Prospects of the World Revolution

Moreno, let's start with a question or, one might better say a reflection, that many Marxists militants pose themselves and defenders of capitalism, especially its promoters and journalists, often use to attack Marxism. Revolutionary socialists have for decades been announcing the final crisis and fall of capitalism. However, capitalism doesn't fall.

Yes, it's true that capitalism hasn't fallen, and it's equally true we have been announcing its final crisis for a long time. I think this is due to a catastrophic conception. At the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of this, Rosa Luxemburg, Kautsky¹ and revolutionary Marxists, in general, argued capitalism was heading towards a catastrophe, namely a crisis without a way out, led by its own intrinsic laws. We have all shared this view, to the point of falling into a millenarian criterion. Just as for centuries it was thought that in the year 1000 the collapse of civilization and the second coming of Christ would ensue, we revolutionary Marxists said that in our year 1000, which was year "X" early this century, capitalism would collapse to lead to a socialist society. Until recently, this conception remained in place in Marxist circles and among us.

Revolutionary Marxists were right in saying the imperialist capitalist system would come into an increasingly acute crisis, which would sink the working masses into poverty and would increase wars and originate revolutions without interruption.

Time has shown there's no scientific law by which you inexorably come to the final catastrophe of capitalism and the beginning of socialism. The problem is much more complex, since the historical subjects, which are the classes with their sectors, groups, and leaders, come into play. The final crisis of society is closely related to the struggles and agreements for the struggle between all of these.

In your opinion, could capitalism last for three, four or five hundred years?

1 **Karl Kautsky** (1854-1938) was a prominent Marxist of the Second International. He abandoned his revolutionary positions at the beginning of the First World War and opposed the October Revolution. **Rosa Luxemburg** (1871-1919) was a leader of the Polish Social Democratic Party and later the German. She broke with social democracy in 1914, for their support of the German government in the First World War. Later she was founder of the Spartacus League, the predecessor of the German Communist Party. She participated in the German revolution of November 1918, during which she was arrested and murdered by order of the Social Democratic government. Marxist theoretician, she wrote several important works as *The Accumulation of Capital* and *The Politics of Mass Strikes and Unions*.

Well, it may well be that capitalism change and achieve a new form of exploitation. The semi-Marxist Economic School of Wallerstein² notes this possibility, which, in my opinion, isn't historically discarded.

That is, capitalism would sink but without arriving at socialism...

Yes, we speak of barbarism. Our expression, socialism or barbarism, seems a slogan, but it's a deep theoretical concept. It means the capitalist crisis doesn't lead inexorably to socialism but it can give place to a new class society much worse than capitalism, based on forms of semi-slavery.

In this sense, it's exciting the study of Nazism. Marxists haven't studied the Hitler phenomenon thoroughly. In Hitlerian racism, we have the embryo of a new slave society, with the death and work camps where Hitler sent the Jews, the Poles and also the leftists. It's the beginning of a new relationship of production, with new forms of slavery.

Hitler subjected to such forms of slavery peoples he considered enemies, conquered in war. This had already happened before in history.

Firstly, Hitler submitted the German Jews and leftist to this beginning of slavery before the war. Then he spread it to the conquered peoples, mainly Slavs. Moreover, in modern history, nothing like Nazi barbarism had been seen. In the First World War, there were no concentration camps where slave labour was used.

The only precedents date back to the rise of capitalism and the conquest of America by the Spanish and the Portuguese, especially the first. It was a real genocide of the indigenous population, where between 60 and 80 million natives were slaughtered. To this process followed slavery which wasn't as barbaric as the first stage of the conquest.

I believe the parallels between the genocide of the Indians by the Spanish in the early days of capitalism and the Jews and the Slavs by Hitler at the time of the decay of the system are obvious. But Hitler also retakes another element of the opening stage of capitalism — the tendency of developed countries to transform the world into their colonies. Hitler turns this tendency into a conscious policy to transform into colonies the nations, nationalities, and peoples of Europe.

Nazism, as a Twentieth Century phenomenon, takes the oldest tendencies of capitalism and projects them into the future. If capitalism survives, it will exceed Hitler.

That is, there will be a generalisation of the labour camps, with guards and barbed wire?

Exactly.

Something like Apartheid spread throughout Earth?

First, I want to clarify that apartheid isn't unique to the South African white minority regarding blacks — the State of Israel applies the same policy over the Arabs and the Palestinians. Turning to your question, Nazism is more brutal than apartheid and Zionism, which is already saying a lot. Besides, it aspires to impose itself on the world, not just limited to one country or region, such as apartheid in South Africa or Zionism in Palestine. Neither the Boer State nor the Zionist State aspires, for the time being, to extend its system of exploitation and racial genocide beyond their current areas of influence, because of the weakness of the capitalist class of both.

I'm convinced that one or two centuries of Hitlerism would have an even biological influence on Jews and leftists in Nazi Germany, and on Jews, Poles, Slavs and practically the whole of non-German Europe. The same thing will happen with the blacks of South Africa under the Boer State, and Arabs and Palestinians in the Zionist state if these racist regimes remain.

What does it mean a biological influence?

Well, lately newspapers have published reports of Brazilian doctors, who say the people of the Northeast of Brazil are becoming a race of dwarfs, of real pygmies, because of one or two centuries of chronic hunger.

² See Wallerstein, Immanuel, *The Modern World-System*, University of California Press, 1974.

I think the system of slavery and genocide, of brutal super-exploitation of the workers and of the breeds considered “inferior”, would have in the course of a century or two the same effect as chronic hunger in northeast Brazil, i.e. of a real physical and intellectual involution of the human beings subjected to it.

Nazism takes these methods used by capitalism in its first stage and then abandoned in its heyday — it’s the deepest trend of capitalism in its decay. Hitler represents the first babbling of things to come if the capitalist system survives: slavery exploitation of workers accompanied by genocidal oppression of the races considered “inferior”, applied with the full force of the state apparatus, as Hitler did with his Gestapo and SS.

And that this is a trend of capitalism it’s shown by the example just given, of the effect of hunger in Brazil, where a totalitarian State as the Nazi doesn’t exist. It’s said something similar happens in India, which always boasts of being the world’s most populous democracy.

You draw a parallel between Nazism, Apartheid, and Zionism. Have you ever been accused of anti-Semitism because of it?

Yes, the Zionist left accuses me of anti-Semitism, especially as I argue the destruction of the Zionist state is necessary.

As a Marxist, I start from the premise the proletariat of a nation which exploits and oppresses another, as Israel does to Arabs and Palestinians, can’t be liberated. The Jewish working class is heir to a glorious tradition of class struggle — the path of the Western proletariat, including the Argentinian, is strewn with a multitude of heroic Jewish fighters. But this proletariat can’t continue to the end, or to grow green again and exceed its glorious tradition until they get on the side of the Palestinians and the Arabs, who are repressed, persecuted and enslaved by the State of Israel. Genocide is a constant of Zionism, from the early years until the recent invasion of Lebanon and slaughter in the camps of Sabra and Shatila.

Calling us anti-Semites is a trap for the unwary. It’s like saying a German who wanted the defeat of Nazi Germany was anti-German, or someone who wants to sweep Boer republic off the map because it’s anti-black is a racist because he’s against the Boer farmers.

The question to be answered with regard to relations between peoples, races, nations and classes is very simple, I would say too simple — who oppresses, who is oppressed? For a revolutionary Marxist, the answer is as simple as the question: we’re against the oppressors and for the oppressed. We defend to the bitter end the latter while pointing out, when needed, the mistakes of their leadership.

Arab terrorism is an aberrant tactic, totally wrong, and so we say. But we continue beside the Palestinians and Arabs, defending these fighters although they use aberrant and monstrous tactics that go against the interests of their people.

What is essential for us is that this terrorism is born out of desperation of the Palestinians youth living in conditions similar to those of the Nazi concentration camps. Look at the photos of the inhabitants of these camps — they have the skin attached to the bones. They show the same state as the survivors of the Buchenwald and Auschwitz camps when liberated at the end of the war. The culprit is the State of Israel, supported, unfortunately, by its people; just as the Nazi state, during its early years, had the support of most of the German people. It doesn’t matter these camps are within or without the borders of Israel, its existence is because of the expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland.

The similarity with the Boer State and Nazism is obvious. The Nazis not only persecuted the left but also used the most brutal methods of civil war against other races, mainly against Jews. We have always fought in the front row against all expressions of Nazism and will unconditionally defend the Jews.

When one belongs to an oppressing race or nation fighting against an oppressed nation or nationality, if one is a consistent revolutionary Marxist, one is for revolutionary defeatism. The lesser evil is the defeat of one’s own country or nationality. Lenin favoured the Russian defeat in the

Russian–Japanese War and in the First World War, and so they called him a traitor, anti-Russian, racist, German agent. And our comrades fighting the Zionist Jews are called traitors, renegades, anti-Semitic, for opposing the oppression and genocide of the Arabs and the Palestinians by the State of Israel.

Racial oppression in Israel and South Africa is a modern expression of Nazi barbarism; it shows once again that where there's capitalism, Nazism is just around the corner if not stopped by the mass movement.

And even without going to the monstrous extremes of Nazism and its younger brothers, Zionism and apartheid, the economic development of capitalism itself leads to cases of North-Eastern Brazil and India — dwarfism, progressive and cumulative stultification. This is, getting back to what I said at the beginning, the meaning of the alternative socialism or barbarism.

Does socialism or barbarism mean the same as socialism or holocaust? Because you, in your later writings, use this expression.

It's the same antinomy but in a qualitatively higher level because it means the alternative to socialism isn't, as before, a return to barbarism, with the devastation of countries and civilizations — as it happened in the two world wars — but the outright destruction of humanity, the disappearance of plant and animal life on earth.

We spoke a moment ago of how capitalism destroys man. But man isn't the only victim. Capitalism in its current imperialist phase isn't at all “democratic” with nature — the destruction of flora and fauna, pollution of air and water and above all the atmosphere by industrial and especially nuclear waste progresses at a dizzying pace. Everybody recognises depredation of wildlife, whether for sport or for capitalist production, even Brigitte Bardot...

But capitalism also replenishes, so to speak, natural resources. I'm talking, for example, about hybrid seeds which produced the Green Revolution.

Precisely this is what I was going to talk about. Because hybrids are an example of how the great discoveries of science also turn against nature when they're used by capitalism. Capitalism is only interested in hybrids with high economic yield. Then, large tracts of land are prepared to be planted with these seeds, which mean the natural flora, of poor economic performance, is destroyed. So dozens of plants and seeds, disappear, simply because they don't perform as the hybrids.

Also disappearing are animal species whose hunting gives the bourgeois profit or personal satisfaction to the hunter...

But as accelerated as the disappearance of species and the destruction of the environment may be, the term Holocaust suggests something brutal and sudden.

Indeed, the actual Holocaust is the real possibility of a third world war which would eliminate every form of life on our planet.

The Reagan Administration speaks of the third war and prepares intensely for it, without even trying to hide it. He shares the philosophy and religious dogmas of an important ultra-reactionary sect in the United States. Some time ago, I read in *Le Monde Diplomatique* that the sect holds, on an interpretation of the biblical book of Revelation, that the times are near to a world war that would lead to Armageddon, Hebrew term for the place where the “final battle of good versus evil” would be fought. In this final war, the Jews and unbelievers will be exterminated and for the believers will come “a new heaven and a new Earth”.

That Reagan is a devout believer of this philosophy with biblical garb isn't my invention. In his first election campaign, he said in a speech, “perhaps we belong to the generation that will see Armageddon”. And, more recently, he insisted: “When I consult the prophets of the Old Testament and examine the signs that foretell an Armageddon, I wonder if I belong to the generation that will live it.”

During the last election campaign, eminent leaders of the Jewish and Christian communities, as well as evangelists and Protestants, attacked Reagan mercilessly. They said a new religious ideology had entered the country, the ideology of the nuclear apocalypse.

And to finish with this topic, look at this quote by Caspar Weinberger, Reagan's Secretary of Defense and one of the men closest to him: "I have read the book of Revelation and I think the world is heading towards its end, I hope that by the will of God. Every day I tell myself that we have little time."

Under the light of these categorical quotes, what is the purpose of this tremendous array of nuclear weapons that Reagan is setting up and journalists called "Star Wars"? For me, it can be nothing but speeding up preparations for the final war against Evil, i.e., in terms of international Earthly policy, the Third World War against the Soviet Union and all humanity.

Now, it's no coincidence that a couple of crazy and irresponsible people as Reagan and Weinberger rule the most powerful country on earth. On the contrary, this is because the bourgeoisie becomes increasingly irrational before the advance of the world revolution and, like Hitler, more dangerous every day.

I have expanded myself on these quotes and comments about this critical issue to make it clear the government of US imperialism is not only hastily preparing to launch the third world war but it has already mounted a religious ideology to justify it. This means the demise of humanity is a real, immediate danger, if the workers of the world, mostly Americans, don't defeat the imperialist masters who rule them. Put another way, socialism or holocaust.

Turning to another aspect of the question, isn't capitalism getting stronger? For example, Alfonsin said in a speech³ that there has been an improvement in the economic situation of countries like Germany and Japan. He also quoted non imperialist countries such as Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan.

Not so, not at all. From the standpoint of what we call quality of life and of the capacity for feeding and other vital needs of life, there has been no improvement in any of these countries in recent years...

But, for example, Neustadt⁴ has a strong argument, he says Germany at the end of the war was much worse off than Argentina today; it was a country in ruins. Now it's much better off, and it achieved it through the capitalist system.

That's absolutely right. The post-war capitalist boom benefited the imperialist countries and also the workers' states, which greatly improved their standard of living. The USSR also improved their ability to feed and to save money. This is a patently obvious truth.

The problem is that any analysis, besides of statistical, should be historical, dynamic. You have to study the whole process and its dynamics, to answer the question: "where does it come from, where is it going?" It isn't enough to study the situation of a sector of the capitalist system in a given time and period.

It's undisputed that from the year 1950 — 1940 in the US — the standard of living begins to improve, huge progress in the economy of the capitalist countries, primarily the imperialists, which lasted until the late 1960s.

What was the cause of this boom? In my opinion, to a very special set of circumstances. One is that Hitler had reduced the living standards of German workers to a third of the pre-war level. The same thing happened in the United States, during the crisis of 1923–1939. Another is that the communist parties which led the working class, instead of fighting for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of workers' states in Europe and Asia, which could have been achieved, entered the bourgeois governments to convince workers they should strive in production to enrich the capitalists, which would benefit the entire society.

³ It refers to the speech by President of Argentina Raul Alfonsin on 26 April 1985.

⁴ **Bernardo Neustadt** (1925–2008) was a political commentator on radio and television in Argentina, known for his support of the military dictatorships.

To give just one example among many, at the end of the Second World War the French bourgeoisie was comatose. However, not only was the workers' movement on the rise because of the defeat of Nazism, has been the axis of the Resistance but also they could have been armed and bring into full crisis the army and police that had been collaborators and were morally destroyed. The CP enjoyed great prestige and influence for its involvement in the Resistance. And it used them to disarm the class — its leader Maurice Thorez⁵ accepted a position as minister in the cabinet of De Gaulle and called on the workers to surrender their weapons to work for the country's reconstruction, i.e., its capitalist reconstruction.

Well, the boom existed, that's undeniable, also the improvement in the standard of living of the masses. The question is whether the situation continues to improve or, at least, the standard of living achieved is maintained. The reality is quite the opposite: since 1968, approximately, there's a downward curve, much steeper in backward countries than in industrialised countries, but the trend is the same worldwide. As in Argentina, poverty increases in all countries of the world, absolutely all of them, including Japan. There isn't a single capitalist country in the world where the standard of living of the working masses is improving. The absolute law is that for the last 20 years or so, hunger and poverty increase and wages get lower.

The countries which we call imperialists inherited great wealth from the past; the fall there isn't very pronounced. In the dependent countries, such as Argentina, the drop is very steep. There may be in the world 100 countries like Argentina, against 20 other countries like Germany and others that are put to us as an example. As for the four Asian countries — South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan — it's true they have a high volume of exports but at the cost of terrible misery and exploitation. There's no eight-hour day and wages are very low.

And what happens in the United States? I just happen to have here on my desk a Sunday supplement of *The New York Times* with a special report on poverty in the United States.⁶ It says the number of people whose income is below what is called the "poverty line" increased by 10 million since 1978 to today. And look at these figures: 22.2 per cent of children are poor, and if you take only black children the figure is 46.7 per cent. And there's more: a commission of doctors at Harvard University says that 20 million Americans are malnourished and it calls this an "epidemic of poverty".

Moreover, European Statistics say in Western Europe there's an 11.5 per cent of unemployed, i.e., over 20 million unemployed workers. England takes the cake with three million.⁷

If Neustadt and those who think like him are right if the situation in industrialised countries improves day by day, what do these statistics mean?

Very well, we assume that capitalism is in deep decline but, on the other hand, you can't reach socialism by a natural process of social evolution. That's why Marxists argue only the working class can solve this crisis, right?

The organised working class and with a leadership that's equal to the great task that's raised, which is the conquest of power to destroy the capitalist system and reorganise the economy on new foundations.

Ours isn't a religion, we have no religious faith in the working class. If the latter, with its parties and leaderships, doesn't overthrow capitalism, the situation will get increasingly worse. Now, without a doubt, we say there's a systematic, heroic struggle of workers around the world against the capitalist and imperialist regime. As in any fight, you can't say beforehand who will win. What's certain is that the fight exists — in Brazil, in Argentina, in England with the miners' strike, and so on and so forth. The question is whether the working class will know how to equip itself with suitable leadership.

5 **Maurice Thorez** (1900-1964), general secretary of the French Communist Party and ardent supporter of Stalin, was a minister in the first government of General de Gaulle after the Second World War.

6 See "Hunger in America", in *The New York Times Magazine*, 16 August 1985.

7 Data from *Le Monde*, 29 May 1985.

Some modern historical research schools like Wallenstein and others — I don't share their principles, but from the empirical point of view they're very serious — argue that in the fourteenth century began a great revolutionary process of peasants and artisans against feudal lords, which lasted a century and a half, approximately. There followed terrible wars, until the peasants and craftsmen were defeated. However, the landowners realised the need to change the feudal regime; landlords became capitalists and imposed absolutist governments, the modern states. Thus, there were the bourgeois revolutions that gave birth to the modern capitalist system.

Perry Anderson⁸ argues the opposite, that the absolute monarchies were feudal, non-capitalist: they were a kind of feudal resistance to the advance of capitalism and the rise of the mass movement. Something akin to modern reactionary totalitarianism which is defensive in relation to the workers' and popular movement.

I don't know who is right but both have a serious method to investigate and interpret history because they take the class struggle as the main plank.

According to Wallerstein, it's idle to speculate on what kind of society the peasants and artisans may have created if they had succeeded; what matters is to note they had the possibility of changing society and fought fiercely for a century and a half.

This example is valid for today, although we're at a much higher level since the working class is much more capable than medieval peasants and artisans. Unfortunately, so is capitalism, which has much more talent of their own —or hired — than the feudal landlords.

Let's talk, then, of the prospects of the revolution.

If we look at it from the point of view of the leadership, the outlook isn't very flattering for now. There isn't a large international leadership, with mass influence, which raises the prospect of defeating imperialism, mainly US imperialism, based on the proletariat of the advanced countries of the world, including the Russian.

Now, although this aspect is very important, the crucial factor is the great struggle the masses are waging against capitalism and imperialism on a global scale. The mother of it all is whether the masses are fighting, which also gives the opportunity to test the leaderships and to be very optimistic. That is, while there are struggles new leaderships may arise and be put to the test. It's the process I see — old leaderships in crisis, young leaders emerging and who can be tested in ongoing struggles.

You talk about being optimistic. Haven't we gone over the top a bit in assessing the struggles in Latin America?

I agree one thing is to be optimistic and another is to exaggerate the successes. That said, I argue that here we're in a struggle against imperialism and that our analyses have been objective. A couple of years ago, fierce dictatorships dominated all the countries of the Southern Cone, now there are only those of Chile and Paraguay. To me, that's a victory of the struggle and resistance of the workers, a spectacular victory.

Those who argue there's no ongoing revolutionary process in Latin America and the working masses and the working class aren't fighting, unconsciously say the governments of Bignone, Alvarez, Garcia Meza and Figueiredo were progressive because we owe the democratic rights we're enjoying today to them. On the contrary, I'm convinced these bloody dictators were overthrown by the struggle of the masses, not by a gracious concession from the military and imperialism.

In that case, would you say the United States would have preferred for the dictatorships to continue?

Maybe not. Imperialism also has to adapt to the revolutionary upsurge of the masses. For instance, Rockefeller has praised the current Angolan regime... which had given him oil concessions.

For me, the highest virtue of capitalism, in a global and historical context, is its ability to adapt, which is related to trade. There's no capitalism without trade, and trade means exchange between unequals. Therefore, there are negotiations, assimilations, and combinations with

⁸ See Anderson, Perry, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, 1974, London: New Left Books.

different regimes. The exchange gives it a tremendous dynamism. That's reflected in the political arena: it represses or negotiates according to its needs. The only thing capitalism is never going to negotiate is the world revolution because it means its own end. But today we see how a sector of the world bourgeoisie negotiates with Nicaragua to see whether they can paralyse the revolution, as they paralysed before the Portuguese revolution, and thus avoid new revolutionary victories.

Now, I believe that the objective logic of those wins is they will continue. Consider an analogy. Argentine historians debate whether Independence Day is 25 May or 9 July. The Declaration of Independence was signed on 9 July 1816. However, it's no accident we celebrate 25 May 1810 when we overthrew the Spanish viceroy and established the first Argentine government because the two are closely linked, one is the continuation of the other.

Well, when the Nicaraguan revolution advances to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, the people will have two dates to celebrate: the fall of Somoza will be its "25 May", the expropriation of the bourgeoisie its "9 July".

Would you say the birth each revolution is harder than the previous? Perhaps imperialism has gained in experience since the Cuban Revolution.

It's true that nothing happens today as in the period between 1945 and 1951 when the mass movement expropriated the bourgeoisie in a third of the world. It would seem the revolutionary impetus has weakened and to this, you can add that world Stalinism actively tries to prevent the bourgeoisie from getting expropriated. However, I think since Cuba and Vietnam it's becoming easier to do the revolution.

The problem is that, for us, revolution isn't only the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. The processes in the Southern Cone, Central America, even Peru, the liberation of Angola and Mozambique, the fall of the Shah of Iran, the black struggle against apartheid in South Africa, they show there's a colossal revolutionary upsurge. Add to this the great achievements of the masses in the countries of Eastern Europe.

Later we'll refer to this specifically.

Okay, but I point it out here because it's part of the general world process. In Eastern Europe, some democratic gains have been made.

But, where is the axis of the world revolution? I mean the revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie. If the masses are struggling all over the world, where is the vanguard of this struggle? How do you see the world revolutionary map?

For me, our continent is the vanguard, no argument. I refer to Latin America as a whole. In another stage, you could have differentiated the Southern Cone from Central America. Today, the only country that seems alien to this process is Mexico. It's very important because the Latin American proletariat connects with the process of the European and American proletariat.

For a while, I believe the English proletariat was at the forefront. So was, towards the end of the 1970s, the Polish working class and also Iran. Currently, there are revolutionary processes around the world. In the United States, there's a very serious process of solidarity with South Africa. All this takes place against a backdrop of a crisis that has no short-term solution.

You recently said the future of the revolution was being played in El Salvador.

I was referring to the Central American revolution, which at the time was the undisputed centre of the world pre-revolutionary process. What we said a year or two ago about the Central American revolution has extended to the global level. The process of mass struggle and crisis of imperialism has intensified. The struggles in the rest of South America have matched the situation in El Salvador.

You have also said a victory of the Salvadoran revolution would have repercussions within the United States.

That remains valid. The victory of the revolution in El Salvador would have a tremendous impact on Central America, Mexico, and the United States. In the United States, Latin American

immigration has a particular feature, it's the only one it hasn't adopted the English language but keeps and cultivates Spanish. It's not like the Italian community, for example, who has abandoned Italian or only speaks it within the family. This is a great cause of concern to imperialism because a part of United States society becomes bilingual. I have read newspaper articles where it said the US government is very concerned about the tendency of the Spanish language to become dominant in parts.

Some states have had to implement bilingualism in the public service.

Yes, in California, Texas, or Florida one listens to a judge or any other officer and he speaks fluent Spanish. The other day I saw in a TV newscast a Florida police chief, the guy was speaking Spanish without gringo accent

Anyway, back to what we said before, I think a win in El Salvador would have a tremendous impact in the United States. So would a win in Colombia, although few Colombians live in the US.

I would like your opinion on the Middle East, albeit briefly.

I get the impression Lebanon has replaced Iran as a regional centre of the revolution.

Look at the beating imperialism is getting there. Newspapers say Lebanon has become a no man's land. As a description, it's not bad, but as a characterisation, it's a mistake: the truth is imperialism and Israel have left with their tails between their legs and that's a triumph of the masses.

Of the Palestinians?

No, no, of the Arab masses. It's something much broader than a victory of the PLO. The PLO by itself couldn't defeat imperialism and Israel. It was the Arab masses with their struggle.

This will have a tremendous rebound effect over Israel, in the army and the workers. With the anger over the death of Israeli soldiers, the war against Lebanon began to change in fact to war against the Israeli government. It's a very interesting process, almost transforming the imperialist war into civil war. If the Israeli army had spent more time in Lebanon, I think everything would have blown up.

Besides, if the Israeli proletariat comes out to fight, the fight will achieve a unity which it doesn't have today. It's a modern proletariat, very capable. Imperialism knows of the problem, so it sends mountains of dollars to Israel. If imperialism abandons Israel and the proletariat turns, everything blows up in the Middle East, which would become unrecoverable for the US.

Let's go back a bit on the subject of overall perspective. Gunder Frank⁹ argues it's impossible to succeed against such powerful forces as imperialism and the bureaucracy with their nuclear weapons.

For me, this is an external view of the processes of class struggle. If Gunder Frank was referring to the need to win the proletariat and the masses of the advanced countries, primarily the United States, to definitively defeat imperialism and make the revolution, I must agree. Until this happens the US government will always have the possibility of launching an atomic bomb on any country where the proletariat takes power; it can't be denied.

Gunder Frank is a magnificent revolutionary intellectual, I have no doubt. But I hold his pessimism is based on an external, superficial insight because he believes only the masses of dependent countries fight imperialism. He forgets, for example, the role of the American antiwar movement in the victory of the Vietnamese revolution. It was a very powerful factor, despite the proletariat not participating massively. I think the American working class will be an irresistible force when it starts and, sooner or later, it will.

The question is when? In the dependent countries, hunger is ever present. The white proletariat of the United States doesn't suffer from hunger for now. Within 20 or 30 years, perhaps...

⁹ It refers to a talk-debate by this prominent Marxist economist to militants of MAS of Argentina. It has been published under the title *On the historical subjects* and can be downloaded from www.nahuelmoreno.org.

No, no. I see a huge increase in poverty. That's why, against what Neustadt says, I insist there's a quantitative increase in poverty in the United States.

But any American worker has a car. If he goes from having two cars to one, or from a large to a small car; that won't happen for 10 years at least.

That's where I disagree. A man used to a big car will defend it tooth and nail if he's forced to settle for a small car.

Settling for a small car when one was accustomed to a big one isn't the same as accepting to eat little when used to eat well.

I don't believe in that graduation. I don't believe the revolutionary process starts only when we fall into total misery.

I mean, you will not face an entire system because it took your big car to give you a small car, but still a car.

No worker thinks that way. No social class will give in with pleasure what it has, and this is true for both the exploiters and the exploited; it's a law of history. The bourgeoisie defends its regime and yields absolutely anything unless forced by the class struggle. I completely disagree with the idea a worker will willingly give up something won, whether the change is a big car for another smaller or to settle for a pair of shoes if you had two. This is where the class struggle begins. In Europe, there have been colossal battles for a two per cent increase. In Belgium, the car was a colossal weapon of struggle, there were strikes spread by thousands of workers in their cars.

So, when the bourgeoisie wants to take something away, the worker doesn't accept it and the class struggle accelerates. There's no class collaboration for a class to give away anything to another; whether the bourgeoisie to the proletariat or vice versa. There's always a fight.

Let's now discuss what kind of fight. Suppose the struggle is doomed to failure because the bourgeoisie can't concede anything. This year the worker has to change his large car for a small one and next year he can't have a car. Then he fights, at first not against the system but against his boss, who has lowered his wages and doesn't allow him to keep the big car. The following year, he fights because his small car is taken away, and the year after because they take his bread. I'm talking about the dynamics of the process, which can be more or less quick. The worker sees he's getting hit, perhaps initially light hits, not sledgehammer blows, and then he sees the same thing happening to the worker from another branch of industry. Thus, from the practice of his own life, he draws the conclusion that what is wrong is the system.

This process, which for me is inevitable, has a big down side. The leaders tell the workers' movement it has to accept self-sacrifice — the small car instead of the big car — because in four or five years the situation will improve. In reality, the situation gets steadily worse.

So, how do you explain the great class battles, the struggles for power, occur in El Salvador, the Middle East, and Bolivia?

We have an expression that in developed countries there's a lot of fat. Put another way, in these countries there's much wealth accumulated, so the fall in living standards and the increasing exploitation of workers isn't as abrupt as in the countries you mentioned. In these, quantity transformed into quality: the proletariat is getting everything taken away, its standard of living has been lowering for 30 years or more. In contrast, developed countries went through a huge economic boom and the accumulated fat allows them to give pensions to unemployed workers. These countries begin to lose weight but on the basis a great fat; the loss of a couple of kilos doesn't make them starve.

Is this why, in your opinion, the European and American proletariats don't question the system yet? Not beyond, for example, to seek the replacement of the Thatcher government by a Labour government?

That's one of the reasons. The Western proletariat won't be convinced the system no longer works until the system falls into a cancerous, gangrenous state. Put another way, you can't convince anyone that a body is in a state of collapse if it's not in a state of collapse. It's as simple as that.

Imperialist capitalist countries, like the United States, haven't reached this state of disintegration and gangrene.

Along with this factor, which I call objective, there's another, a tragic one, which is the leadership. I refer in particular to the role of the Communist parties and the USSR. The proletariat of Europe and the United States, also Canada and Australia, is the heir of the greatest achievements of humanity before the October revolution: democratic rights.

American workers are proud of their great democratic gains achieved through two revolutions, the Independence and the Civil War. It's great this is so but it's now a matter of overcoming them, of achieving much greater gains in a progressive society where there's freedom of creation, artistic, scientific, journalistic independence and of every kind. That society can only be socialism.

But when they look at the picture of the supposed existing "socialism", what do they see? In the USSR, a totalitarian state where there isn't, for example, the right to criticise the government or the regime or to form a political party.

This doesn't mean that the proletariat of the USSR doesn't enjoy rights. They do and much bigger than Western workers, but they're of a different kind. The Russian workers have guaranteed work, they don't risk unemployment and misery, and they're not subject to infernal working rhythms. There are three aspects, in general terms, in which the proletariat of the workers' states outstrips its western class brothers: working conditions, social medicine, and education. Hence, the strength of the Soviet regime.

All this produces a tear in the consciousness of the workers of the world. The world workers' movement defends separate rights instead of taking them as a whole and striving for a society in which reign both the economic and social gains of the Russian workers and the democratic gains of the American workers, expanded and extended.

The opportunistic, bureaucratic, and counter-revolutionary leaderships of the workers' movement play a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing this dichotomy. The Yankee union bureaucrat tells the workers: "We must support the Democratic Party, which guarantees democratic rights. It's true, there's unemployment, and living standards fall but here we can criticise the government, say what we want, no one goes to jail for saying what he thinks, as in the USSR."

In the USSR, the ruling bureaucracy tells the workers, "Look at Western Europe, look at the United States: there's unemployment, poverty, in many of these countries medicine is very expensive. You want a system like that, where you may run out of work at any time?"

Both bureaucracies delay the consciousness of the working class, they have them handcuffed. They make you believe that you can only aspire to one kind of freedom, not all.

This means, with these methods both imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy is trying to maintain their domination.

Exactly.

Would you say that, eventually, either one or the other would "push the button" and launch a nuclear war?

Imperialism yes, no doubt. As for the Soviet bureaucracy, I don't believe they would take the initiative to push the button. This is due for economic and social reasons. The bureaucracy, unlike imperialism, need not dominate other countries. The "press the button" action obeys very powerful immanent laws. For a madman to push the button, knowing he can also die, to produce such irrationality, equally irrational laws of the historical process must operate.

The bureaucracy grossly mismanages the economy of the countries it dominates but it doesn't obey a powerful irrational law as capitalism does, forcing it to dominate other countries and constantly increase the exploitation of the workers. Capitalism is the system of production that's forced inexorably to extend its domination; therefore it lives in a permanent imbalance. There can be no equilibrium point when the system itself requires companies and countries to try to dominate one another.

The USSR and its government, however, need not exploit anyone beyond their borders. It's enough to oppress their own proletariat; in this sense is the same as the trade union bureaucracy.

The aggressive, warlike character is typical of capitalism, which can't fail to increasingly exploit the entire world. Today we talk about the arms race and the great production of armament as if capitalism had ever been different. There has always been a large production of arms, large fleets, and mercenary armies under capitalism; the only difference is today there's the atomic bomb. Since its inception, capitalism has been aggressive, warlike, has spent tons of money on armaments.

Pressing the button is related to a deep trend of capitalism, to extend their domination, crush the working class and the backward countries to dominate and exploit them. It's its law. And it's even more so today when faced with the world revolution that threatens to liquidate it.

Returning to the example of Hitler, who also represents the extreme development of capitalism in this field. I don't doubt that Hitler would have begun to throw atomic bombs everywhere. Luckily he didn't have them.

If the Soviet bureaucracy needn't dominate other countries, why did it invade Czechoslovakia in 1968?

I should have said no need to dominate economically...

But it doesn't exploit them?

Wait; let me answer the previous question. The invasion of Czechoslovakia was for political reasons, not economic. There's a difference. Stalinism can't allow the existence of a workers' democracy in any country in the world, least of all in a neighbouring country. So it invaded Czechoslovakia, so it supported the Jaruzelski coup in Poland and will do so with all the harshness that circumstances require. So does the union bureaucracy when there's a democratic leadership on any union or factory.

Whether it exploited them, the figures show between the USSR and the other Workers' states trade is very inconsistent since it benefits several workers' states and not the USSR. There's a very serious study, conducted by a great specialist in the USSR, Marie Lavigne, who isn't a supporter of the Soviet system. She tries to prove the USSR lost millions of dollars in trade with other workers countries. I don't know whether this is so but I do point out the author is a serious specialist.

While US imperialism plunders Latin American countries, the USSR buys sugar from Cuba at prices above the world market and sells it oil at lower prices. One could almost say the USSR subsidises Cuba. Otherwise. explain how it is possible a small and poor country like Cuba has achieved wonders in education and public health. In this field, it has outperformed almost all Third World countries, including Argentina and Brazil.

At the same time, the Cuban regime is totalitarian and very similar to the USSR, which is why I talk of political domination, of oppression, rather than exploitation.

Wasn't the invasion of Afghanistan an act of imperialist aggression?

I insist on my criterion, the USSR doesn't extract surplus value of the work from the Afghan masses. It didn't invade to ensure the functioning of "Soviet enterprises" exploiting Afghan workers. First, there was a bourgeois regime in total crisis, just about to fall, like in Bolivia some months ago. Moreover, Afghanistan belongs to the security zone of the USSR, and even imperialism itself recognises this.

But what is important is that after the Iranian revolution, the bureaucracy couldn't afford a new revolutionary process at its border having as protagonists the same races living within the USSR. This is a very serious problem for the bureaucracy because the Muslim community is the fastest growing demographic in the Soviet Union. At first, the soldiers of the occupying force were Muslims but they had to remove and replace them with Russian troops because they had begun to sympathise with the Afghan guerrillas. The reason for the invasion was, specifically, to prevent a

revolution similar to the Iranian, which could destabilise the bureaucratic regimes of the Muslim Soviet republics of the south.

Do you sympathise with the Afghan guerrillas?

Not at all. It's a force financed and armed by the CIA, a force hostile to the USSR. But I argue the bureaucracy are playing the imperialism game, not only because it violates the right to self-determination of the Afghans but also because the Red Army acts as an oppressive force which maintains the existing social system, without creating a workers' state. It's opposite to what they did after the Second World War when the Red Army drove out the Nazis in Eastern Europe and was a major factor in the bourgeoisie's expropriation and the establishment of the workers' states.

We need to clarify this last was part of the overall counter-revolutionary policy of the Soviet bureaucracy since it helped Western European capitalism to recover from their crises and, in the East, it politically expropriated from the working class the control of power and the economy.

Some argue that imperialism can "give away", say, some areas of the world to socialism, as in the case of Cuba.

This can only be temporary; it's a situation contrary to the law of capitalism. And if we talk about a great capitalist country like France, it couldn't be allowed even circumstantially because it would be a disaster. This would cause what sociology calls a demonstration effect. A France where the bourgeoisie is expropriated and socialism is in place with workers' democracy would have a tremendous demonstration effect; the Western masses would see the birth of a superior civilization.

The danger of world war and the deployment of the atomic bomb will exist as long as imperialism exists. Pessimists who say the revolution can't succeed start from some facts but I think their conclusions are totally wrong. A fact is the historical possibility of atomic war which will be started, if it happens, by imperialism, not the USSR.

It's equally true you can't militarily besiege the United States. Those who believe it's possible to take power in Latin America, build a powerful army, and join together to attack the United States are wrong because then Latin America would receive a few atomic bombs which would leave large holes where the revolutionary centres of power were.

Does this mean then that the Latin American revolution must wait for later? That's what Fidel Castro has said lately.

No, just the opposite. The revolution in our countries would greatly accelerate the crisis of imperialism, besides beginning to solve the most acute problems of our workers. And, what is fundamental, would impact workers in the US and all the great powers. They can't be crushed with the atomic bomb.

Why not?

For a simple reason: in New York, a few blocks away from the black and Puerto Rican neighbourhoods, are luxurious apartments of the bourgeoisie, with carpet at the door and liveried doormen. A bomb which fell on the miserable buildings where the Puerto Ricans live would also destroy the bourgeois apartment. There, the war between the classes can only be the most primitive, body to body, knife in mouth, within and without the armed forces.

From what we have discussed so far, it appears the prospects of the revolution depend on what happens in the centre of the imperialist capitalist system, i.e, in the United States. Therefore, the fundamental task of revolutionary Marxists is to win the US proletariat for the revolution.

Well, it is, and I'm glad you have been as clear as you summed it up. I'm more and more convinced of the importance of this task.

The question is: how to link the struggles in Latin America with the struggles of the US workers?

The direct linking will happen with the conquest of power. That will be the quantum leap, which I hope to live to see it. If I can see the revolution in the US, the better, but I know that conquest in one of our countries would mean the conquest of power in the world, in a few years.

The challenge is to repeat what happened in Russia under Lenin and Trotsky: a great democracy to develop science and art, to welcome the artists and scientists who want to go, and to all those who feel persecuted in their countries. Why did an artist like Isadora Duncan go to the USSR? Nobody can convince me she was a Marxist. She was there because it was the land of freedom.

A fact like the British miners' strike, however important, can't impact the American working class. At most can cause a movement of solidarity with the struggle, or the American workers could conclude, empirically, they should strike like the English to earn higher wages. But to show them that under the planned economy they can have a better quality of life and greater freedoms than in the United States, it's necessary to give them a blow in their consciousness that only the capture of power can give.

The US working class is empirical. Therefore, a great revolutionary victory and the creation of a democratic workers' state will greatly facilitate the task of winning them for the revolution.

If a civil war forced the workers' state to cut democratic rights, wouldn't this undermine the demonstration effect?

Yes, but cutting doesn't mean cancelling of the rights. Again, the example was the Soviet regime in the early years. Amid the civil war that followed the seizure of power, a group sympathetic to the Second International attempted against the life of Lenin and nearly killed him. Despite the circumstances, the terrorists were subjected to public trial and the Bolsheviks invited Emile Vandervelde, who was secretary general of the Second International, to act with full rights at the trial.

As much as imperialist propaganda confuses some sectors, there's no way to contradict the facts. In a similar situation, we could invite leaders of American workers' movement who were our opponents — it'd be enough they were honest people, not bureaucrats — to act as advocates and even judges, and this would have a huge impact. The American worker could compare the situation of their class brothers in a workers' state with democratic rights and a standard of living in constant improvement, with the situation in his country, where unemployment increases and wages fall. Thus it would start a new stage in the history of humanity. The same could happen if the proletariat of the USSR could be released, through organisations like Solidarity.

You're, then, optimistic about the prospects for the American working class.

I'm a Marxist, I rely on scientific analysis. If someone proves the working people of the United States will have an improvement in their standard of living, I would be a pessimist. But the laws of capitalism are inexorable; they lead the American bourgeoisie to increasingly exploit their own workers, not just those of the dependent countries.

So I see no reason to be pessimistic or to say the masses of the advanced countries won't fight. And when they do, the whole situation will change, because the American masses, once they have entered the struggle, have been the most combative of the world.

And back again to what I said before: if they don't fight perhaps it won't be necessary "to press the button" but imperialism will continue exploiting humanity for another couple of centuries under new forms of barbarism and slavery.

Anyway, I insist, the most likely scenario I see is the opposite.

CHAPTER 2

The Revolutionary Party

All revolutionary Marxists have emphasised the importance of the political organisation of the working class. You, Moreno, are no exception. Why do you ascribe such importance to building the revolutionary party?

This has to do with a historical phenomenon and with the Marxist definition of history. Let's start with the latter, to extend concepts I mentioned earlier in passing. Marx says history is made by the classes; a definition which seems correct but a little brief. Defining history of humanity as the history of class struggle, he speaks of slaves and masters, lords and serfs, bourgeoisie and proletariat.¹ I think the issue is more complex since the state, sectors and groups of classes, and their leaders and organisations also involved in the historical process. So, it's true the class struggle is the axis of the historical process but in this struggle, sectors are involved, with their own organisations and leaderships, which unite and divide. Put another way, history is a product not only of the struggle between two antagonistic classes but a much more complex process, with struggles — and alliances to fight — among various sectors of two or more classes.

Marx didn't leave us exact theoretical definitions as to the social sectors but he did analyse them in his specific historical works, which are of enormous wealth. There he speaks of many sectors, not just two or three classes.

For example, in *The Class Struggles in France* not only did he mention bourgeois and proletarian but he describes a web, a lattice of social groups — bourgeois of different factions, landowners, workers, peasants, petty bourgeois, and lumpenproletarian — and their respective organisations and leaders.

For example, he shows how Napoleon III, whom he calls a caricature of the true Napoleon, relied on his political campaigns in the lumpenproletariat of Paris.²

Then, what's brilliant in Marx is the definition that the classes, not individuals, make history. On that basis, we should note the process is much more complicated than the definition given in the Manifesto; Marx approaches a more correct definition in his historical works.

Do these class sectors play different roles in the class struggle and in society?

Correct. For example, in the Russian Revolution, not all the proletariat supported taking power. There was a section of the railway workers, led by the Mensheviks, which provided direct support to the counter-revolution. And while the Russian middle class, in general, was with the bourgeoisie, a sector, led by the Left Social Revolutionaries, followed the Bolsheviks and even took part in the first Soviet government. As you can see, the social fabric is complex, not just the confrontation between bourgeois and proletarian.

According to French ethnologist Meillassoux, the social base of bourgeois production in backward countries isn't the proletariat but the agricultural semi-proletariat because the

¹ See the opening paragraphs of the *Communist Manifesto*, by K. Marx and F. Engels.

² See Marx, K. "The Class Struggles in France 1848–1850", *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 2010, Vol 10, p. 45–132.

bourgeoisie can pay very low wages: this worker doesn't depend on his salary but on his agrarian family for housing and food, so the capitalist can pay him much less than the urban worker. Here we have a clearly capitalist entire sector that isn't labourer but a combination, semi-proletarian and semi-peasant.³

Can you expand a little more about the role of leaders?

I was getting to that. Just as there are classes and class sectors, each of these has its leadership. Sometimes there's an individual who plays a social role, for example, a Spartacus. In the tribes there are chiefs. This is, where there's a group of people there's someone who leads, a superstructure.

With the French Revolution emerge new, unprecedented, institutions prepared by all the previous development of the bourgeoisie, which is the political parties. So, if there can be no struggle without leadership, we can extend the above definition and say the history of humanity is the history of class struggle with their sectors and leaders. And since the French Revolution, we have known the best way to organise these leaderships is to build political parties. What is a party? It's a voluntary grouping which leads or intends to lead a class or a particular class sector — even, in many cases, an alliance of classes or sectors — and which acquires permanent features in terms of structure, methods of operation, and program.

Let's now turn to a very important theoretical problem. Marx said at the time that the working class was owed a single party. Then he saw that different sectors existed in the proletariat, with the corresponding parties. There's no denying these parties have a very strong social basis: for example, the Social Democracy, the parties of the Second International, are based on the labour aristocracy.

The Trotskyists, we think the proletariat needs a global revolutionary leadership, which today it doesn't have. For this, we need to build the party. It's the modern expression of the leadership of a class or class sector.

Does this mean that Marx's hypothesis, "one working class, one party" was wrong?

It was right at the time and for some years when the modern proletariat emerged and took form. In the last century, when there were already many bourgeois parties, Marxists argued there was a strong, centripetal kind of trend in the proletariat favouring the existence of only one party since the working class is much more homogeneous than the class of exploiters.

In this century, the situation became much more complex, especially since the rise of imperialism. We have different structural and historical formations, there are immigrants, and there are different trades or professions. The modern middle class has emerged, which for me it's a sector of the working class because they live on wages. The various workers' parties reflect different sectors of the class, as with the bourgeoisie, although the proletariat is less dispersed and never had as many parties like them.

In Argentina since 1930, we have the Conservative Party, unquestionably the representative of the landowning class. There was the case of General Agustín P. Justo, who as president ruled on behalf of the Conservatives, although he himself wasn't. He rather reflected the Radical⁴ sectors linked to imperialism, lawyers of large foreign companies, sectors of the urban middle class gentrified by the imperialist colonisation, in brief, the anti-Yrigoyen⁵ sectors of the Radical party. Conservative was Roca,⁶ his vice president.

Conservatives and "anti-personality" [i.e., anti-Yrigoyen, TN] Radicals were pro-imperialist but they formed two parties because the Radicals represented the middle class tied to the port,

3 Meillassoux, Claude, *Femmes, greniers et capitaux*, 1975, Maspero; translated to English as *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community*, Cambridge University Press, 1981. Mainly Chapters 6 and 7.

4 **Radical**. In this and further references, it refers to members or supporters of the Radical Civic Union party (UCR).

5 Refers to the followers of **Hipólito Yrigoyen** (1852-1933), Argentine politician, President of Argentina in two terms (1916–1922 and 1928–1930), leading figure of the Radical Civic Union.

6 **Julio Argentino Roca** (1873-1942) was an Argentine politician and diplomat, vice-president during the period 1932–1938.

to the railways while the conservatives were large landowners such as the families Patron Costas, Saravia, Menendez Behety, Anchorena, the great *estancia*⁷ owners of the province of Buenos Aires. Popular ingenuity had baptised Conservatives “cowpokes” and Radicals “shepherds” because the owner of the cows is richer than the owner of the sheep.

Besides the two official bourgeois parties, there were Radical opponents to the government of Yrigoyen. In the province of Santa Fe, there was the Democratic Progressive Party. Later on, another very complicated bourgeois party came, Peronism, which was based on the working class.

As for the workers’ parties, there were only the Socialist and Communist, which disappeared from the scene on account of the rise of Peronism. In the 1940s there was a colossal workers party, the Labour Party, which Peron liquidated despite having received its support.

As we see, very few workers’ parties. In general, in every country, there are one or two strong workers’ parties or none.

Are there any privileged sectors of the working class?

There clearly are. In the imperialist countries, there are labour sectors living on the crumbs of the exploitation of dependent countries. But they also exist in our countries. When I was young, workers of the daily *La Prensa* were very privileged; they defended the company against Peronism at gunpoint. Another similar example is the Caravajal print shop in Cali, Colombia, the most technically advanced in Latin America, its workers earn relatively higher wages than others and defend the company. To make matters worse, the leaders of major labour organisations, unions and parties, have a privileged life, very similar to that of the marginally affluent working for the class enemy.

What sectors represent the parties which claim to be of the left in Argentina?

Well, let’s start with the Intransigent Party. For me it represents middle-class sectors, employees, but with a rare blend because there are also Radical sectors, Radical chiefs, what they call the old Radical trunk from where they split. It also has its left wing but as a social sector is the middle class.

Peronism groups the modern working class, not immigrant but national. The rise of Peronism coincides with the first major internal migration in Argentina, from the countryside to the city.

Workers’ parties may also reflect different traditions. The Argentine Communist Party, for example, was founded by Italian immigrant workers. This had to do with the Italian Socialist Party (ISP) opposing the participation of Italy in the First World War. The Italian bourgeoisie was dependent on both England and Germany and so it wasn’t sure on which side to take part. The ISP then took a neutralist position, not directly anti-imperialist and of the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war, as was the position of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

In Argentina, the leadership of the Socialist Party, Juan B. Justo, Repetto, and company, was pro-imperialist and supporter of participation in the war on the side of the Allies. The wing of the Italian workers began a debate in 1916 in favour of the positions of their Italian Socialist Party comrades and for Argentinian neutrality in the war. This wing broke in 1918 to form the Internationalist Socialist Party, which in 1920, under the influence of the Russian Revolution, joined the Third International and took its current name, Communist Party.

As for the other wing of socialism, at that time begins to link to itself to the great Argentinian oligarchy. Old man Dickmann, a member of that leadership, was a physician, like Juan B. Justo, and graduated with a gold medal. In the Argentina of the beginning of the century to be a doctor and university professor meant to belong to the upper classes.

I’ll tell you an anecdote. One day, when I was very young, I’m at Dickmann’s home, talking to him, when the phone rings. He answers, has a very friendly conversation with someone and cuts. And he tells me: “That was my great friend Benito de Miguel, what a joy; I hadn’t spoken to him for

⁷ *Estancias* are large landholdings spread over extensive areas, often 10,000 ha or more. In the Argentinian grasslands, the pampas, *estancias* have historically been estates used to raise livestock (cattle or sheep).

so long.” Well, I was stunned, because Dr Benito de Miguel was the political incarnation of the great oligarchy of that time. The same as being a friend of Martinez de Hoz⁸ today.

The two wings of the Socialist Party that split in 1918 represent different class sectors: some were Italian immigrants workers, the others were immigrant’s children but with middle-class values, who had progressed socially. If we want to know which sector a party represents, it’s not enough to make a class cross section, you also have to do a historical analysis, know the origin and traditions of the party and its sector.

From all this, it seems the organic unity of the left is impossible.

Unity in a single party there can’t be. For now. Maybe it can be achieved after taking power when the whole class achieves an even standard of living. This is why I insist that during a historical period this unity did exist but the rise of imperialism and the proletariat of backward countries leads us to discard Marx’s hypothesis for our times and to recognise new laws created by the development of world capitalism.

What sector of the class does Trotskyism represent?

I’m convinced Trotskyism politically reflects the most exploited sector of the proletariat but it always tries to mobilise all the workers, even the most backward and the most aristocratic sectors. Therefore, we say Trotskyism is the consciousness of the historical needs of the working class as a whole, not of this or that sector.

But it’s a fact that the Trotskyist movement is full of students and intellectuals.

That’s true in the propaganda stage of the party while still not joined with the working class. All parties go through that stage, whether workers’ or bourgeois. For example, it was said at first that all Russian Marxists would fit on a couch because there were three: Plekhanov, Axelrod, and Vera Zasulich. The bourgeoisie, before creating their parties, had their great theorists such as Voltaire and Rousseau. The Latin American independence movement had Miranda. At the time no one followed these theorists, they only represented the idea, the program. This phenomenon is general; in the stage of development of their programs, parties have only ideologues or intellectuals.

Trotskyism has been able to become strongly entrenched in the workers’ movement and gain mass influence in revolutionary stages when workers with their mobilisation approach their program. In favourable circumstances, Trotskyism has made its way because their slogans are picked up by the most exploited sections of the mass movement.

Bolivia is a case in point: there was no Trotskyism; the comrades had formed in Argentina. They went there with revolutionary positions as the nationalisation of tin and quickly gained the leadership of the Mining Union Federation, precisely because it was the most dynamic and combative sector of the Bolivian proletariat.

Trotskyism has been for many years a marginal phenomenon. To some extent still is.

Here we turn to another problem. If you want to know why we’re marginal, you must first accept the fact. There are Trotskyists who deny it, but the truth is for the five billion human beings on Earth, the overwhelming majority don’t even know we exist. And there are Trotskyists so marginal they don’t even know they’re marginal.

Why are we marginal? For several reasons. One, very important, is that the working class of the advanced countries of this post-war period ceases to be the main historical protagonist, a role it had fulfilled from about the 1870s or 1880s until the Second World War. In those 70 to 80 years the proletariat waged colossal struggles and achieved huge gains — the eight-hour day, unions, universal suffrage and the largest of all, the Russian Revolution.

This changes since 1949-1950, or perhaps a little earlier, and some Trotskyist theorists believe that thereafter the workers’ movement has practically disappeared from the scene. I don’t agree with this, I think the workers’ movement itself has fought major battles in the post-war period. The

⁸ Jose A. Martinez de Hoz (1925–2003). A great landowner in the province of Buenos Aires, was Minister of Economy in the Argentine dictatorship established after the military coup of 24 March 1976.

difference with the period 1870–1950 — these dates are, of course, approximate — is they have been sporadic fights, without continuity. The systematic, continuous battles have been developed by minority sectors of the workers' movement such as the Southern Cone of Latin America, Japan for about 10 years, the Basque proletariat, the English in the last 20 years.

The great protagonists of the post-war period have been the peasant or semi-proletarian masses, as in China, Yugoslavia, the Greek guerrillas, African guerrillas, also Colombian guerrillas who have been fighting since 1948 until today. Well, the socio-political fact is that in the post-war period, peasants and semi-proletarian sectors occupy centre stage while the working class, except perhaps in the Southern Cone, goes into the background.

Because of this phenomenon, Trotskyism has no social base to lean on. The program of Trotskyism is the working class mobilised. If there's no workers' mobilisation Trotskyism has nowhere to stand.

That's one reason, but there's another. At the start of the post-war period, Trotskyism had a very young leadership, inexperienced in the mass movement. The historical leaders trained in the revolution, Trotsky mainly but also others such as Rakovsky and Chen Tu-hsiu⁹ had died when the war began. This leadership somehow tried to strengthen, develop Trotskyism at a time, from 1947, in which the workers didn't fight systematically but their own inexperience and lack of political clarity led them to look for shortcuts in building the party. So they made a mistake I considered catastrophic: the line to enter the organisations leading the masses, especially the communist parties. These were petty bourgeois, bureaucratic parties, and the condition for entering was to stop criticising them. With that, they lost the Trotskyists' reflexes, of workers' democracy and permanent mobilisation to do the socialist revolution, i.e., the *raison d'être* of Trotskyism

That line was based on the following argument: the world war of US imperialism against the USSR is inevitable in the short term; the communist parties will make the revolution to defend the workers' state; the Trotskyists, to avoid marginalisation in the process, we must abandon our propaganda in the factories for workers' democracy and permanent mobilisation, lowering our banners for the moment, to enter the communist parties and make the revolution with them.

This was, in a very simplified way, what the European Trotskyists led by Mandel and Pablo,¹⁰ who were at the head of the Fourth International, were saying. Saying something similar about all mass organisations — that they would go towards revolutionary positions pushed by the situation.

And not only did they say it — the truth is they applied this policy consistently. The comrades at *Lutte Ouvrière* (Workers Fight) have told us that, when they supported the anti-bureaucratic mobilisation of workers in East Berlin in 1953 and made propaganda for them on the French Renault, the periodical of Mandel and Pablo denounced them. I don't think Mandel and Pablo were in favour of pursuing the comrades and preventing them from distributing their flyers. But for them, the most important thing was to stay within the CP because it would lead the revolution. This fatal mechanism has, in fact, led to the public disappearance of European Trotskyism for many years.

Wasn't their demise also due to a lack of political space?

9 **Christian Rakovski** (1873-1941), a Bulgarian revolutionary, took part in the Russian Revolution and was elected to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party in 1919. Together with Trotsky and other Bolshevik leaders, he founded the Left Opposition to combat the bureaucratisation of the party and the workers' state, and represented it in the 1927 Congress of the CPSU, already dominated by Stalin. In 1928 he was expelled from the party and deported to Siberia. He reneged on his positions in 1936 and could return to Moscow. **Chen Tu-siu** (in modern Romanisation: Chen Duxiu) (1879-1942) was one of the founders of the Chinese CP and its secretary general from 1921 to 1927. The Stalinist leadership of the Comintern expelled him from the party to become a scapegoat for the defeat of the Chinese revolution in 1927. He joined the International Left Opposition in 1930. He was arrested by the government of Chiang Kai-shek in 1932 and spent the rest of his life in prison.

10 **Ernest Mandel** (1923-1995), a prominent Marxist economist, was a leader of the Fourth International (United Secretariat) and its Belgian section. **Michel Pablo** (1911-1996), Greek Trotskyist and main leader of the Fourth International after the Second World War, was the author of the "sui generis entryism" tactic — i.e., for an extended period— in Stalinist Communist parties. He later broke from Trotskyism.

That has its importance, besides other reasons which I have given, but it isn't the root cause. The fact the Stalinists directed the post-war revolutions, combined with the weakening of the struggle of the European proletariat, increased the strength and prestige of Stalinism to its highest level. This left us, Trotskyists, with a narrow but real leeway. Mandel and Pablo, with their tactics, couldn't take advantage of it. And, what is much worse, they didn't prepare the Fourth International to exploit the wide margins that opened in the late 1960s, when the irresistible fall of Stalinism in the workers' movement begins.

Bureaucratisation and the absence of rights in the USSR, were they as clear then as it is now? Because Trotskyists today have a very specific political space, being the only ones who claim the combination of socialism with workers' democracy.

Certainly, that's the new great historical task, which only us raise. It's one of the main reasons Trotskyism hasn't disappeared since it answers, among others, to this historical need: workers' democracy in States that claim to be socialist.

There were processes of class struggle in the post-war period in which Trotskyism played an important, even leading role.

I was just going to talk about it. Errors aside, the flip side of this phenomenon is the ease with which Trotskyism penetrates the mass movement when there's mobilisation. For example, it seems Trotskyists led the great strike of Renault in 1947. There were 14 or 15 militants in a factory with 45,000 workers and they could lead it because of their faith in the class; that the working class will re-emerge. They're the same who argue the proletariat has disappeared from the scene but at the same time have faith it will come back to fight.

Something similar happened in Leyland, the British automotive factory.

Exactly, while Leyland was mobilised, Trotskyists played a leading role. When workers stopped mobilising, not a single Trotskyist leader was left in the factory. It's an almost mathematical process. The same happened in Bolivia in 1952 and it's happening again now. Our Bolivian sister party, the PST, is very small, but it's entering the mines. In a general miners mass meeting, they congratulated the party for being the only one to give its all in the mining mobilisation in La Paz.¹¹

When there's mobilisation, Trotskyism is part of the workers' life. When there isn't, the same workers look at you funny. I think that Trotskyism, with a correct political line, could have easily penetrated into Hungary during the anti-bureaucratic revolution of 1956. I suspect it will increasingly strengthen in Poland.

Trotskyism connects with the proletariat, and only with it. It couldn't directly lead the peasantry because its program is essentially a workers' program. It's the program the working class must implement to lead all the exploited of the world. Thus Trotskyism accompanies the proletariat as the shadow follows the body.

Does this explain that it hasn't led any revolution since Bolivia in 1952?

Certainly, because the mobilisation of the Bolivian proletariat wasn't matched anywhere else in the world. The future of humanity depends on the proletariat and here Trotskyism has a decisive role to play. It isn't a matter of being pessimistic or optimistic but of making scientific forecasts. I contend that if the proletariat doesn't go into battle, the defeat of the world revolution is coming. If the workers of the world act like in Bolivia, Trotskyism will be a power.

You just said that Trotskyism can't lead the peasantry. However, on one occasion Hugo Blanco¹² in Peru was at the head of a guerrilla group, in the 1960s...

11 It refers to the Bolivian miners' strike of March 1985, which lasted 16 days

12 **Hugo Blanco** was won for the Trotskyist current lead by Moreno, as a student in Argentina. He led the great peasant mobilisation of Convencion and Lares (Cuzco) valleys, Peru, in the early 1960s. After the defeat, he spent eight years in prison. He was later leader and parliamentarian of unified Trotskyism.

That wasn't a guerrilla: the process that Hugo Blanco led was the creation of peasant militias. The peasants armed themselves to expropriate the landlords, distribute the lands and defend those gains. They didn't leave their land to make war from the bush, as the guerrilla would have done.

But it was a peasant mobilisation.

That yes, it was.

Wasn't Trotskyism sectarian to hold onto its workers' program? Wasn't Stalinism more skilful turning to the peasantry, if the revolution was happening in the countryside?

On the contrary, I argue this is our great success. First, I want to say Hugo Blanco didn't want to take part in the peasant mobilisation; it was us who convinced him in a clandestine meeting in Cuzco.

At this point in my life, I'm convinced our "sectarianism", in the sense of staying next to the workers' movement, is entirely correct. There's no way to cheat the historical and class process. If I lead the peasant movement to seize power, I can't build a workers' democracy. It's impossible to reach socialism with a democracy based on the peasantry, it's something that goes against the laws discovered by Marxism and confirmed by history. The political superstructure that emerges will be consistent with the class which takes power.

Take the example of the USSR. Trotsky, who was the creator and the undisputed leader of the Red Army, could have staged a coup against Stalin to seize power. Why didn't he? Because of socio-political considerations. The proletariat suffered several defeats, retreated and Trotsky accompanied them because he didn't seek power for power's sake. Stalin did consider power a goal in itself, thus he did all kind of manoeuvres and leaned on forces outside the proletariat.

We must get into our heads that our policy is aimed to convince the working class to self-determine, to be democratic, and to take power through the revolution of the working masses, led by it. Else, we won't get the society to which we aspire. Then, as the scientists we are, we must say we failed because the class on which we leaned on has historically proved unable to take in its hands the destiny of humanity, incapable of self-determination, of mobilising, and imposing the rule of workers' democracy.

And what is the role of Trotskyism in countries where the working class isn't dominant?

That's a secondary problem. The working class can lead the process even when a minority. I disagree with those objectivist sociological analyses I've read lately, according to which the working class can't lead the historical process of the world for being a minority or because their number decreases. The Russian proletariat was a small minority of the population; however, it led the October Revolution.

I'm referring to the class character. We try to lead the proletariat, we never move away from it. This isn't declamation; it's an international class policy that emerges from deep theoretical analysis. There's no political trick. It's no use lying, telling the peasantry we're peasants, with the goal of making a workers' revolution. If the working class doesn't follow us, we get nowhere. We bureaucratise, capitulate to the peasantry. It's inconceivable to do the proletarian revolution without a proletariat.

Throughout my political life, after, for example, looking with sympathy to the regime emerged from the Cuban Revolution, I have concluded it's necessary to continue the revolutionary class politics, although it may delay the arrival to power for us for 20 or 30 years, or whatever may be. We aspire to the working class truly coming to power, that's why we want to lead it.

Of course, there may be tactical and political variations. We defend the regime of Fidel Castro against imperialism because he built a workers' state. But we don't abandon the criterion of class, the democratic and self-determination character we want for the working class. Trotskyism must exist, among other reasons, to change the political regime of all the workers' states.

We defend the Cuban workers' state but simultaneously we criticise the political regime of Castro, which isn't based on democracy and self-determination of the working class. In Cuba, we

fight for a regime of workers' democracy, for the right of the class to organise itself in different and antagonistic parties, for freedom of the press and, as Lenin argued against Trotsky, for the independence of the unions from the state.

Therefore, the task of the Trotskyists is to penetrate gradually the workers' movement and build the party...

For me, no construction is gradual in nature or whatever. There are, of course, certain stages in party building. One stage is theoretical, of program development and analysis of reality. It's very complex because without a global analysis and organisation there can be no correct national analysis. There's also a stage of penetration in the workers' movement. Mediations may exist: for example, during a period the party is active in the student movement to gain sections of the left for Trotskyist positions. But the short-term goal — two, three, four years — is going to the proletariat. A Trotskyist organisation that isn't full of militant workers live in permanent crisis, even if it comprises very smart and capable comrades. This is the case of some of our parties, where there are even brilliant comrades but young and without experience in the class struggle.

In university, if one makes a tactical mistake or loses an argument, it's okay, you can come back the next day and see how to reverse the situation. But in the workers' movement, a tactical mistake can be fatal, you lose everything. So the militant becomes serious, responsible, he learns the manoeuvres of the class struggle. He realises it's a war. He sees it in reality, not in books. Therefore revolutionary leaders can only form in the life of the working class and their struggles.

Does it mean the party grows by accumulating cadres?

Yes, but the objective reality, to the extent there's a revolutionary upswing, gives rise to tendencies, causes breaks in parties, generates a crisis. The revolutionary party can only gain mass influence or be strong in the vanguard if it addresses these positive, dynamic, centre-left — as we call them — tendencies, to attract them, win them to our positions.

Old man Cannon, of the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States, who was an accomplished leader, said one shouldn't allow the existence of a centrist current of the left — i.e., that oscillates between reformist and revolutionary positions— for long because it comes a time when it crystallises and it becomes much more difficult to achieve common positions with it. Its leadership defends itself, it doesn't want to disappear, and although there is a common programmatic basis the unity is difficult because it has existed for a long time as a separate organisation.

Would this be the case of the Partido Obrero (Workers Party) in Argentina?

Indeed, *Partido Obrero* (PO) is an old centrist organisation, already crystallised. With them, we couldn't achieve unity, despite our efforts.

To mention an example to the contrary, in Colombia there was the Socialist Bloc, a very progressive centrist organisation. We established relationships with them and after a process 89 joined Trotskyism.

The heart of the issue is: to be honest, principled, not fall in manoeuvres or go with likes and dislikes. This will work wonders. The great German Communist Party at the time of the Third International, the most important of the West, resulted from the unification of the Luxemburgists with independent socialists.

Why were there so many divisions?

This is another product of the marginality of Trotskyism. Marginalisation causes estrangement, alienation in philosophical terms. One of the clearest examples of this I saw in Argentina: it was a group of Trotskyist Jews. They had split up and didn't even talk to each other; they resorted to us to do as intermediaries. These were marginal within marginal, exiled from Europe, strangers to the country.

I remember in Zarate there was a group of German Trotskyists, workers who were completely unaffected by reality. It was a very well organised small group, they called themselves Trotskyists, I know not why, but they lived totally isolated from reality.

Estrangement produces a psychological phenomenon, these people make a cult of marginality, want to be marginal. Clandestinity produces a similar effect, as seen in the Argentine PST. In 1972, when the party would become legal, there was a serious problem because most of the comrades wanted to stay underground. This was very exciting for them to seem conspirators, meetings with a few comrades, in short, the mindset of “we’re few but good”. At first, those of us who wanted to move into legality were a minority in the party.

Marginality is just one of the reasons for the divisions in Trotskyism. Another dramatic one was the crisis of leadership of the International. When I was young, the Fourth [International] was a point of reference for all of us, almost like a religious issue. We still felt the influence of Trotsky. In the years 1951 to 1953, when the Fourth [International] splits, we lose that political, ideological, even moral context. The Fourth [International] divided because of a programmatic, theoretical, and leadership crisis.

The strongest parties break and, instead of trying to rebuild the organisation, adopt a defensive attitude. This is the case of the Socialist Workers Party, the centre of world Trotskyism at the time: they adopt a nationalist policy in the sense of strengthening their own party, not the International. They justify themselves by saying McCarthyism prevented them from leaving their country to take part in international organisations. I have my doubts. I would argue they had the great merit of resisting Pabloism but I criticise them for not creating an organised anti-Pablo current in the Fourth [International].

In several of your writings, you mention Trotsky’s death as a fundamental fact in the history of the Fourth International.

Indeed, we have always said the death of Trotsky is an objective, not subjective, element in the crisis of leadership of the Fourth [International]. This analysis is typical of our current. It was a qualitative fact: not that the Fourth [International] was worse led than before his death but, plain and simply, it was left with no leadership.

I’m convinced that if Trotsky had lived a few more years, the Fourth [International] would have advanced in its program, its analysis, and its numbers.

Another aspect of the leadership vacuum is the experience in the workers’ movement, which for me is crucial. Without a long experience in the workers’ movement, there can’t be a great leadership. The only ones having it, apart from Trotsky, were some leaders of the Socialist Workers Party.

Trotsky had taken part in the leadership of the three Russian revolutions.¹³ He had been part of the largest revolutionary leadership that humanity has known; the leadership of the Third International in its first five years. Between 1905 and 1917, in exile, he had fought in the socialist movement in several countries in Europe, mainly in France and Germany. That colossal experience, irreplaceable, was lost in one fell swoop with his murder.

I would like to dig a little deeper into the problem of post-war Trotskyist leadership.

The question forces to repeat myself since I have touched on the subject elsewhere. As I said before, that leadership is made up of young intellectuals like Pablo and Mandel, who initially are very sectarian applying the writings of Trotsky verbatim. As of 1948, when the Chinese Revolution and the revolutions that expropriate the bourgeoisie in the east of Europe take place, none of them sees this new reality. The wing of Trotskyism which holds those countries have become workers’ states because of the expropriation of the bourgeoisie by the USSR in Eastern Europe and by the masses in China and Yugoslavia triumphs after a long controversy.

¹³ It refers to the revolutions of 1905 (“the October rehearsal,” according to Lenin), February 1917 and October 1917.

As of late 1949, Pablo also acknowledges the existence of these workers' states but using a method of analysis totally removed from Marxism. His argument was that Yugoslavia, to take a case, was a workers' state because 90 per cent of the bourgeoisie had been expropriated. With this approach— he was answered— you could say that Fascist Italy at the end of the war was a workers' state because Mussolini had expropriated a large segment of the Italian bourgeoisie. The Marxist method looks at the class dynamics of events. In Italy, Mussolini expropriated the bourgeoisie at the service of the Nazi war effort; in Yugoslavia, instead, the mass movement expropriated it and in the rest of Europe the Red Army, the armed forces of the Soviet workers' state.

The following years revealed the importance of this theoretical and methodological controversy. Pablo was right on the characterisation of the new workers' states but his method, which we then labelled as aprioristic and empirical, led him to make catastrophic mistakes. Aprioristic for saying that if a certain percentage of the bourgeoisie was expropriated— no matter by which class and for what purpose— there was already a workers' state. Empirical for holding, based on the foregoing, that Yugoslavia, China, etc., were workers' states because of that fact alone. When analysing the global political situation of the early 1950s with this method, he came to two conclusions: the Third World War was coming and Stalinism would be forced to make the world revolution. Therefore we had to enter the Stalinist parties, which would make the revolution and take power. This impressionist schema led to 18 years of entryism. The Pabloite leadership had to change their arguments because the Third World War didn't happen; entryism became a phenomenon in itself, which they justified every two or three years with different arguments.

From this, a current emerged that capitulated to all the leaders of the great struggles of the post-war period: Maoism, Castroism, Tito, and even non-Stalinist leaderships as the Algerian National Liberation Front. And they still do — after the coal strike in England, they say Scargill, the miners' union leader, is the greatest thing in the workers' movement. Even when Scargill joined the international Stalinist union, the same union which allowed Poland to send coal to England during the strike. It's a hobby they have: it's enough to have a struggle to stop doing political analysis and capitulate to its leadership.

Also, horrific organisational methods were implanted within the Fourth [International]: taking part in national parties to appoint their leadership, expelling, smear campaigns against leaders who opposed their positions. Of course, Pablo applied these methods, not Mandel. He's a serious and loyal leader. We disagree with his impressionist method of analysis and of developing policies, which lead him to capitulation, but his organisational methods have nothing to do with Pablo.

One of the criticisms made to Trotskyism is that while the Stalinist slogans are “reasonable”, the Trotskyist slogans are always impossible. Many say this is one barrier that prevents them from entering the mass movement.

The truth is there are sectarian Trotskyist parties that raise some incredible positions. For example, in Bolivia, Guillermo Lora doesn't know how to raise any slogan other than the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Here in Argentina, I don't remember exactly the year, the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) raised the demand for a 20 per cent increase in wages. We said, “Okay, let's do rank and file meetings at each factory and form mobilisation pickets to achieve this increase, but not a penny less.” *Politica Obrera* (PO) and Posadas' *Voz Proletaria*¹⁴ raised slogans for much higher increases, believing the more they demanded, the more revolutionaries they were. At the time inflation was between 15 per cent and 20 per cent per year, so imagine what it meant to ask for such an increase. But they thought themselves more revolutionary than the CGT by asking for more.

When we demand from the CGT to fight for “their” increase without retreating one peso and to have rank and file meetings and pickets, we make true Trotskyist politics; the childish,

¹⁴ *Politica Obrera* (Workers Policy) name of the party and periodical of the organisation currently known as *Partido Obrero* (Workers Party). *Voz Proletaria* (Proletarian Voice) organ of the Fourth International Group lead by Juan Posadas.

ridiculous, position of Posadas and PO is its denial. The art of Trotskyist politics consists in raising slogans that emerge from the needs of the masses and reflect their true level of consciousness.

Trotsky has left us extraordinary examples. For example, he said if the German middle class broke with Hitler, it was correct to propose the convening of Parliament, the same which had elected him chancellor, to dismiss him.

Regarding Austria before the Nazi invasion, he said it was a crime the CP was putting up the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat against Nazism when the Austrian social democracy and the masses were only willing to fight for bourgeois democracy. The slogan of the CP should have been to fight all together for democracy, demanding from the Socialist Party to be consistent in this fight and mobilise the masses. Austrian fascism could have been defeated with this.

Another of Trotsky's colossal slogans was the one he gave for the United States: since the working class trusted Roosevelt, let's mobilise to demand a public works plan to put an end to unemployment.

Trotskyist politics, authentic Trotskyist politics, not delusions caused by marginalisation, always look for the easiest, most understandable slogan for the working class and the masses to mobilise and fight. Trotsky's writings are like a professorship of how to search for such slogans. For us, a slogan is "reasonable", to use the terms of your question, if it's "easy" if it's understandable to the masses and workers' movement and helps to mobilise them.

How do you rate the slogans of the CP, according to this criterion?

They're just the opposite. The CP often isn't interested in mobilising but directly in sinking a mobilisation.

Let me tell you an anecdote. As a young man, I was a good friend of Sergio Satanovsky, the screenwriter who works with celebrated director Lucas Demare.

His older brother was a senior leader of the CP and led the Stalinist intellectuals involved in the controversial theatre performances that were on twice a week at the People's Theatre. That was the municipal theatre then, as the San Martin [Theatre] is now, and its director was Leonidas Barletta.

These meetings had a lot of freedom of expression, and the Trotskyists— we were a very small group— we used to attend. We had many friends and acquaintances among intellectuals, especially those who wrote in the daily *El Mundo* as Ledesma, Rivas Rooney, and Roberto Arlt.

The big topic of discussion was almost always the struggle against Nazism. Anyone who denounced the concentration camps, persecution of the Jews, etc., got applauded by the audience, be it an anarchist, Trotskyist, Socialist, whatever. There were many Jewish workers and intellectuals in the CP and the left in general. They even were the majority in some unions, such as clothing and timber.

Well, one night, about 8 or 9 pm, we got the news, brought by our friends in *El Mundo* newspaper, that the Hitler-Stalin pact had just been signed. I took the floor immediately to denounce the fact and Satanovsky, who was in a box to the right of the stage, retired. The rest of the Stalinists stayed, listening in silence. They were half the audience and, in turn, they were almost entirely Jews.

Around twelve o'clock Satanovsky came, who had evidently gone to consult with the Central Committee of the party if the news was true. And then something happened that had a tremendous impact on me, to this day I haven't been able to forget it. He took the floor and said more or less the following:

"We repudiate the imperialist rabble masquerading as a democracy to attack the German people and their great government! It's a lie Hitler persecutes the Jews; it's a lie he persecutes the CP; there are no concentration camps in Germany! They're all lies of imperialism."

And then ... all Stalinists applauded! We couldn't win a single Jew from CP to our positions! Not one! Everyone applauded.

Well, I was astounded and the impression lasts to date. There, I was convinced Stalinism is like a medieval church, no one doubts anything and everyone accepts what the leadership says. I couldn't believe my eyes, although the anarchist comrades had already forewarned me.

Ok, but, apart from that, this shows the difference with Trotskyism. The great concern of the CP isn't the interests of the workers' movement and how to mobilise it but the interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

And on the other hand, in the Stalinist parties, you neither doubt nor discuss: you follow the policies according to the orders "from above", i.e., Moscow or Havana.

There are those who defend this way of acting of Stalinism with the argument "not to alert the enemy". For example, Fidel Castro tells the Sandinistas to support Contadora,¹⁵ to have bourgeois elections, don't expropriate the bourgeoisie, so that imperialism doesn't invade Nicaragua and thus they have time to arm themselves to defend the revolution. Another example: Castro called on Latin American countries not to pay their foreign debt, while he tells Reagan he should ease the pressure for payment and declare a moratorium so that there isn't a revolution. The purpose of this would be, according to its supporters, to empower the revolution, to make it less bloody, so to speak.

I answer first from the point of view of the bourgeoisie, the class that after centuries of domination has more or less an idea of how to handle politics and also has a huge intelligence apparatus. Who can believe it's so easy to fool them? I say this assuming for a moment that, indeed, Castro and the Sandinistas want to cheat imperialism and so far they have succeeded. If so, we should add that the Social Democracy, imperialism, the Pope, the Mexican, Venezuelan, Colombian governments, and so on and so forth, are all morons.

Mexico's Foreign Affairs Minister gave the best answer. When the correspondent of *Le Monde Diplomatique* asked a similar question, he replied indignantly that his government weren't idiots. He added, in his own way and with his language, he had verified countless times in practice that Castro did everything possible to stop any kind of mobilisation against the Mexican government.

The same applies to Belisario Betancur, President of Colombia. Castro has attacked the Colombian guerrillas, sent letters of support to Betancur when the guerrillas kidnapped his brother, so the president has every right in the world to think and say publicly that Castro is his friend. If someone said Betancur has been fooled, he could answer, just like the Mexican minister: "I'm not an idiot and besides Castro has given me categorical evidence of his friendship."

The most that could be said for Castro is that he has a dual, contradictory behaviour.

Talking is a behaviour. If Castro repeats constantly for two years that it's necessary to support Contadora, millions of Latin American will support Contadora. If not, then Castro may explain the mechanism by which they think they will convince 200 million Latin Americans to fight Contadora, while Castro repeated ad nauseum, "Long live Contadora", "let's support Contadora".

He may argue he favours Contadora to gain time, avoid the imperialist blow while the Nicaraguan revolution is strengthened and gets weapons.

We return to the problem of consciousness of the mass movement. When Castro tells Reagan to accept a moratorium on foreign debt payments to avoid a socialist revolution in Latin America, it's because he really doesn't want to have a revolution...

Why?

Because at the same time he supports Siles Suazo and tells the Bolivian proletariat not make the general strike. This is categorical: Fidel Castro, with his remarks, was the great scab of the general strike in Bolivia. The same in Colombia: After his remarks, the CP and the FARC support

¹⁵ The **Contadora Group** was an agreement signed by the governments of Mexico, Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela to strive for "stability" and "regional peace" in Central America. It quickly received the support of almost all Latin American governments, the US Congress, the European Parliament, and the Vatican. Its main proposals are contained in the so-called "21 Points" signed in September 1983. Its acceptance implied that Nicaragua wouldn't support the Salvadoran guerrillas, with weapons or bases in their own territory, and would at the same time recognise the political rights of the Nicaraguan counter-revolutionary guerrillas (the "contras") for the sake of "national reconciliation".

the Betancur government. In Spain, he supported, in fact, Felipe Gonzalez and the monarchy against the naval strike.

All these categorical facts correspond perfectly with what he says and they show he doesn't want the revolution. Just as the Stalinists, he supports the theory of socialism in one country and peaceful coexistence with imperialism.

In Angola, there's an almost surreal situation. The counter-revolutionary UNITA guerrillas strive to attack Rockefeller's oil wells while Cuban together government troops defend the wells. Almost everywhere, Fidel Castro supports reactionary governments against the mass movement. His statements are supported by the facts.

Something similar happens with the FSLN. Remember, for example, that Nicaragua sent the Minister of Culture, Ernesto Cardenal, to publicly support Alfonsin policy regarding the Beagle.¹⁶

Before turning to the subject of the world party, tell us in a couple of words how you see the prospects for the construction of the Movement to Socialism.

I think the prospects in Argentina are good. Our party is strong, growing, in a situation of crisis without a way out, at least for several years. I see a class which isn't defeated, a serious party, with many cadres.

Now, lest anyone think everything is on track. We have some serious shortcomings. For example, under the dictatorship, many of our militant cadres had to leave their jobs in factories and companies and that created problems difficult to overcome. It's just one example among many.

Anyway, it's an objective fact we're well positioned with the vanguard, we have a national public presence recognised by all sectors, and we are inserted in a very dynamic process of the class struggle. We have a fairly accurate understanding of the current situation: the reality has confirmed our analysis. I refer to general aspects since the analysis is never confirmed in whole or in every nuance. Our party was built in the heart of Argentina's working class and has experience and tradition. Then there's a reason to be optimistic about their future.

16 The **Beagle conflict** was a border dispute between Chile and Argentina over the ownership of Picton, Lennox and Nueva islands and the scope of the maritime jurisdiction associated with those islands that brought the countries to the brink of war in 1978.

CHAPTER 3

The World Party

Throughout your political life, you have devoted enormous efforts to build a global revolutionary organisation...

I would say most of my political life has been, still is, geared to the world party, to the construction of the Fourth International.

The world party is the number one priority of the workers' movement because there's one world economy and politics, which are subject to national realities. Imperialism applies just one policy, through the IMF, to all countries, developed or backward, which have debts with international banks. And what we say regarding the foreign debt is true in all areas of politics and economics.

The existence of a global policy is characteristic of capitalism and, since it's a matter of dethroning it, we need a tool according to this reality and this task. The global mass movement requires different tools for each one of the problems of class struggle. To fight in the economic field the working class created unions. It's no coincidence the first trade unions were born in England, the cradle of the industrial revolution.

But the need to develop a global policy doesn't necessarily follow the need for a global organisation.

I just want to prove otherwise. Let's continue with the example above. The workers need unions to fight for their wages, job security, etc., against their national oppressors. They need political parties to defend their class interests. In the international arena, they need a united workers' movement. Unfortunately, these organisations have been lost because of the division of the international workers' movement into pro-Western and pro-Soviet tendencies. The global economy requires the development of large international unions. Its absence means a big backward step for the mass movement. Why was the great coal strike in England lost? Precisely because of the lack of international solidarity. A large global labour organisation would have created a revolutionary solidarity movement with the British miners which would have been unstoppable.

From what you have just said, it seems that those international unions existed once.

Indeed, and they had a lot of strength. There was a yellow international union and in parallel the Red International of Labour Unions,¹ created by the Third International, which was very strong, very well organised.

Imagine an organisation of this type, strong and centralised, which resolves, for example, that not a single plane or a boat leaves for Chile or a single Chilean ship is unloaded on a foreign port until Pinochet is gone. How long would this dictatorship last? Very little, I think. The same regarding the coal strike: if there had been an organisation able to prevent the shipment of oil and coal to England, the strike would have been won quickly.

¹ The **International Federation of Trade Unions** (known as "yellow") grouped unions led by European social democratic parties. He disappeared during Second World War. The **Red International of Labour Unions** was created by the Third International — and dissolved along with it— to group unions founded by the Communists in opposition to the reformist bureaucracy.

I have had the opportunity to talk with leaders of the Galician Nationalist Party. They agree on the need for international analysis and that solidarity is essential but they argue parties can only be national because of the weight of national specificities.

And who organises solidarity or develops international analysis? Each task requires a specific organisation; I don't believe in spontaneity in this field. Which agency forced the world workers' movement to be in solidarity with the British miners? None, so there was no solidarity.

What can you tell us of Spain and the International Brigades who went to fight with the Republic against Franco?

Precisely, at that time there was the Third International, which prompted solidarity with the Republic and the formation of the Brigades. Trotskyists also drove this process, like the anarchists. Otherwise, there would have been no International Brigades in Spain.

Wasn't the lack of solidarity with England more because of the low level of consciousness of the international workers' movement, rather than their lack of organisation?

The two factors are intimately linked. If we take Hegel's² categories of objective spirit and subjective spirit, we may say the subjective spirit, the level of consciousness, has to be objectified. How? In an organisation. They're two sides of the same problem. If the worker is conscious he's exploited, he creates an organisation to fight against exploitation. It's the transformation of subjective in objective spirit: of thought into action and then into an organisation.

Going back for a while to the position of the Galician nationalists — and they aren't the only ones who think so — they argue the weight of the national specificities forces the national parties to maintain an independence of political judgment, not to submit to an international organisation.

I don't deny the importance of national specificities or that parties must preserve their independence of judgment. Now, it's a matter of determining what is decisive. If the world is a sum of national specificities, where Argentina is diametrically opposed to Uruguay, Uruguay to Brazil, this to Mexico and so on, i.e., there are no common features and countries don't form part of a global whole, then the international can't and shouldn't exist.

What is the reality? Exaggerating a little, we can compare the world and countries with a country and its provinces. When we analyse the Argentine reality, we consider a whole, not the sum of provincial situations. Argentina is dominated by a national, not provincial states.

The world situation isn't exactly so as nation states exist and have profound differences. But what is characteristic of capitalist domination is the existence of the global system. So much so that we talk about political and economic cycles worldwide. For example, when capitalism needed a big sugar production, the Caribbean and also northern Brazil took to the production of sugar, large sugar mills appeared. The European revolution of 1848 was a unique process that spanned the entire continent. Another example: before capitalism, there were no world wars.

For Marxists, the first and decisive scientific fact is the existence of the economic, political and social capitalist world system, whereby national specificities are contingent. Put another way, the national is a specific expression of the world system.

Proletarian internationalism arose in response to an objective problem; it isn't something invented by Marx at his desk. The Communist Manifesto, published in 1848, is a document of migrant workers, the European workers' leagues, who were immersed in a boiling revolutionary process. They were German, French, Belgian, British, Italians...

In 1863, the First International emerges founded by union leaders from different countries, who call Marx to collaborate. In England, there were many immigrant workers, including Germans, who received very low wages. This created problems for British workers, who remained out of work because of the cheap labour. In France, there were similar problems. The working class leaders of these countries met, discovered they had common problems that required an international organisation. That is, the problem wouldn't be solved in England with the clash between British

² Georg Hegel (1770-1831), a German philosopher and logician, had a profound influence on Marx in the field of logic.

and German workers but in the unity of both proletariats and those of the entire world against the common class enemy.

For us, the ultimate crime, the ultimate betrayal of the Stalinist bureaucracy was the dissolution of the Third International, demanded by its allies Churchill and Roosevelt.

This explains why imperialism hasn't yet been defeated. The Second International exists but it isn't a true International but a federation of Social Democratic parties, defenders of the capitalist system. The Third International and the Red International of Labour Unions were officially dissolved by Stalinism. With this, they erased the need for the International from the mass consciousness.

Today the internationalists we're a tiny minority in the global mass movement. We Trotskyists are the only ones who claim the indispensable need of having an international trade union and a political organisation, a centralised world party.

Seventy or 80 years ago all the vanguard workers vindicated the International. In the First [International] there were anarchists, Marxists, Proudhon³ followers, the British trade unionists. When the Second [International] was founded, all currents of the workers' movement except the anarchists participated. Not that the anarchists had ceased to be internationalists, they just remained in the First [International].

Stalinism broke this tradition while elaborating the theory of socialism in one country.⁴ According to them, the USSR would defeat imperialism in economic competition; therefore, a world party wasn't needed to develop the program and tactics of the workers' movement. Khrushchev used to say that in 20 years the power of the USSR would surpass that of the United States.

This ideology led to a backwards leap in the consciousness of the workers' movement, which stepped back suddenly to the period before the 1848 revolution and the emergence of the *Communist Manifesto*.

Pedagogy calls functional illiterate the person who learned to read and write in primary school and then lost the knowledge by not exercising it. We can say the world workers' movement suffers from functional illiteracy in the field of proletarian internationalism because of Stalinism. The world party, the only political tool that can defeat imperialism, appears before the workers' vanguard as a utopian, peculiar idea, as wishful thinking.

The main base of support for the theory of socialism in one country has proved false since the workers' states failed to catch up to imperialism in the field of technology development and production. In this way, among others, it's confirmed once again the essential tool to liquidate capitalism isn't the technological and economic competition of the workers' states with imperialism but the world party, the International, to face imperialism politically by mobilising workers worldwide. Rather, we require two internationals closely linked: one trade union and the other political.

Now, we should add that this doesn't negate national specificities. We're opposed to international leadership ordering national parties how to act, what policy they should apply...

Which is how Stalinism works, isn't it?

Stalinism is the opposite of an International. The USSR, as a great power, maintains and finances parties in all countries of the world that serve its interests and apply the policy it dictates. An International acts as a party: they have congresses where national party delegates discuss and vote a political orientation.

3 **Pierre-Joseph Proudhon** (1809-1865) was one of the first theorists of anarchism. His ideas were popular among the workers in the nineteenth century.

4 The theory of socialism in one country, formulated by Stalin to support his abandonment of the international revolution, holds that the USSR, because of its size and natural resources, is able by itself to "catch and overtake" the development of advanced capitalist countries and reach socialism. The Marxist theory contends, however, that while the first step is the conquest of power and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie in the national states, society will come to socialism only by a great development of the productive forces, which requires the conquest of power globally and the abolition of national borders. Thus, the great economic, scientific, and technological heritage, today property of a handful of countries, would reach the entire planet.

Look at the case of the Argentine Communist Party, which explicitly supported the coup of March 1976 and the Videla⁵ government. I can't believe all CP members and the millions of Argentine working class activists who are globally sympathetic to the USSR would agree with this policy, to support the dictatorship that tortured and killed thousands of militants, including of their own CP. It did it because it's a party that depends on a bureaucratic State and does what is ordered. The USSR at all times maintained excellent diplomatic and commercial relations with the dictatorship.

However, for many, that is internationalism, a State dictates its will to parties sympathetic to it. For example, recently there was a meeting of Latin American Communist parties in Havana. Isn't that a kind of international? Is it just a facade?

Neither one nor the other: it's a meeting of ambassadors, similar to what Reagan does when traveling to Europe and meeting with ambassadors and pro-US party leaders.

The meeting of the CPs isn't an International: if the issues are resolved unanimously, it isn't a worker's party. Was there any resolution to be passed by a majority, not by unanimity? Did you read in some newspaper that there were strong arguments? No, it was just a meeting of officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, where this explained its position and then issued it to all attendees.

The International, as we conceive it, is characterised by the existence of deep differences, precisely because it's global. It can't be otherwise, at a meeting of delegates from different countries, reflecting different cultures, traditions, and even languages. Unanimity in these circumstances is impossible.

The development of the revolution is uneven from country to country, isn't it? This causes an uneven development of the national parties, sections of the International.

Correct.

Suppose in a country, for instance, Bolivia, we're able to advance to the seizure of power, just as there isn't a strong International...

Is the question of whether we take power?

The question is whether the seizure of power in a country depends on building a strong international.

I would say the construction of the national parties and the International is a combined process. First, to take part in the class struggle it's essential to begin from a proper analysis of the national situation. Making this analysis and developing the policy and what we call the "line" of the party — that is, the combination of tasks and slogans we propose to mobilise the masses and build the party — is a task firstly of the national party. But this analysis can only be complete in the context of a proper assessment of the international situation: how to understand the Argentine situation regardless of the general situation of Latin America and the politics of imperialism? It's no coincidence that our party congresses discuss the world situation before the national question on the agenda. Well, this is where the international organisation however small and weak, as the IWL,⁶ plays an indispensable role in collecting the experiences and opinions of members and leaders of many countries. The analysis will always be wider, richer than what a national party can develop, however brilliant its leaders be.

5 When Videla took office, the newspaper of the Argentine CP commented: "General Videla's formulations are a liberating program, which we share. General Videla asks for understanding. He'll have it. It's appropriate that all patriotic sectors of our people, picking up the presidential call, take part in the democratic reorganisation" (*Tribuna Popular*, 8 April 1976).

6 *Movimiento al Socialismo* was a sympathiser organisation of the **International Workers League – Fourth International** (IWL-FI), of which Moreno was one of the founders and leaders. The IWL-FI was founded in 1982 to fight for overcoming the crisis of leadership of the Fourth International. Following Moreno's death in 1987, the IWL-FI went into crisis and, in 1990, it began to split. Currently, Moreno's followers in that organisation and keepers of the web page www.nahuelmoreno.org, are grouped in the **International Workers Unity – Fourth International** (IWU-FI).

Now, the other aspect of the combination I mentioned at the beginning is the International can only achieve a qualitative leap in its strengthening and growth from the conquest of power by one of its parties. A triumph of Trotskyism in any country would shoot down a series of prejudices, firstly the one holding the International is unnecessary. I honestly think no Trotskyist party — and remember we're talking about the party that aspires to socialism with workers' democracy — can take power without the political and theoretical help of the International, however small and weak it be. This would eradicate this deeply flawed, nefarious idea that the International is just a decoration, not the deepest political necessity of the international workers' movement.

Moreover, the example of a Trotskyist government would cause a colossal impact, on having imposed workers' democracy, with rights of all kinds. This government would grant greater rights than any other State, bourgeois or workers' bureaucratic.

These two facts would awake an enormous amount of enthusiasm in the world working class, and the International would transform — finally! — in an organisation of millions of workers.

You say, then, that the International mainly plays a role in policy development. Can or should the International leadership take part in the life of the national parties?

Not only of political development but also of the organisation of international campaigns, such as solidarity with the great workers' struggles — from the Salvadoran guerrillas to the English miners' strike and the anti-bureaucratic fight of Polish Solidarity — or the policy of unity of the masses of dependent countries against payment of the foreign debt.

To answer your question, I believe at this stage the International shouldn't take part in the national parties. Maybe later will be different, when there's a large International, with a very prestigious leadership and whose parties have the power in several countries.

For the time being, it must take part, and energetically, in the political discussions but it would be a dangerous mistake for the international leadership to change the leadership of a party or impose a national policy. The national is a specific aspect of the international but it keeps a large degree of autonomy.

CHAPTER 4

The Existing Workers' States

Many people wonder, seeing what happens in the workers' states if it's truly worth making the socialist revolution. Over there, life seems sad, sombre, there are no democratic rights. So, is it worthwhile making the revolution?

Everything depends on the point of view. Keep in mind that all countries where there are workers' states were extremely backward. A neo-Marxist current argues Russia was one of the most advanced countries of the world. I disagree; industry was very advanced and also some rural sectors but, overall, it was a very backward country. All countries that have expropriated the bourgeoisie, except Eastern Germany, and perhaps Czechoslovakia and Poland, came from ancient backwardnesses, like China. Seen from this angle, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie wasn't only worth it but also was a colossal historical progress.

From the point of view of rights, it meant for the workers a series of gains relating to what we call, following Trotsky, the democracy of the nerves and muscles. Before, the worker worked 16 hours a day and ate poorly. Now, he works eight hours and eats in abundance. I dare say this is a democratic right, perhaps the most important of all. Thanks to it, the worker lives longer, he has no atrophied nerves or muscles.

All these revolutions have caused a colossal advance, sometimes of centuries, in the standard of living of the masses. Look at the case of Cuba. Just over 10 years ago *Life* magazine, which is so reactionary, published an article saying after the revolution the Cuban people achieved impressive material improvements. At once, the editors received mountains of letters, where they were asked what was happening, whether they had become propagandists of Castro. They said no, but they couldn't deny the facts either.

It's said in Poland the standard of living of the masses is deteriorating.

Before turning to this problem let me tell you that a while ago I read an article in *L'Alternative*¹ on Brezhnev's successors. The author is a Czech intellectual exiled in France who hates the totalitarian regime. He says Western Sovietologists don't understand the USSR and the Eastern European countries; they have a totally wrong idea. They don't understand why the population massively sticks to the regime. And the reason, he says, is they don't understand the rights and social gains existing in those countries. They only see one side of the problem, which is totalitarianism.

Those of us who lived Peronism of the years of 1946 to 1955 find some similarities. The Peronist regime had strong totalitarian tendencies, it kept an almost monopolistic control of the press but under Peron important social gains were achieved.

¹ See "Las Sucesion au troné et la kremlinologie" by Lubomir Sochor, *L'Alternative* No. 20, January/February 1983. The author was elected to the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak CP in the congress held in the middle of the "Prague Spring" and had to leave the country after the Soviet invasion. The magazine *L'Alternative*, devoted to political and economic problems of the Eastern European countries, was published in Paris.

In the courses we held last summer with the cadres of the Movement Towards Socialism, I remarked it has been impossible to implement Taylor or Ford systems² in the workers' states. They can't impose intensive work rhythms. On the contrary, scholars on labour relations in the USSR have shown it was impossible to impose in the Gorky car factory — built in 1937 based on the model of the Ford factory in the United States— the same production rates as in the latter. And even Stakhanovism³ had to be abandoned because the workers' reaction brought down the production of many companies.

Now, as the bureaucratic control extends, the problems of lack of formal rights and also content rights emerge more clearly because the economy stops growing or grows slightly and then even the rights to the nerves and muscles are cut. The bureaucracy holds back the developing of the economy and therefore lowers the living standards.

Exclusively because of the bureaucracy?

For me, yes. There's a big problem with alcoholism, causing a high birth rate of deformed children. I don't know whether it has already reached the statistics of some regions in France, this ought to be studied. And it's even said the global statistics of alcoholism in the USSR distort the true situation because in the highly populated Muslim regions there's hardly any drinking because of religion. It means in the non-Muslim regions there's much heavier drinking than what the national statistics show.

I mention this problem of alcoholism because it has much to do with the lack of formal rights. What can a man who works eight hours a day and can save a lot of money do? Workers in the workers' states are rich, so to speak. They have money in the bank but there's nothing to buy. This produces a large alienation, leading to drunkenness. What good does it do to work leisurely and have lots of money and free time if you can't write a book or publish a newspaper, or make a painting, or direct a movie, or a TV show? Or to express yourself through a political party or an intellectual or scientific current? The serious problems that lead to alcoholism begin here.

Now, I insist, if we look at the starting point, progress has been colossal. In China hunger reigned for two or three thousand years but the problem disappeared since the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, the big landlords, and imperialism.

Seen dynamically, it's a process that begins with a colossal leap and then, because of bureaucratic control, it slows down and, finally, goes back.

But not enough to return to the starting point.

Of course not. For that, you need a social counter-revolution returning power and ownership to the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

As you said a moment ago, the population massively sticks to the regime. Now, suppose Germany had a plebiscite and the citizens of the East and the West could freely choose the system they prefer. Wouldn't they choose West Germany?

I don't know whether you're aware the East Germans who moved to the other side begin to return. It's a fairly recent development. It's true that most would choose the West German system, but don't forget West Germany is one of the countries that benefited most from the post-war economic boom and also that after the division of the country, it was left with the most industrialised part. The east is more agrarian; it had virtually a single large industry, the famous Zeiss optics, in Leipzig.

I read somewhere that East Germany has the highest living standards of all workers' states.

2 Production systems designed to achieve higher performance out of the worker's labour. Taylor's system comprises of a rigid division of labour, within which each worker performs a minimal task, combined with scientific regulation of each movement made by the worker. Ford's system is the production and assembly line, or chain work.

3 See Jacques Sapir, *Travail et travailleurs en URSS*. Paris: Editions La Docouverte, 1984. **Stakhanovism** was a method of increasing production by increasing the pace. Named after Oleg Stakhanov, a miner who based on physical exertion increased his production 16 times.

It's possible, but it's still considerably lower than in West Germany. But back to what I said a moment ago, the flow of East Germans to the West begins to reverse, some of them return because they can't stand the scourges of the capitalist world. In West Germany, there are over two million unemployed and also working rhythms are hellish. To make matters worse, they have to compete with Turkish immigrant workers, who are very cheap labour.

Speaking of the rhythm of work, I saw an interesting phenomenon on a trip to Israel. Soviet Jews were massively returning to the USSR precisely because of this problem.

For it and unemployment. I've had a chance to talk much about life in Russia with a woman born and raised there, daughter of Spanish immigrants to the USSR after the civil war. This lady was at first dazzled by Spain. And lately, I've heard she's thinking of going back to the USSR because of the problem of work. In Spain, there are three million unemployed and she can't risk losing her job. In Russia, she wouldn't have that problem.

The pace of work is another matter; the USSR has failed to impose a Taylor-like system, despite attempts by recent governments.

It appears Russian emigrants go crazy in Western countries. I've seen in Israel they're treated as semi-lumpens, bums who don't know what hard work is.

They're right if their working performance is measured according to Western values. A US or Israeli worker at Ford sees at a Russian worker work and thinks so. Or an Argentine labourer in Peron's time: at that time the worker could change jobs when it suited him, miss going to the factory when he was sick, and so on. With the Russian, worker it's the same.

So it could be said as a compliment, thanks to the planned economy, they can eat despite a production rate lower than the Western one.

It's a compliment but also criticism, the problem is twofold. The Russian workers missing work often, changing jobs, and generally yielding little is protesting against a regime that denies him other rights. The worker who suffers from a lack of democracy and the other evils of bureaucratic regime can't love his work.

This brings us again to the question of whether it was worth making the revolution. Yes, it was worth it in the sense we said before. The Russian Jew who migrated to Israel and then wants to return aims to restore the rights of his nerves and muscles. When he reaches the west, he begins to work eight hours or many more — if he's lucky enough not to be unemployed — and at a rate of capitalist labour, which destroys him.

Would you say low labour productivity in the USSR is a form of protest against the totalitarian regime?

There are elements of protest against the system but the problem is much more complex. As there's no private property, there are no economic mechanisms to allow increased production. In the MAS summer courses, I looked into this. Lenin was the first to say socialism should introduce Taylorism with a human face. This failed because, in the absence of a boss within the factory, there's a highly contradictory situation. The ruling party is strong, the union is strong, and so are factory managers. It's a situation where nobody dominates.

To give an example to the contrary, assume the union internal committee of Ford goes to the manager and asks for a wage increase. The manager calls the board of directors in the United States and says: "My position is that we shouldn't increase wages but should increase the hours of work." The board reply they agree and that's it: the position of company management is one. Whether or not they impose is another story, which will depend on the struggle, i.e., the balance of power of labour-management forces.

Now, when the economy is nationalised, the property becomes abstract, so to speak. The factory manager, who wants to step up the pace of work, i.e., the exploitation, has to consult the party. The party consults the union and the manager; it becomes an arbitrator between the two.

But it happens the workers' movement terrifies bureaucracy. As soon as there's mobilisation, it thinks workers are stronger than the manager and gives in immediately. Believe it or not, the workers' states are the only countries in the world where workers win almost all disputes. What does the party do when there's mobilisation? It busts the managers. They go to the local or provincial party leadership, if the dispute has spread, and gives all increases or whatever is asked. The crackdown comes after and it's selective: it's directed relentlessly against the leadership of the dispute.

This mechanism is constantly repeated. It's a fact little known outside the country that in the USSR there are large waves of strikes. Information is tightly controlled so we take years to learn that, apparently, the rising of Khrushchev was because of a wave of strikes.

I want to insist on low productivity. Why is it so, specifically?

A combination of factors: bureaucratic ineptitude, lack of enthusiasm by the worker because of the absence of democracy, the fact of not facing a ruthless and despotic boss, forced to it by the need to accumulate but a party that can manoeuvre and arbitrate between managers and workers in the factory.

Isn't it also due to the lack of competition? The capitalists say the biggest production incentive is competition. Capitalists compete with each other and those who don't have the necessary efficiency succumb. Everyone has to cut costs, apply aggressive sale policies and efficient production systems. Lack of competition creates inefficiency, as in public enterprises. So, can you move forward without competition?

The USSR advanced a lot, and there's no competition there. By the fact of expropriating the bourgeoisie and establishing a planned economy, it leaped in less than half a century from being a very backward country to a first-rate power. Note the aerospace industry: the USSR launched the first satellite, Sputnik.

Now, capitalists are right to say it hasn't achieved an efficiency higher than in the bourgeois regime. This is for several factors.

The first, I already mentioned. The lion's share of labour productivity the capitalist countries is because of the over-exploitation of the worker, the fact of being subjected to long hours and a hellish pace of work. It's the lack of democracy of the nerves and muscles or, in the beautiful phrase coined by environmentalists, the decreased quality of life. Today, there's a lot of research whether the famous capitalist efficiency has brought more evil than good: the disappearance of animal species, the most brutal exploitation of millions of human beings causing their dumbing down, new diseases such as mental, horrible things. Efficiency and technological progress are important but they aren't everything: there's a qualitative factor, which is the quality of life.

The factor that most conspires against efficiency in the bureaucratic workers' states is the totalitarian leadership of the economy. There's much bribery, waste, disorder. Ridiculous things happen, like the factory that produced lots of gloves and they were all right hand. Another example is the textile factory which, to meet the number of metres of fabric required by the Gosplan — the central planning commission — reduced the width of the fabric, then the central government gave them an award for having produced more metres of fabric than required. These delirious things, worthy of a madhouse, are because of bureaucratic control, which doesn't allow the working class to express itself.

You mentioned capitalist public enterprises, at the beginning they were very efficient, even though the free traders deny it. For example, public school was an extraordinary public enterprise. The bourgeoisie created it when building modern Argentina and three out of four residents were immigrants who hadn't mastered the language. Other examples are the postal service and also the state railways in the 1930s. They worked very well for being state owned.

But suppose I'm a Soviet worker, what incentive do I have to produce?

None. Maybe there's some kind of award for production. I would favour the awards, provided they're democratically established. That is, the workers decide the one who produces more earns more.

Would that improve labour productivity?

In my opinion, it would, but as long as it's by a democratic resolution of workers, I insist on that. They must decide, for example, if a great physician, college professor, earns more than a "junior" professional. The key is democracy. In a democratic meeting, I would argue that in the first phase of the workers' state these incentives must apply.

Could you expand on the subject of planning, thinking about the reader who is introduced to these issues for the first time?

Well, let's start with capitalism. The bourgeois makes his plans paying attention to the market and competition. First, I want to clarify competition not always lowers prices. The monopolies were born from competition and when they dominate the market prices rise.

Anyway, even in the era of monopolies competition exists and it's relentless. Capitalist competition has a formidable control element, which is the market. If I manufacture a product which isn't sold in the market my company bankrupts. The market is a "democratic" economic response, so to speak, because the act of buying or not buying a product is a response to the quality, to the efficiency, although most of the time to the marketing, by the consumers.

There's also another factor: the utility. I mean, if a sugar mill in Argentina is inefficient, the company bankrupts. In Cuba, it wouldn't bankrupt; it would become part of the totality of bureaucratic inefficiency.

Agreed, but let's continue with the problem of the economic mechanism. In the economic world, there are so far three mechanisms: capitalism, workers' democracy, and bureaucracy.

Capitalism is from top to bottom, from producer to consumer, and receives an automatic, mechanical reply, from the market which accepts or rejects the product. If it's of poor quality, it won't sell. If the company is inefficient and its costs are too high, maybe it sells the product but at a loss because the market imposes the prices.

The second mechanism, which until now has only existed in the Soviet Union in the early years, under Lenin and Trotsky, is that of workers' democracy. It's a bottom-up process in which the factory workers in a general meeting democratically resolve the quantity and quality of what will be produced, this plan goes to the district meeting which, in turn, approves or modifies it and then forwards it to the institutions of the Soviet Republic responsible for designing the overall economic plan. The workers are involved throughout the process, organised in Soviet currents and parties to comment on the plan in all its aspects: what and how much is produced for domestic consumption, for export, what must be imported, and so on. The control mechanism isn't automatic, blind, so to speak, as in the market economy but rational and conscious: the workers democratically discuss and solve the overall economic plan set and approve it through a free vote.

The third mechanism, the bureaucratic one, is from the top down, from State to consumer. There are no control mechanisms, neither from the market nor from the workers and therefore it's complete madness. The factory manager develops his plan trying to show he needs a lot more money, raw materials, and personnel than what is needed. In the USSR the factory stocks are huge, much larger than in the capitalist countries. The capitalist orders whatever he needs and when it runs out he orders more. But in the workers' states, where the bureaucracy has control, no one knows if he'll get the raw material when needed. That's why the managers try to hoard labour, machinery, raw materials, and funds. Especially funds because their social status depends on it. The manager who handles millions of rubles is more important than the one who handles hundreds of thousands.

With the development of top-down planning and without the smallest opposition, everything is distorted. Everyone tries to deceive the others because the final decision rests with the Secretary-General, exclusively. But there's no way to cheat the laws of economics: if there are only right-hand gloves or fabrics with a width less than the industry standards, it causes a brutal imbalance and, among other anomalies, a flourishing black market. Such delirium is the inevitable product, again, from an economy planned from above without control.

Bourgeois commentators are careful not to recall that during the 1920s when workers' democracy prevailed in the country and in the Communist Party and economic plans were discussed and voted freely, the only authentic "economic miracle" of this century was achieved. The Soviet Union went, in just two years, from an economic crisis and unprecedented famine to a situation with increased production, improved living standards of the workers, and a substantially reduced workday. The economy of the workers' state continued to improve until 1928, precisely the year when Stalinism gave its reactionary coup. Thereafter, a bureaucratic, dictatorial, planning of the economy was imposed, which led to disaster and death to millions of workers, mainly peasants.

When free enterprise advocates say there are only two systems of control of the economy — free-trade capitalism and Stalinist economy — they consciously lie, because then it's easier to discredit socialism and state ownership of the means of production.

Turning to the current problems of the workers' states, in China in recent years there has been a shift in the economy, with the introduction of elements of the capitalist economy, including private factories. Does this mean a return to the capitalist system?

Ok, let's be precise. Undoubtedly elements of capitalism have been introduced in the Chinese workers' state but this doesn't mean China will return to the capitalist system just by making some concessions. The danger of return exists but can only be done through a political process: a counter-revolution to return power to the bourgeoisie and imperialism. For this, there have to be big struggles, tremendous political phenomena.

The recent example of Latin America's Southern Cone is instructive since it's a regime change, not the exploiter's final defeat at the hands of workers. Gigantic mobilisations of masses were necessary for the dictatorships of Bolivia, Argentina, and Brazil to fall. In those countries, power didn't pass from one class to another but from a bourgeois dictatorship to bourgeois democracy. Conversely, in 1976, to impose Martinez de Hoz's plan, the Argentinian bourgeoisie had to resort to a coup and dictatorship that massacred the vanguard of the mass movement.

The transfer of power from one class to another requires shocks of this type but at an incomparably greater scale. The introduction of capitalist elements in China generates a counter-revolutionary dynamic but the bourgeoisie can only return to power through an armed counter-revolution that crushes the mass movement.

The fact of introducing elements of capitalism, isn't a recognition of the greater efficiency of the capitalist system?

It's recognition, first, that Mao was a disastrous politician and worse economist, plus a bureaucrat. It was necessary to go back on his insane plans, for example, to produce steel in small scale in rural villages with traditional methods.

It's also recognition of the greater efficiency of capitalism in the sense that a capitalist enterprise can impose on their workers a degree of exploitation impossible for a state that expropriated the bourgeoisie. And, finally, it's recognition of the inability to achieve a large technological development with Mao's methods.

Could we regard the current Chinese turn as similar to the NEP?⁴

Yes, but an NEP with much more serious concessions and without democratic control of the workers' movement that existed in the Soviet Union under Lenin and Trotsky. The NEP was a move aimed at saving a critical situation and the Bolsheviks had the plan to rely on the poor peasants, developing collective farms, to prevent the rich peasantry from dominating the agrarian economy. With China, it's an NEP led by Bukharin,⁵ i.e., by the right wing of the Bolshevik Party,

4 NEP (New Economic Policy) was implemented in the USSR in 1921, as a temporary measure designed to revive the economy shattered by the revolution and civil war. It included a controlled introduction to the capitalist market, concessions to the bourgeoisie to install small businesses and to farmers to trade their produce freely.

5 **Nikolai Bukharin** (1883–1939), member of the Bolshevik Party and its Central Committee during the revolution, held senior positions in the party and in the Third International. He formed a tendency in the party called Right Opposition, which included in its program the extension of the NEP with the abolition of the state monopoly of foreign trade. He was executed on Stalin's orders.

which put forward the slogan of “peasants, get rich!” without warning of the dangers of an agrarian class increasingly richer. The Chinese bureaucracy doesn’t give this alert nor creates political mechanisms to counter it.

Then, what the Chinese bureaucracy is looking for in this way is more efficiency, since workers’ democracy doesn’t exist.

Of course, the alternative is iron clad: workers’ democracy or return to capitalism. The process of China is very interesting because it shows the future.

Can there be intermediate alternatives? I say this because coincidentally I’ve just read that an Italian company that manufactures jeans with the suggestive brand name “Jesus” recently installed a plant in the USSR. It will produce an unimaginable quantity of jeans per hour/person. The entire process, from cutting the fabric to final packaging, will be highly computerised, so it will use little labour. Then, apparently, what the USSR imported is Italian high technology. Can this be interpreted as an introduction of capitalist elements in the socialist mode of production?

I don’t know the terms of the agreement. If the Italian bourgeois, owner of the company, controls the factory, the answer is yes. Now, if it’s an agreement to deliver a turnkey factory, i.e., fully assembled and ready for operation, as it was done with Fiat, this doesn’t affect at all the socialist economy. If they’re given, as in China, the granting of assembling the factory, exploiting of Russian labour and taking profits, it’s an important capitalist element.

Specifically, can there be capitalist restoration?

Not only can but there will be unless global capitalism is defeated. Socialism with workers’ democracy or the triumph of imperialism: I don’t see another alternative. And if the latter happens, the workers’ states will become semi-colonies of imperialism.

Are there tendencies in the workers’ states that aspire to capitalist restoration?

This question is related to a weakness in the Trotskyist analysis of bureaucratic workers’ states. The Trotskyists, we have always believed there are strong internal trends for the restoration, of Russian NEPman⁶ type. Indeed, these tendencies existed and were quite important but I get the impression capitalist restoration won’t come this way but through the establishment of enterprises, foreign trade, and agreements with imperialism.

With this approach, a union leader would give his union to the boss when he lives precisely from his position as a leader and gets his privileges from this.

To answer I’ll tell you a true story that happened in Argentina. There was a taxi drivers union leader, I can’t remember his name, who was a great friend of Alsogaray when he was a minister and formed a partnership with him and March.⁷ This man lived with his son in a luxury hotel in the city of Buenos Aires. The business was done on behalf of the taxi drivers union, and the man, who was secretary general of the union, charged a hefty commission. With that money, he formed a partnership with March to form Pueyrredon Constructions, a construction company that made a lot of money working for unions. They got themselves granted multi-million credits by Congress and built homes for the Commerce Employees Union.

Why can’t this process happen with bureaucratic sectors of the workers’ state? In China, it has been discovered the existence of a youth group called the “children of senior cadres”, i.e., sons of generals, ministers, members of the party Central Committee, and so on. They occupy menial positions in the state apparatus but thanks to family ties they are able to provide their good offices to the capitalists who want to invest in China. The system is so well established that there are an already established rate and a mode of payment. The young intermediary receives from the

⁶ NEPman: name given to traders enriched with that policy.

⁷ **Alvaro Alsogaray** was Finance Minister in the Frondizi government (1959-62) and in 1986 a Member of Parliament representative of the pro-imperialist liberal right. **Armando March** was secretary general of the Confederation of Commerce Employees Unions and city of Buenos Aires section, one of the most powerful unions in Argentina.

capitalist the equivalent of 2 per cent of the amount of business, half at the signing of the contract and the remainder upon closing of the transaction.⁸

Another example is the Polish bureaucrat Stepaszynsky, director of the Film and Television Institute, denounced by Solidarity: the man had become a multi-millionaire; he had luxury properties in the French Riviera. This means that capitalists corrupt bureaucrat officials, they offer them big business.

The most important factor of capitalist restoration aren't small merchants of a neighbourhood or village, as the NEPman and black market dealers but bureaucratic sectors that become direct or indirect agents of imperialism, which penetrate through invasions, IMF loans, businesses that allow them to give these bribes.

Another possible way, which Trotsky didn't see, is the production cooperatives. That is the program of Walesa in Poland. What is it? Individual plants to become an independent company; the liquidation of state monopoly of foreign trade; each company to import and export on their own. For me, that's already capitalism. Factories would function as labour cooperatives but capitalist cooperatives. This would liquidate the nationalisation and the planning of the economy.

Imperialism has been much cleverer than we thought. Their policy isn't only to enrich the NEPman but to attack as inefficient the state bureaucracy, for hindering production. That every factory with workers, technicians and foremen form a cooperative and negotiate directly with imperialism, which would give credit, technology, anything they need, even a market for their products. This way the economy becomes dependent and the country a semi-colony. The great slogan of imperialism will be that workers own their factories. Look what an insidious thing: colonise a country on behalf of the worker-owned businesses. Yugoslavia has progressed much in this regard.

Turning to a more political arena, would you talk about the possibilities, the prospects of the political revolution, i.e., of overthrowing the bureaucracy and establishing a workers' democracy?

Trotsky is the great Marxist theoretician who poses the need for a revolution that preserves the fundamental achievements of October and overthrows its main internal enemy, the bureaucracy, to return to workers' democracy. This is, besides a point in our program, a theoretical and political hypothesis. You know the historical process confirms some hypothesis and refutes others. We believe this has been confirmed because there have been political revolutions, some of an extraordinary magnitude although they haven't succeeded. The political revolution is a fact of contemporary political life, as evidenced by Hungary and Poland in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the Polish process started in 1970–1971 with the shipyards' strike and which, in my opinion, is still ongoing after passing through several ebbs and flows.

There are other facts, perhaps less spectacular but, in my opinion, revolutionary: the existence of semi-legal opposition groups in Hungary; the freedom of Baluka⁹ in Poland. These are gains of the masses against the totalitarian state, product of insurrections such as the Hungarian, Czech or Polish. In many of these countries, there are opposition groups which meet, discuss, publish samizdat¹⁰ and are tolerated by the governments.

Thus it seems to me inevitable that the workers' and mass mobilisation will develop in the bureaucratic workers' states. In the beginning, perhaps, they will have a reformist character but the time will come when they'll consider the overthrow of the bureaucracy, the democratic reconstruction of the unions and the soviets or the founding of new organisations such as Solidarity in Poland.

8 See *Correo Internacional* No 13, October 1985.

9 **Edmund Baluka** (1933–2015), leader of the great strike of the Gdansk shipyards (1970–1971), went into exile after the defeat of the movement. Returned to Poland to restart the strike process, was arrested and later released.

10 **Samizdat** ("own publications", as opposed to Gosizdat, "State Publications", the official Soviet publishing) is the generic name for underground dissident literature in the USSR.

Isn't there a danger of the political revolution leading to the restoration of capitalism? I ask this because, for example, Walesa is a man of the Catholic Church.

He also serves the bureaucracy and he addresses Jaruzelski with the utmost respect, as when he was his superior during military service. Going directly to the question, I would say yes, it's a possibility. Any step forward carries its dangers but not for this we must stop giving it. After all, Argentina, after gaining independence from Spain, was in danger of becoming a British colony. Like any fight it can end in different ways: in a win, a draw, in the destruction of the country, there are many variations. If I said any revolutionary process leads inexorably to the triumph of the masses I would betray my methodological convictions. The peasant revolution in Germany was defeated and virtually destroyed the country. The French Revolution caused a tremendous famine in the early years and also the Russian Revolution.

In the abstract, you can't rule out that imperialism take advantage of the struggles between the workers' movement and the bureaucracy to invade the country if the international situation and their own internal situation allow it. If you ask me whether that's possible, I must answer yes.

Historically, the process of political revolution is lethal for imperialism. Imagine Solidarity took power in Poland and Walesa, at the head of the process, attempts to restore capitalism. This would necessarily happen amidst a tremendous popular mobilisation which would impose the broadest democracy, with the right to form parties, discuss, publish, etc. Besides, it would originate a worldwide anti-imperialist revolutionary mobilisation, whose dynamics would tend toward socialism with democracy. To give an example, the French Revolution was initiated by the Mirabeau sector, who wanted to reach a constitutional monarchy to guarantee loans to the king, and it ended up liquidating the monarch.

That's why imperialism underpinned Jaruzelski in Poland, gave him loans...

Exactly. What's, for imperialism, the importance of the bureaucrat? He's the man with whom they can negotiate the entry of an IMF loan to the workers' state and force it, after imposing an austerity plan, to pay. He's the man who signs an agreement for "world peace", which in practice means that Castro pressures the leadership the Salvadoran guerrillas to negotiate with the bourgeoisie and the US and don't even dream of making a "new Cuba" in El Salvador.

This is what imperialism loses if the bureaucrat falls. It also loses its most important ideological argument to deceive the workers in their own country, which is the lack of democracy in the totalitarian workers' states.

Something similar happens with the unions in capitalist countries. For the bourgeoisie, it's imperative the bureaucracy lead them, not currents of class or revolutionary.

Therefore in Argentina, we saw how the candidate Alfonsín denounced the lack of democracy in the unions but when he came to government he ran to the aid of the bureaucrats.

Yes, although he has differences with the bureaucrats, for a bourgeois government there is nothing worse than democratised unions.

A point remains that bothers me in our proposition of political revolution. I don't see objective forces existing in the workers' states that are in favour of democratisation. I think it lacks the subjective factor, the party, to raise the issue of workers' democracy.

The revolutionary party is the subjective factor necessary to direct the political revolution, giving it a dynamic, preventing it from falling into the hands of imperialism: so far, we agree. I disagree with the statement that there are no objective forces. For example, in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, there were meetings in factories; it posed the topic of internal democracy in the Communist Party.

Regarding the Czechoslovak revolution of 1968, Lambert¹¹ has a theory that the Russian army invaded because the Soviet bureaucracy was terrified of the democratisation process. It seems the Czech CP congress was about to amend its Statutes in favour of more democratic rules. The Russian

¹¹ Pierre Lambert (1920-2008) was a French Trotskyist leader.

intervention was because of the advancement of workers' democracy, more than any other factor of the revolutionary mobilisation. They didn't invade Poland because they could control this process through the CP, led by Gomulka. I insist this is Lambert's theory, I can't confirm or deny it, but it seems well founded. I confess I never attributed great importance to this congress of the Czech CP. Lambert considered it very important because they met in the middle of the revolutionary process. And this happened because there are powerful objective tendencies in favour of workers' democracy. If there's something the masses, intellectuals, and workers in these countries suffer is the lack of democracy. If the goal of 10 million members of Solidarity isn't democracy, what is it? We tend to see only what a few thousand Catholic leaders of Solidarity think and overlook what 10 million think and express in action.

Solidarity is a great movement of all Polish workers for democracy. And it's democratic: Walesa makes manoeuvres like a good bureaucrat and Vatican man but he must impose his positions by voting.

I don't believe in historical categories imposed from the outside, i.e., that don't arise from the masses. I believe in the political revolution because it's an objective process: the masses of the USSR suffer deeply from lack of democracy, which produces alienation. All these countries are the realm of bureaucratic oppression and alienation, although the direct exploitation of the working masses by the bourgeoisie is gone. The role of the revolutionary party is to lead the democratic mobilisation, give it a program, and prevent it from degenerating into bourgeois democracy.

CHAPTER 5

The Revolutionary Workers' State

In the previous conversation we talked about the bureaucratic Workers' states, today I would like to touch upon the revolutionary workers' state. Suppose, specifically, that our party takes power: how would the state be? What are the main differences with the workers' states led the by bureaucracy?

The first difference is that we're opposed to say our party takes power, it's a dangerous statement. If a guerrilla army or an opportunistic workers' party leads a revolution and takes power, we can support this process as very progressive but programmatically we're against this army or workers' party taking power as an organisation in itself.

Our program calls for the capture of power by the working class through its organisations, which should involve all class parties and in these organisations we'll try to have a majority to lead them. This is our first major difference with the bureaucracy.

The second, which springs from it, is we don't want to build a totalitarian state, absolutely controlled by our party but quite the opposite. We want to replace the bourgeois parliament with more democratic bodies, which may be trade unions, factory committees, soviets, in short, organisations the working class creates. Besides, we'll encourage the creation of organisations such as cooperatives, neighbourhood organisations, etc., where democracy reigns permanently.

Some advocates of the existing workers' states say in them is there is a "grassroots" or "mass" democracy — thus they call it — because there are neighbourhood organisations that discuss local problems such as garbage collection or the paving of streets. Make no mistake: there's no democracy if it doesn't reign the right to form tendencies, factions, and parties in all mass organisations and institutions of the central state to discuss and resolve all problems, from the national economic plan to building a neighbourhood road, from the Constitution to a minor law.

Would there be a parliament?

Yes, but a workers' parliament.

What would be the difference with a bourgeois parliament?

First, it would concentrate the three powers of the State, not just the legislative. In bourgeois democracy, the three powers are separated because this serves the interests of the ruling class. For example, if parliament passes a law favourable to the proletariat, the executive and justice powers are there to delay its implementation, lock it in a thousand different ways, to prevent its application. Parliament is susceptible to pressure from the masses; the other two powers were created to offset these pressures. We want a flexible institution that allows immediate implementation of the workers' resolutions. So we want the executive and justice as branches of the workers' legislative power.

Does it mean that at the head of the Socialist Argentine Republic— or whatever it may be called— there will be a body like a congress of trade unions or workers councils?

Exactly. The proletariat of each country will decide what kind of body they want. That will depend on the local situation. For example, when a large part of world Trotskyism raised the slogan

of “popular organisations” or “united front parties” in Bolivia, we were against. The only mass organisations that can take power in Bolivia, for now, are the unions and the Bolivian Workers Central (COB), so we proposed “all power to COB”. We’re against ghost organisations, non-existing in reality, existing only in the imagination of leaders like Guillermo Lora.¹ So far no ghost body has taken power. We don’t believe in ghosts, least of all in politics. The workers’ movement should get the organisational forms they want and that match their traditions and experience.

Such as the workers and soldiers commissions and tenant organisations in the Portuguese revolution of 1974?

Of course, or as the Soviets in Germany in 1918. But after the revolution of 1918, soviets didn’t resurface in Germany and factory committees did appear. Trotsky said at the time the CP should forget the soviets and try to be strong in the commissions to seize power through them. We always privilege the most representative form that the grassroots of the workers’ movement has given itself.

Returning to the differences with bourgeois democracy, the workers’ parliament would elect a Commission or a President who would be responsible to parliament and revocable at any time. At the same time, parliament members would be accountable to their constituents, who could also revoke them instantly.

The second big difference is, then, that elected officials wouldn’t meet fixed periods but may be revoked at the time deemed necessary by the workers.

Could everybody vote? The priests, for example? The Russian revolution took away the vote from the priests.

It depends on the situation. In this, there are no a priori laws. There may be priests closely linked to the working class, supporters of workers’ power, why should we take away their vote? The village priests played an important role in the French Revolution.

The priests?!

Sure. All the papers of expropriation of the nobility were drafted based on the reports of the parishes. Each parish sent to the Convention its program, indicating what should be done, who should be expropriated. They’re extraordinary documents, as an expression of popular will. And they were very well prepared by village priests, those starving petty clerics who hated their bishops and cardinals.

In this, there are no prescriptions. The Russian Revolution established at first that every worker’s vote was worth five peasant votes to counteract the fact the peasants were the vast majority of the population. Workers’ democracy decides and we abide, even if what it resolves is opposite to our positions or program.

Wouldn’t such a system be chaotic?

Why? Is bourgeois parliament chaotic?

But the bourgeoisie imposes order by the army.

I’ll answer with an example. When I was young I lived the process of the creation of neighbourhood football clubs, which was more or less since 1910 to the late 1950s. In those years thousands of football clubs were created in Argentina, it was a mass phenomenon of social organisation. Also in this period, unions were created and, before the rise of film, hundreds and hundreds of independent theatres in neighbourhoods.

Those clubs were conducting a very effective activity, organised football teams and championships, dances in the neighbourhoods, everything. And their running was very democratic. Management committees emerged from elections, there was the right to form lists, even political parties could intervene and indeed they did when they were interested in winning a club directorate. From some of them, the big clubs of today were born. And that great democracy didn’t stop them conducting their business or a few of them becoming true sporting powers.

¹ **Guillermo Lora** (1922–2009) was leader of the Revolutionary Workers Party of Bolivia.

Returning to the workers' state, for me, it's about having confidence in the class, in the workers. If they could bring the sport to so many thousands of young people and democratically organise social and sporting life of their neighbourhoods, why wouldn't they be able to bring that same democracy to the State when they take in their hands the planning of the political, economic and social life of the nation?

In the Portuguese revolution of 1974, thousands of workers, soldiers and tenants committees were formed. This process was quite chaotic.

In a sense, yes, because it destroyed all forms of formal democracy and of government authoritarianism. But the fact the tenants' committees distributed housing to homeless families was an example of democracy. The problem is that the process wasn't developed and it's precisely here that our party has a big job to do. The revolutionary Marxist party tries to win a majority in the committee to develop the mobilisation, so the process won't abort, as in Portugal.

It's said the system of parliamentary democracy, in which we elect deputies to parliament every two years and a president every six, is superior to any dictatorship. If you trust the people will know how to exercise democracy every six years, why couldn't they do a daily exercise of that democracy, with elections of delegates and formation of strong organisations at all levels?

For me, it wouldn't be chaos but an order under an active, daily democracy, through unions, cooperatives, factory organisations, etc. In this process, it's necessary to create, instil in workers the reflex of workers' democracy.

How would you synthesise, then, the main differences between bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy?

Well, the Argentine Constitution says the people only govern through their elected representatives. These representatives, even though they may betray the country or go against the mandate of those who elected them are immovable. In some countries, they exert their function for two or four years, in Argentina the Senators last nine years in office. Judges may be appointed for life by the executive and the legislature, not elected by the people. All this besides the division of the three powers, as noted earlier.

Workers' democracy is the opposite. Not only links the three powers in the legislative branch but the people exercise power directly. For example, workers in a neighbourhood have an assembly and what they resolve is done. All officers are elected and he who doesn't fulfil his mandate can be removed at any time. That's why it isn't an indirect but direct democracy.

What do you think of the thesis by Mandel's disciples, according to which in Cuba there's a great "grassroots" democracy, i.e. organisms which freely discuss local problems, and bureaucracy at the central state level?

The author of this thesis is Jean-Pierre Beauvais, a French disciple of Mandel. He says Cuba is a contradictory phenomenon. I disagree: I think workers' democracy has contradictions but not on this level. It may happen, for example, that workers at a factory ask for extraordinary wage increases inconsistent with the national economic plan approved democratically by the appropriate state agency. Alternatively, that a particular party relentlessly criticise the plan as wrong. Those would be contradictions within the overall structure of workers' democracy.

What I don't accept is a way to define a regime under which a portion would be democratic and another totalitarian, or a part revolutionary and another counter-revolutionary. This approach is unacceptable for a Marxist. Every phenomenon is total and has an essential definition. First, we need to define the essence and then see what the contradictions are.

What is essential in Cuba? Consider an example. In 1968, the USSR invaded Czechoslovakia. Fidel Castro supported the invasion. The Cuban workers who opposed the invasion, did they have the right to appear on national television to condemn it? Could they call for a national referendum to determine Cuban politics at the time? Did they have the right to file the motion, "The people and government of Cuba manifest their unconditional solidarity with the Czechoslovakian workers' movement and repudiate the criminal Soviet invasion", and could the Cuban workers decide with

a vote? Not at all: the politics of Cuba was what Castro resolved in his circle of 10 or 15 friends in the Politburo, to support the bureaucracy of the USSR. Therefore, I say there's no contradiction in the level posed by Beauvais: Cuba is a bureaucratic, totalitarian workers' state.

Suppose your party has a majority in the central state body and in a democratic vote you lose the majority and have to give up the government. Would you?

I think so. Again, I refer to a real case. Lenin had promised the Bolshevik Party in power would respect national self-determination of the peoples who were part of the tsarist empire. One country subject to this rule was Finland, which, in turn, was an important centre of the proletariat and the Bolshevik Party. After the October Revolution, the Constituent Assembly met in Finland and decided by a majority, against the Bolshevik position, that the country would be independent and not form part of the Soviet Union. Lenin respected this democratic decision he didn't share.

Would this democracy be extended to non-worker parties?

Yes, I see no reason for not awarding them legality. There is no reason to give it in advance either: we don't know whether they will be fascist or will engage in counter-revolutionary actions. If they don't, I repeat, there's no reason to deny them legality. We'll respect all workers democratic expressions, even if they support a reactionary bourgeois current.

Specifically, in Argentina, would you give legality to Alsogaray's party?

Maybe, if he has any popular representation. It's quite different if people like Alsogaray or Martinez de Hoz asks for legality and they only have the support of 0.01 per cent of the population: there I suspect they won't get it. But if it's followed by a sector of the population, albeit a minority, I'd vote for giving them legality. Workers' democracy has to be broader than bourgeois democracy.

But with this, aren't you proposing an unlimited democracy as postulated by Mandel, against whom you polemicized?²

The subject of that controversy was whether this kind of democracy is possible as an immediate prospect. It's a theoretical problem, a hypothesis. We didn't discuss whether our programmatic goal is to provide total freedom, especially to workers. A worker, by the mere fact of being one, will be able to say whatever he wants, criticise the regime with all hardness and on television and newspapers. All citizens are entitled to the broadest rights, always provided they express some section of the people.

The discussion with Mandel is different. We believe every country where workers take power will be immediately and relentlessly attacked by imperialism; the workers' power, before settling itself, will have to go through a tremendous civil war, probably combined with external attacks. The question is whether at this stage unrestricted democratic freedoms to everyone can be granted. For example, according to the criteria given by Mandel, the Sandinista government should invite the "contras" to go to Managua, with all guarantees to open branches and express themselves through the press. In the event of armed conflict, you couldn't kill a "contra" but would have to arrest him for trial, ensuring he has counsel. And in El Salvador, you should provide the same guarantees to Major D'Aubuisson and his fascist thugs.

We argue, against Mandel, that in this stage there are no conditions to give these total rights and the main "culprit" of this is imperialism. Look at Nicaragua: the Sandinista government neither convened a constituent assembly nor expropriated the bourgeoisie, as it should have done, in our opinion, but called bourgeois style elections and left intact the bourgeois property. However, imperialism attacked it through all means. The Yankees prefer regimes like the Salvadoran, Pinochet, or the Guatemalan, they claim they're regimes more democratic than the Nicaraguan and give them all kinds of loans, while simultaneously they arm and train the Nicaraguan "contras".

2 The central documents of this controversy are *Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Socialist Democracy*, adopted by the United Secretariat, and *The Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (available for downloading from www.nahuelmoreno.org), presented by the Bolshevik Faction, then a current of that organisation, later a precursor of the International Workers League (Fourth International).

Another difference with Mandel is that his document, written in a very hard stage of the world class struggle, doesn't even mention the possibility of imperialist invasions, civil wars, wars between states. We did predict these events and said it was necessary to adapt our goal to provide democratic rights to the need to defeat the bourgeoisie and imperialism. We like very much that the Sandinista government imposed martial law in the provinces attacked by pro-imperialist guerrillas from their bases in Honduras and ordered to shoot the "contras" on site. Mandel's document paints an idyllic situation in which there's no martial law or anything like that.

This armed attack by imperialism, didn't condemn the revolution to bureaucratisation?

The imperialist attack is a factor in favour of bureaucratisation, no doubt, but we shouldn't confuse the clipping of the rights with bureaucratisation. Consider again the example of the Russian Revolution.

In the first year of the revolution, before the civil war, democratic rights were very broad. For example, the Kadet party published its press and its positions in the soviets, even when it was a mortal enemy of workers' power; their positions were similar to those of the Radical right in Argentina under Peronism. There were also artistic and scientific freedoms. Lenin didn't like modern literary and plastic currents but he never spoke of taking away the freedom to express and publish them.

Suddenly, all those political, artistic, scientific rights were cut because of the civil war and foreign invasions. At one point, the revolution was reduced to a rather small area around Moscow, while the rest of Russia fell into the hands of the counter-revolutionary armies. It was then that the Bolshevik government restricted the rights of the supporters of the counter-revolution. However, Lenin and Trotsky always insisted on the temporary nature of these measures. This was how Martov,³ a Menshevik and relentless critic of government — which didn't prevent him from opposing the counter-revolution during the civil war — had complete freedom to present his positions in the soviets, once the counter-revolution was defeated. The controversies between Martov and Lenin in 1921 were tremendous. And this happened despite the fact the country was plunged into famine and economic catastrophe caused by the war.

This means that the Russian was the only revolution which imposed workers' democracy...

Let's be precise: it was the only one among those which succeeded. In the Spanish revolution, a great democracy reigned at first, encouraged by the anarchists, the POUM,⁴ the Trotskyists, even the Socialist Left. All organisations had broad freedoms in the Republic until the Stalinists were able to crush the anarchists in the year the civil war started and eliminated it. Anyway, the Spanish revolution was defeated by Franco, so it's useless to speculate whether it would have bureaucratised if it had succeeded. Also, the German and Hungarian revolutions of 1918 were based on self-determined democratic workers' organisations.

What about the post-war revolutions, weren't they all bureaucratised?

They already came bureaucratised before taking power. Stalinist parties, which brought their organisational methods into the state, led some. This is the case in China. Others, like Cuba, had at their head guerrilla armies; in these, the commander of the guerrillas set policy positions as part of the military decisions. The result was the same.

The question, then, is whether it's true, as some authors say, that the revolution is doomed inexorably to become bureaucratic.

3 **Julius Martov** (1873–1923) was one of the early leaders of the Russian Social Democracy and co-director, with Lenin, of its newspaper *Iskra* (Spark). From the split of the party in the Congress of 1903, he was a prominent leader of the Menshevik wing and opposed the October Revolution.

4 **Workers Party of Marxist Unification** (POUM) resulted from the unification of Workers and Peasants Bloc with a current split from the Spanish section of the International Left Opposition, the forerunner of the Fourth International. Andres Nin (1892-1937) was one of the most important leaders of the party but the real leader was Joaquin Maurin, a prisoner at the start of the civil war, who was a personal friend of Trotsky who distanced himself politically from him when he spoke in favour of the Popular Front. He was Minister of Justice of the Generalitat of Catalonia in 1936. The Stalinists murdered him in 1937.

I would formulate it differently: whether the proletariat can historically take power to establish a regime of workers' democracy. At this point the answer has to be hypothetical, it can't be absolute. All I can say is that the alternative for humanity is either socialism with workers' democracy or barbarism.

Now, if you ask me what the most likely scenario is in my opinion, I must say I see a working class increasingly educated, of a higher level to manage the state democratically. There's no reason to believe it cannot overcome the levels of democracy and revolutionary activity achieved by the Russian, German or, in general, European proletariat.

The Polish working class, with Solidarity, has set a high example of democracy. We know Walesa is a kind of Trojan horse into the organisation but what's essential is that important issues are resolved by voting, and Walesa has been in trouble after losing a few. It seems at one point he wanted to dissolve the organisation and couldn't.

Another example was the great worker and student mobilisation in France, in 1968. Everyone could express their positions, from Sartre, who was neo-Maoist, to even the Trotskyists, who played a leading role in the barricades.

In Portugal, our comrades, who were few and very young, got a big house to install as their headquarters. They went to the regiments, harangued the soldiers and went with them to expropriate the houses of the aristocracy to distribute among the inhabitants of the slums. There was a great workers' and popular democracy.

Also in Nicaragua, there was much democracy in the early days of the Sandinista revolution.

Yes, unions were founded everywhere. The Simon Bolivar Brigade⁵ was free to act in any part of the country, form unions, have headquarters.

All these examples we have given, from the Russian to the Nicaraguan Revolution, are just samples of what may happen in the future. For me, it's just a matter of the working class resuming its traditions. Here is where we enter the realm of hypothesis. Some argue that Portugal, Nicaragua, or Poland are the death throes of a process started by the working class many years ago — the one of direct workers' democracy— and which has expired. I would argue the opposite — that the process tends to develop more and more. A single revolutionary triumph imposing workers' democracy will have a tremendous demonstration effect because the working class will access a far superior quality of life than what they currently have.

What will happen to art under the regime of workers' democracy? Will it have more freedom to express itself?

I refer again to the example of the Russian Revolution. It's no coincidence, for example, that Isadora Duncan had lived and worked in the Soviet Union: the revolution in its time attracted the great artists of the world. One of the most tragic consequences of Stalinism was the persecution of artistic currents, to enthrone an official art.

The great task of democratic self-determination of the working class is the transformation of society. It's a socio-political task, focused primarily on economic, not scientific or artistic factors. For us, there isn't a workers' art or science, nor an official art or science of the ruling party. On the contrary, the workers' state must give full freedom to the scientific and artistic schools and this includes providing the material for them to work and express themselves. In this area, freedom must be unlimited.

Does this include freedom of the press?

5 The **Simon Bolivar Brigade of Internationalist Fighters**, comprising militants from various Latin American countries in support of the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979, took part in many battles that led to the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship by the Sandinistas. Although its centre of activity was the Atlantic zone, where the FSLN hadn't arrived, some of its members were in the first columns that reached Managua and took Somoza's bunker. After the victory, they dedicated themselves to promoting the creation of trade unions and the labour federation. It was politically driven by the Bolshevik Faction and its Colombian section, the Socialist Workers Party. The Sandinista government of Nicaragua expelled them when the Brigade tried to promote a policy of development of the mobilisation of the masses for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

Yes.

But isn't it conditioned by the strength or representativeness of the parties or schools of thought?

I refuse to set standards through my answers. If we say the working class in power must grant the widest democracy, it will be them who will decide how to ensure the freedom of the press.

For me, the most absolute freedom of speech and press is a formidable weapon in the hands of the working class, as important as the development of science. For the government of the working class and the revolutionary party that leads it, it's a matter of life and death to know the currents of opinion that exist and to have truthful information of what is happening in the country and the world.

What does it mean truthful information?

It's a very important question because a government bureaucrat could try to censor a story or opinion he doesn't like with the excuse that "it isn't true". For the workers' movement, for a revolutionary party, the truth arises from the clash of opinions, including the right to lie. Freedom of the press means that a newspaper can say what it wants. Otherwise, there's censorship. If a newspaper lies, another has the opportunity to prove it and the public will decide which one is telling the truth. We must allow the free play of competition journalism for the readers to decide which one is the most truthful, agile, entertaining publication. It isn't the State who must decide.

What about religion?

I think you should respect religious freedom but, of course, without the State giving a single penny to the priests and the Church.

That is, the parishioners themselves will keep them financially.

I think, it almost certainly will be so. The workers' state will decide this. All I can say is the cult will be a private matter. In this sense, the Church will be in the same situation as a sport or literary club.

Does that allow the existence of schools run by priests or nuns?

Ah, not that, not at all. Education is like the mail service or foreign trade. They're institutions of vital importance that should be nationalised; they can't and shouldn't be in private hands.

But why believers couldn't have their own school?

Because everyone in the country should be educated according to the plans and programs the workers' power democratically resolves. Education is a task the State cannot share or delegate to anyone, least of all the churches, which for us who are atheists, are an institution and an ideology at the service of the exploiters.

What if the "workers' parliament" democratically resolved by a majority that priests can have their own school?

We would abide by this decision, in dissent. Therein, lies the essence of workers' democracy: majority decisions and abide by what is voted.

There's something that concerns many people: would the workers' state allow the free flow of people in and out of the country?

It would do a lot more than that. It would try to sign agreements with as many countries as possible so citizens could travel without a passport or visa, just by presenting their identity card. It's the opposite of what happens today in almost every country in the world. For example, to exit Argentina you must renew your passport every two years. A counterexample is the European Economic Community: a citizen of one of the European Union countries can travel to any other, live, work, study, just presenting a valid identity card. No other region in the world offers so much freedom in this sense as the EEC, we have to admit. Something similar happens between Argentina and its neighbours but is more limited because there's only the right to travel, not to work and live permanently.

The latest chapter in Trotsky's autobiography is called "The planet without a visa". There he recounts how he spent several years in exile in Turkey, trying to get a visa to live in different countries: France, England, etc. Germany even denied him a visa to receive medical treatment. We'll remove this monstrosity, so no one again has to write something similar.

How will the military organisation be? Will there be a professional army?

As long as there's a danger of war, the regular army will be inevitable. War requires scientific knowledge, which, in turn, requires professional training. This ranges from the most basic — to figure out how many hours a day can a man go carrying a given load — to the most complicated: modern weapons, rocketry, or aviation. You might as well ask whether there will be accountants in the Ministry of Economy, or engineers in the steel mills.

How would it differ from a bourgeois army?

In that great political freedom would reign. The officers and soldiers could take part in political parties; there would be political education and discussion in the barracks. Workers' organisations would exert their control over the armed forces. The soldiers would also have their control agencies. I speak of political control, not military. For example, if a group of officers talked of a coup, soldiers' committees could report them and even stop them.

Would there be military service?

Probably yes but it wouldn't be a traumatic event as it is now. Where possible' military training would take place in the workplace itself, under workers' and people's control. It would be a matter of not moving the soldier from where he lives and works.

Did you know that in Spain military regulations require citizens to do their military service 300 kilometres away from where they live?

Of course, so the soldier is alien to the local population, he doesn't feel bound by his friends or family, especially if he happens to be sent to suppress a demonstration. We think the opposite should happen; the soldier must be as close as possible to where he lives and works.

To conclude this topic, what is the role of the revolutionary party after taking power?

Well, I was afraid you wouldn't ask. I already partly answered in my previous answers but there are aspects I want to highlight.

The existence of a party like ours, which vindicates workers' democracy, expropriation of the bourgeoisie, and the permanent mobilisation of the working class is a necessary condition for the development of the revolutionary process. If a reformist party takes power, a party which doesn't believe in the development of the world revolution, which doesn't believe the great task is to defeat imperialism in the world, and that for this the workers' republic should make maximum sacrifices, it will create a sharp contradiction, a crisis. I think it would resolve quickly; the power would quickly return into the hands of the revolutionary party but the fact is there's a possibility that during a period the power stays in the hands of a centrist or opportunist party, not as extreme as ours whose eyes are always placed in the defeat of world imperialism.

This is the central hub of all the answers I have tried to give today because we believe that to defeat world imperialism it's necessary to win over the workers in the imperialist countries. And for this, we should shock the conscience of those workers, convincing them the socialist future will be infinitely superior to imperialism. We must find a way to make them overcome this backward consciousness, distorted by the example of so-called socialist countries with their totalitarian regimes. We resume the campaign of the Third International, which could convince large segments of the world proletariat the only solution is socialism and the defeat of imperialism. We must insist tirelessly in the ultra-democratic yet revolutionary character of our program because this hits the consciousness of a critical sector of the world's workers. We must, in short, convince the American proletariat there will be a lot more democracy if they take power than if the power remains in the hands of the Democrat-Republican oligarchy.

CHAPTER 6

The Militant and Daily Life

It's said the Leninist party, with its centralised structure, the almost military discipline, is outdated. In Europe, especially, large sections of the left oppose such party structure. What would you say to those who think that way?

First, you shouldn't confuse the Leninist party with the caricature Stalinism has made of it. These currents you mention reflect the disgust Stalinist parties provoke. They have swallowed the fairy tale that Stalinism is the continuation of Leninism when in fact it's the exact opposite. It's true they retain some formal similarities, such as structuring the party in cells, permanent work teams, although lately Stalinist parties are losing this feature. The definition of militant as a person performing party activity and belonging to an organism where he discusses the political line and party activity is typical of Leninism.

I would like to say in passing and going a little outside the strict frame of the subject, that this Leninist conception originated the first division of Russian Marxism in Bolshevik and Menshevik wings but it was overcome after 1905 when a congress of the unified party adopted Lenin's formula. Thereafter the division between the two wings persisted but referring to differences in the interpretation of the Russian Revolution, which became increasingly irreconcilable. This was the root cause that separated the two tendencies of Russian Marxism.

Returning to the question, we should note military discipline is part of the Stalinist caricature that sees the party as an organisation in which the highest rank determines the policy and activity while they restrict the rank and file to obey without question. It's clear that no worker or intellectual sympathetic to revolutionary positions like the idea of belonging to a party in which the number one obligation is to obey.

In Lenin's party, there was always broad democracy, especially in grassroots organisations. The workers felt comfortable in it and free to discuss and criticise. No one would get into his head that a militant could be repressed or forced to criticise himself for his political positions. There were arguments, sometimes very strong, but fraternal, without repression.

Were there ever expulsions from the party?

There were sectors and currents that sustained deeply antagonistic positions with the party leadership. Some separated from it, which isn't the same as being expelled for disagreeing, but most of these sectors remained in the party and their spokesmen kept their positions. Therefore, I say freedom was almost absolute.

In the Bolshevik Party discipline, i.e., that the entire party was actively involved in the class struggle with the same policy, was combined with genuine internal democracy. History proves this: none of the major decisions was taken unanimously and I mean decisions as important as taking power.

Some discussions were held in the party newspaper: for example, the discussion about the Soviet economy, in which Bukharin, Preobrazhensky and other great theorists and leaders participated. This happened in the 1920s before Stalin completely controlled the party.

It's interesting the example of Zinoviev and Kamenev in the October Revolution...

Indeed, both were opposed to the seizure of power in 1917. That was their right. The problem was that when the party's Central Committee voted the insurrection, they revealed the vote to the public indirectly through certain statements to the bourgeois dailies. With this not only did they violate the elementary rule that a vote will be abided but they also put in danger nothing less than the victory of the revolution. So Lenin called them traitors and scabs and demanded their expulsion. Any worker understands the correctness of this attitude. If a factory assembly votes by a majority to strike out, whoever doesn't comply is a scab.

Anyway, later Kamenev showed great loyalty to the party, he placed himself under the command of the Central Committee and actively took part in the insurrection. Not so Zinoviev, who remained on the sidelines.

Later on, Lenin summoned them to take on some of the most important tasks of the revolution. Zinoviev was the President of the Third International during the first years and both were members of the Politburo, the top leadership of the ruling party.

That was the Bolshevik Party: everything is discussed, even publicly in the pages of *Pravda*.

How would you define the party as a human group?

Years ago, when I dedicated myself to studying sociology, I read a book by Georges Gurvitch, who was a great admirer of Nathaniel Moreno, the inventor of psychodrama as a method of psychotherapy.

Based on Moreno and other psychologists and sociologists, Gurvitch says there are three types of groups. This is a purely sociological classification: how man organises himself since he exists on earth. Some groups are sectarian, closed, with despotic leaders. Others are almost love affairs. There's a third type of group that brings together the best qualities of both: it's very democratic yet dynamic, homogeneous. In his description of the groups' morphology, let's call it this way, Gurvitch said there's a leading sector, also a subject who is blamed for everything, things which I have seen in reality.

Since I read Gurvitch, I believe that the Bolshevik Party corresponds perfectly to the third type: a solid group, strong, dynamic, very united and fraternal, as well as democratic.

Some see us from the outside as a monolithic bloc...

Yes, or as automatons. I have heard that in a university when our comrades arrive, militants from other currents make gestures like imitating robots. This doesn't scare me. It's just a caricature of a virtue of ours, which is to hit as one man around the slogans voted. They want to imply that among us, within the party, there are no fraternal relations and great discussion.

Fraternity, trust, is another essential element. It's the mortar that binds the party. This trust between revolutionists can't exist without democracy, what unites us all is that everyone feels that others are their comrades in struggle.

Why is it so important the disciplined operation, in bloc?

History has been already shown this. The discipline, the centralisation, the militants who give entirely of themselves to the party, are characteristics you can accept or reject, love or hate, but there hasn't been a single revolution that hasn't been led by an organism of this type. A lax, not disciplined organism, not Jacobin, can't take power. In this sense, we can say the party is democratic in the discussion and works as an army in action.

To question centralism is to question efficiency itself. If an anarchist tells me he rejects any form of centralisation, I answer, I respect his opinion but the discussion happens at two levels: one, what is wanted; the other, whether history has ruled in favour of centralism or anarchy in terms of efficiency. No revolution of this century has triumphed without a high grade of discipline and centralism. It's logical because it's a question of facing the State with its army, its police, its whole apparatus.

Does this discipline exist in the bourgeois parties?

No, except in Bonapartist parties, right-wing nationalist movements, and fascist groups who want to make a counter-revolution. The traditional parties of the bourgeois regime don't have this feature. Nor do they need it, as they have all the institutions of the state apparatus working in their favour. They aren't fighting to gain power, or interested in changing the bourgeois democratic regime but rather in defending it. This operation, which allows the existence of different wings and permanent tendencies within the party, attracts the middle class and even certain sectors of the workers' movement which feel reflected in them. Of course, none of these parties has made a revolution, nor do they want a Nazi-Fascist style counter-revolution. I don't think the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States, or the British Conservative and even the Labour parties, want to run a fascist counter-revolution, let alone a workers' revolution. The workers' insurrection and armed struggle, or counter-revolutionary putsch, can only succeed if it's led by a centralised agency with an iron discipline.

Doesn't party discipline produce alienation?

I've argued on this issue with Mandel and Novack.¹ I have a debt with the comrades, to pose my positions in writing. I think in this alienated world the party plays a dis-alienating role. That is, a contradiction is created in the militant because society alienates and he lives in this society. The party gives you all the possibilities to combat alienation.

I get the impression many artists and scientists have a happy life individually. Because ultimately alienation comes down to that: it's the science of happiness or unhappiness of man caused by a social regime. I think some privileged sectors, very few in number, have managed to feel fulfilled, to live happily. If the first condition of dis-alienation is to lead a full life in which you enjoy what you do, I think not only the party but, sometimes, science and art also provide it.

The capitalist monopolistic system closes this possibility. Suppose, for example, a young guy who loves cinema and wants to make a film: it's almost impossible, of one thousand or two thousand candidates to film directors only one is successful.

The capitalist system works against the development of the qualities of the individual, whether natural or gained. Or they're used when serving its profits. The example of cinema also applies to any branch of art, science...

What about sports?

Also sports. There you have the great Argentine golfer Roberto de Vincenzo, who comes from a humble family. Golf is a sport of the rich but he was lucky to work as a caddy in a golf club and there he was discovered. How many thousands of young guys are there who are passionate about this sport, or another, and aren't as lucky as De Vincenzo?

This isn't the case of Gabriela Sabatini, the tennis player. At 14, she was pulled out from school, family, and friends, to make her cover the professional circuit. Between training, travel, and matches she doesn't have time for anything else. Thus sport entrepreneurs make millions of dollars. She also earns a lot of money but she becomes a monster who knows nothing else in life but playing tennis. Regardless of how much success she has in her career, she's heading for a personal crisis.

Okay, let's get back to the party...

Yes, I see the revolutionary party, with its internal democracy, its revolutionary program of permanent mobilisation, as the strongest support to combat alienation or, put another way, the safest way to achieve a measure of happiness and fulfilment.

Of course, I've known leftist groups, including Trotskyists, who were alienating. Somehow they reflected the alienation of capitalist society. For example, they forbid the female comrades to

¹ **George Novack** (1905–1992) was an American Marxist theorist and one of the founders of the Trotskyist movement in that country. His works include *The Origins of Materialism*, *Introduction to the logic of Marxism*, *Understanding History*.

have children or, on the contrary, they ordered them to have them. Sometimes they imposed very stringent rules of life.

This doesn't happen in parties strongly rooted in the working class, which take part in its life, which perceive their own strengths and weaknesses, they adapt to the class, try to lead it. Open to those militants is a tremendous potential for development that capitalist society denies them...

Look at our party. If one comrade shows talent as an orator or writer, he's encouraged to be so, to study and develop. Society teaches to lie, to hide what one thinks, not to see our own strengths and weaknesses. The party is a social control that allows us to discover ourselves and develop.

If a comrade proves to have great conditions for a task, he's driven to do it. We require no one to complete tasks he doesn't like unless he accepts them voluntarily. All this creates an atmosphere of camaraderie in the struggle.

What would you respond to those who say the militant loses his individuality?

That is quite the opposite. Individual creativity is developed, with social control which is the party. The bourgeois society also exerts a control but seeks the opposite effect: if the individual is a worker, the bourgeoisie is only interested in him producing gizmos for life, for example. For the Bolshevik party the individual is sacred; it always looks for ways to help him develop. And development in precisely the noblest activities of man: writing, speaking, organising, and fighting.

There's no work more alienating and brutalizing than work in the production line or in the mines. The miner works a lifetime to extract a few tons of coal. But if this miner is a revolutionary militant besides extracting coal with others he attempts to organise his co-workers to fight, produces flyers, makes exposés, in brief, he performs a range of human activities that make him happy. He may be very sad if he loses a fight but in any case, it's human joy or sorrow, not the animal feelings produced by alienating work.

There's a widespread understanding of the personal, intimate life of the militant is subject to party discipline. Put another way, the militant can't make a personal decision without the approval of the party.

That is absolutely false. The party doesn't get into the intimate life of anyone. Except, of course, if its safety is at stake. If someone believes that scabbing a strike or disclosing internal organisational issues to the police are personal matters, the party has a duty to defend itself. We prevent no one from studying or traveling, the party only requires the member to dutifully militate and fulfil the commitments he assumed. In this context, we all rejoice greatly when a comrade has success in his personal activities, be it study, sporting, or of any kind.

There's a fact that has caught the attention of fraternal observers attending meetings of the MAS and its sister parties in other countries: the atmosphere of laughter and joy that reigns in our meetings. Marx spoke of this in his time and one of my criticisms of Mandel and Novack is they're unaware of this quote and position by Marx. By this I mean the party member can and should be happy for the activity carried out along his comrades and therefore he can avoid being alienated to some degree, the one imposed by a monstrous society. It's a dynamic and contradictory relationship: a society that exploits and alienates; the party that dis-alienates.

Outside the party, there's a very different picture. It's said, for example, the party discourages members who want children because this diverts efforts which should be directed to political activity.

The first thing I have to say is that in my party everyone has children, there are many kids. I have children myself. If the revolution is delayed, we could say that we'll have a big party by simply reproduction, if we get the kids to become revolutionaries like their parents. Well, that's the first answer.

Now, as I said before, I have known organisations which prohibited the members to have children and severely controlled their personal life. Our concept is different. Of course, there are certain objective standards, which we all meet, but that's typical of all human groups, one can't be a member of a sports club, for example, if you don't pay your monthly fee and observe certain

standards of conduct. The militant complies with the rules of the party and does with his personal life whatever he wants.

Moving to another aspect of party life, I would like you to comment on something about proletarian morality, or party morality.

They aren't the same. Proletarian morality has to do with union activity: to follow the decisions of the assemblies, to take part in strikes, to show solidarity with the struggles in other companies, being a good workmate, not to be a scab or a pimp of the bosses. The proletarian morality seeks class cohesion in fighting and in everyday life, i.e., that the working class recognise itself and show solidarity.

Party morality responds to the needs of the party. It's much stricter. It's part of the workers' morality but has more extensive and specific requirements.

Let's see a recent example: the great English miners' strike. I have read there's a lot of anger with the miners of Nottingham district, who were scabbing the conflict. Then strike activists went there to convince them not to enter work, there were some clashes and government took advantage to repress activism saying the strike was "violent". Well, those scabs failed proletarian morality.

Let's suppose one of our comrades took part in this strike but without actively participating. We say of him he met proletarian morality but failed party morality, which demands party members to be the best activists, the bravest, the first to go forward when the situation needs it.

One can also speak of racial morality, among oppressed races. In South Africa, there's a very powerful and progressive black morality, expressed, for example, in neighbourhoods where blacks who collaborate with apartheid are killed, like black policemen. That's a very hard blow to the white regime.

Generally speaking, morality is a body of rules necessary for the proper functioning of any human grouping. In the case of the party, it means to comply with the resolutions taken. It also means being fraternal comrades because the party is a fraternity of fighters, of persecuted. Failure to do so is also a lack of party morality.

Would you say a party leader party fails party morality if he looks for personal wealth?

That is relative. There's a sociological study that shows many of the great Marxists leaders of this century came from the big bourgeoisie.

A huge contradiction happens in all the militants: they're part of society and, at the same time, they direct their militant activity to change it. This means that if Einstein entered our party, he wouldn't stop having his University life or buying all the books he needs, or not traveling to scientific conferences, for which he would need an income high enough.

I would argue a leader can't own a capitalist enterprise but also there can be exceptions. One is famous, it happened in the early Marxist movement: Engels was the manager of his father's factory but he used much of the money he earned to help Marx, who was very poor, so he could pursue his tasks and his studies without financial worries.

I insist these are exceptions. The rule is a leader shouldn't get rich, even less that he exploits workers as a capitalist.

And a rank and file member?

For the rank and file members, the criteria aren't as rigid but the problem is that all the militants, whether leaders or rank and file, suffer contradictions for living in society. We all know our worst enemies are the army and the police, who live trying to destroy us. Now, suppose that through our propaganda we win an officer for our ideas. At some point, we may ask that, instead of requesting retirement, he remain in the armed forces to win other officers. This militant lives a very sharp contradiction.

The same can happen if we win a priest. In the 1930s there was an American pastor, Edwin Muste, who was active with the Trotskyists who later formed the SWP. He was a much-disciplined

comrade but he kept going to the temple to officiate the rites. Thus, he militated for the opium of the people and, at the same time, for the party that wanted to liquidate this opium. They're personal contradictions that arise.

How does the party solve them?

First, the party isn't a psychiatric clinic but a political organisation. These contradictions are by-products of party affiliation; they're the subjective, psychological, aspect of the activity. The party doesn't have to have a direct policy to solve such problems. Its tasks are political.

For me, party activity generally causes a tendency towards the development of personal qualities and dis-alienation. If we compare my case with that of Muste, my youth was idealistic and partisan activity led me to conclusions of materialistic type. Muste, however, left the party and returned to the church although towards the end of his life he was a leader of the movement against the Vietnam War.

So, cases are individual but the party provides a means for the individual to develop his faculties. This, I insist, is a by-product of party activity, which is essentially political.

There are comrades who live from the party, right?

Yes, they're comrades who are always available to the party, have to travel, politically assist the different regional branches, or help in their development. It might be a comrade with great political or trade union experience, who the party sends to support a regional leadership when there is an event of great importance in the class struggle, a big strike, or a "Cordobazo".² The party press also needs comrades with exclusive dedication. There are others who aren't leaders but meet essential functions: the party can't do without a lawyer, accountant, clerks, in short, what we call the party apparatus.

How do they live? It's clear they can't be working eight hours a day...

From what the party pays them, this generally equals the average workers' wage. It can sometimes be a little more. In a country where wages are very low — for example, in Nicaragua where I believe it's about 12 dollars a month— this isn't enough for a leader who has to travel the country to serve different regions of the party. So we pay a little more or give them travel allowances. Now, in principle, we pay the average workers' wage for those comrades, who we call professionals.

Where do the funds come for that?

Basically, from the contributions of the militants themselves. One of the first lessons a comrade who comes to us learns is this is a worker's party which is supported thanks to that. For us, this is a moral and political issue of the first order, the monthly contribution. It's like union dues, every worker pays it, except that in our case the amount is voluntary, there are comrades who are better off than others and can contribute more.

Would it be the case of a parliamentarian of ours? Because in Argentina the salary of a parliamentarian is eight to nine times greater than the salary of a worker.

A comrade elected to parliament becomes a party professional, with a specific task. Then they're asked to contribute most of their parliamentary allowance and keep what they need to live.

This was the subject of much discussion in Peru, where our sister party had several parliamentarians. I was in favour of keeping an amount higher than the average workers' wage, and even take advantage of the facilities to buy a car and home with special credits the state gave. Other comrades were against and there was much discussion. If a workers delegation comes to pose a problem to one of our parliamentarians, it seems elementary that our comrade invites them with a coffee and he can do it in the parliament's cafeteria, albeit it's a bit more expensive. And for this, the average wage isn't enough.

² **Cordobazo** refers to an important civil uprising which happened in Argentina on 29 May 1969, in the city of Cordoba, one of the most important industrial cities of the country. Its most immediate consequence was the fall of the military dictatorship of Juan Carlos Onganía, and four years later, the return of democracy.

There are other problems to consider. For example, how do we help a comrade older than 40, an age at which it's very difficult to get work and due to his dedication and devotion to the party he has acquired no trade? Or, if the party direly needs money, we might ask a comrade coming from a bourgeois family to take care of the family business to provide a very high contribution. This is, to do what Engels did for a while.

Now, to solve these problems of social location of the comrades we're also democratic. The discussion in Peru was tremendous. The parliamentarian comrades were most self-conscious; they saw themselves like anti-party criminals for receiving a little more salary for their specific tasks. The important thing is that the discussion was done and everyone complied with what was resolved.

And what was resolved?

The comrades will earn a bit more than the average worker's wage. I mentioned all these cases as examples of the various contradictions plaguing the party.

It's clear the vices of society in some way come to the party. For example, male chauvinism. Many female comrades believe there's oppression of women within the party. Do you agree with them?

For me, yes there is. Obviously, a male chauvinist worker won't stop being it from morning to night by the mere fact of entering the party. I'll tell you a story of the Portuguese revolution. Among the top leaders of Portuguese Maoism, there was a couple, excellent militants both, especially her, who was just brilliant. At a Maoist congress, held in a theatre, she was talking and it seems she was going for too long. Then he shouted from his seat, "That's enough, you already talked enough!" And she stopped, cutting her speech short.

So it goes. Maybe someone knows a little anti-male-chauvinism pill with immediate effect, not me. It's a process that takes years.

Overall, I see a breakthrough in the party. There's sexism but it's a very healthy party and we're making progress in the sense of overcoming it.

Comrade Nora Ciapponi said in a radio interview that ours is the only party in whose Central Committee there's 33 per cent of women.

And that percentage is even higher among the branch leaders. At a time the proportion of women in the leadership exceeded 50 per cent. Therefore, I say there's a good atmosphere at the party, even among male comrades. Some male comrades suffer from this but they have to accept it.

Now, I have also seen the opposite phenomenon. Perhaps our female comrades feel horrified but I have observed in certain echelons of the party the females dominate their partners. I don't mean to criticise: women have been suffering this oppression for 8,000 years; hence it's logical and progressive that the situation is reversed. But it's a reality.

What does it mean, in certain echelons?

As a social problem, it's very complex. I read sexologists who believe homosexual male oppression, which has always been very intense, begins to loosen in recent years. Just as 30 or 40 years ago the society rejected a woman who had several relationships and now it begins to accept it, it seems the same applies to homosexuals. There are still many prejudices but they're disappearing.

Some Italian sexologists vindicate female homosexuality: they say in the heterosexual relationship women are dominated while in homosexuality she becomes a subject of the relationship. There are great friendship and openness; members of the couple freely discuss what they like, and so on.

I consider homosexuality as something so normal that I'm opposed to promoting it. In this regard, I fully agree with Daniel Guerin, the great French Marxist historian — and known homosexual — author of a book that vindicates homosexuality. For me, it's the best of what has been written on the subject. In the preface to the Japanese edition of his book, Guerin alerts homosexuals against their tendency to make their liberation an end in itself and that the major problem that must be asked of every militant is the transformation of society.

A homosexual comrade, a Brazilian party leader, wanted to form a current within the party in favour of homosexuality. I was opposed, precisely because I consider homosexuality as normal as heterosexuality.

Suppose that you create a current within the party and with rights of faction. It means in the premises there would be rooms, each with a sign: “Men with Women”, “Men with Men”, “Women with Women”, and each faction would have its newsletter...

But homosexuals are repressed, heterosexuals aren't.

Ah, no, that's completely different. Within society, we fight to the bitter end against the oppression of homosexuals and all kinds of oppression: national, racial, etc. I meant I object to making this kind of activity within the party. Externally, we fight against the oppression of homosexuals, which for me is collateral to the oppression of women.

Well, let's go to the last question of this book, how would you evaluate your life as a militant? And no offense, we all know you have many years yet.

Are you asking me for a personal balance sheet?

Yes.

Well, since Trotsky wrote his beautiful testament it's a common place for Trotskyists to say, “if I were to live again, I would do exactly the same, but correcting some mistakes”. I fully vindicate having been my whole life a professional militant, dedicated entirely to the party and the revolution. Now, I think we've made a lot more mistakes than Trotsky and the Bolsheviks. When I say ours has been a barbarian Trotskyism is because I really think it, I'm not doing demagoguery. We formed alone, without the help of a true international. Then, when taking stock, without pain and with little glory, I see a huge number of errors, some of them very serious, even ridiculous. We had to pay the price for the non-existence of an international and Trotsky's death. If you want an example, in the 1947 elections the party had the program of the Paris Commune, which had nothing to do with the situation in Argentina. If we hadn't committed many errors like this, I'm convinced we would be much better than we are.

Another big mistake was to have had so many professional militants in the party. If I could go back, I think we should avoid this and many of the comrades who were professionals paid by the party should have gone to work and integrate into society. Professionalisation generates trends to live locked up, to drop out of society.

But my biggest problem is the leadership team: how to care for it; to make all sacrifices necessary so the leaders may have good relations between them. For a long time, I didn't understand the problem. When I finally understood it, thanks to the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party and, especially, Joe Hansen,³ it was too late.

Some of the old guard comrades argue the split of the old leadership team, with Bengochea, Lagar, Fucito and others, the best the party has had in its history, was inevitable because of the political influence of the Castro regime. This factor existed but I think there were additional subjective elements, contributed by me. I preferred to discuss and practice the truth in the abstract rather than putting all possible care to keep that team. It may not be so but I'll die with the doubt and the sorrow. §v

³ **Joseph Hansen** (1910-1979) was founder and leader of the Trotskyist party in the United States. He was secretary of Trotsky during his exile in Mexico, until his assassination. He participated for many years in the international leadership of the Trotskyist movement.

APPENDIX TO THE 1986 EDITION

Brief Biography of Nahuel Moreno

Nahuel Moreno was born on 21 April 1924 in Rivadavia, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina.

Very young, he moved to the capital to pursue his studies and there he began his political career at age 15.

He joined the Trotskyist movement in 1940 and in 1944 took part in the foundation of the Grupo Obrero Marxista (Marxist Workers Group, GOM), which in 1947 adopted the name of Partido Obrero Revolucionario (Revolutionary Workers Party, POR). This was the first Trotskyist group in Argentina that included in its program the penetration in the workers' movement. At that time, when Argentine Peronist trade unions were emerging, he was founder and advisor to some of the most important, as the Textile Workers' Association and the union of the Anglo-CIABASA abattoir, the largest in the country.

He was Secretary General of the Socialist Youth of Avellaneda, Buenos Aires Province, until 1947.

From 1952 to 1956 he was one of the most important leaders of the Socialist Party (National Revolution), a current which broke with the old Socialist Party for its support of US imperialism.

After the pro-imperialist military coup that overthrew General Peron in 1955, he was the founder and leader of the *Movimiento de Agrupaciones Obreras* (Movement of Workers' Groups, MAO), which included the Peronist political-trade union clandestine organisations which fought the so-called Liberating Revolution and toppled it, forcing it to call elections. In this period he was leader and advisor to the metallurgical strike of 1956, the first major workers' mobilisation after the fall of Peron. Later, he founded, along with his comrades, the Intersindical (Inter-Union), the predecessor of the 62 Organisations, which included the trade unions reorganised after the fall of the dictatorship, which had fought and had faced leaders who collaborated with the dictatorship. Subsequently, the 62 Organisations were taken over by the Peronist bureaucracy that made them the union branch of that movement.

During this period he collaborated with the weekly *Palabra Obrera* (Workers Word), of enormous popularity in the workers' movement.

Later on, he was a founder of the *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores* (Revolutionary Workers Party, PRT). This party split in 1968 when a wing influenced by the Cuban Revolution went over to the guerrillas and formed the *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* (People's Revolutionary Army, ERP). The wing led by Moreno (called PRT-*La Verdad* because of the name of their periodical) was unified in 1972 with a socialist current to form the *Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores* (Socialist Workers Party, PST), which won legality and participated in the elections of 1973.

Declared illegal and fiercely persecuted by the dictatorship that came to power after the 1976 coup — many militants suffered torture and long years in prison and more than a hundred were killed — the PST participated in revolutionary struggles that toppled it and imposed again democracy in 1982. In that year, he founded the *Movimiento Al Socialismo* (Movement Toward Socialism, MAS), where Moreno is a leader and continues in the workers' and the revolutionary tradition began with GOM.

On the international arena, his party delegated Moreno to the second and the third congress of the Fourth International, held in 1948 and 1951, respectively.

Afterwards, when the line of "sui generis entryism" into the communist parties was imposed, Moreno, along with the leaders of the largest Trotskyist parties, broke with the leadership of Mandel and Pablo and formed the International Committee of the Fourth International. This held an international conference in Leeds, England, in 1958, and Moreno was part of its leadership.

He was the founder and leader of *Secretariado Latinoamericano del Trotskismo Ortodoxo* (Latin American Secretariat for Orthodox Trotskyism, SLATO), which drove the formation of Trotskyist parties in several Latin American countries, mainly in Chile, Peru, and Bolivia.

In 1963 the Fourth International reunited. SLATO delayed membership because it considered its leadership, centred on Ernest Mandel, impressionist and petty bourgeois. On admission, in 1964, he joined its leadership, the Unified Secretariat. From there he continued the theoretical and political struggle against revisionist elements and simultaneously promoted with his current, the formation of Trotskyist parties in Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Central America, and several European countries.

In 1979, he prompted the formation of the Simon Bolivar Brigade, in which revolutionary militants of various Latin American countries took part. The Brigade went to Nicaragua to fight alongside the Sandinista National Liberation Front. The column had three dead and many wounded in combat. This column, the first of its kind since the International Brigades who fought in the Spanish Revolution, took the anti-Somoza revolution to the Atlantic coast of the country and was one of the first to arrive in Managua.

Since the breakup of the United Secretariat, the international current in whose leadership Moreno militates unified for a short period with the current led by Pierre Lambert to form the Fourth International–International Committee (FI–IC). They split when the Lambertist current supported the Mitterrand government in France.

At present, Moreno's current drives the reorganisation of the world Trotskyist movement through the International Workers League (Fourth International).

For his political activities, Moreno has been imprisoned several times in his country, in Peru, and in Bolivia. In 1978 he was arrested in Brazil. His defence was assumed by Amnesty International and numerous personalities requested his release: Felipe Gonzalez, Mario Soares, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, besides prominent members of the Colombian Congress and the Bolivian union leader Juan Lechin. The Portuguese parliament — in that country, his book on Marxist logic is used as academic text — called for his release by an almost unanimous vote of its members.