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Six Countries,
One Nationality,
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Translated from *Correspondencia Internacional* #12, September 1981

English translation: Daniel Iglesias

Cover and interior design: Daniel Iglesias

www.nahuelmoreno.org

www.uit-ci.org

www.izquierdasocialista.org.ar

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Buenos Aires, 2017
cehus2014@gmail.com



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1. A nationality atomised in six countries

A serious analysis of the Central American revolution cannot be made without characterising, from the historical point of view and its placement in Latin America as a whole, the Central American subcontinent with its six countries.

An already long discussion has taken place in the Trotskyist movement on the character of Latin America and its revolution. One current has argued that all Latin America is already a single nationality, prevented from being constituted as a single nation as a result of imperialist politics and exploitation. The socialist revolution on the continent would have as one of its most important aims the constitution of that nation. The two historical constituent tendencies of the Fourth International (International Committee) have argued for years against this conception and its program.

For us, however, the Latin American countries are authentic nationalities, structured in differentiated nations, although semi-colonised by Yankee imperialism. Mexico, Colombia, Brazil or Argentina are not “provinces” of the same nationality, but independent nationalities and, in the case of Brazil, even with a different language.

What we say does not deny that the geographical, idiomatic and cultural unity of the Spanish-speaking countries gives rise to a trend towards unification in a single nationality. But this is only a trend, of historical character, which during the struggles of independence was manifested in an embryonic and utopian way and which has only recently been expressed with increasing intensity since the post-World-War-II period due to the multiplication of trade, cultural and political exchanges, and for the similar problems posed by the reinforcement of Yankee exploitation throughout the continent.

In any case, the historical trend towards the constitution of a single nationality cannot be confused with the present reality, which is determined by the existence of different nationalities.

It is precisely this analysis alone what justifies our International raising the task of constituting the Federation of Socialist Republics of Latin America. This slogan tends to unify the continent by recognising the reality of its present nations. It is the programmatic synthesis between a reality, the present nations, with an imperative necessity expressed today as a trend, that of their unity.

For its part, the whole of Central America constitutes a reality qualitatively different from the rest of Latin America. For reasons of unity and geographical extension, a common historical tradition that starts from the united colony, as well as culture and language, Central America forms a single nationality divided into six different states, or, at least, where the trend in the entire region towards the formation of a single nationality is strong and evident.

This characterisation of the unity of the subcontinent becomes essential to understand the revolutionary process that currently shakes it, and to give a correct program. It is necessary to start from the fact that the strength of the Nicaraguan or Salvadoran revolution is not only given by

the heroism of the workers of each of these countries, but by their organic unity existing with the Central American revolution, as an overall process. This is not a bookish or literary abstraction, but a reality that is expressed, among other facts, in the hundreds of thousands of Central Americans who cross their borders to go to work in the bordering countries. It is a reality with manifestations throughout the history of Central America and, mainly, in the program and the action of its great liberators like Sandino or Farabundo Martí, who fought and considered themselves part of that Central American nation.

That is why we consider an error, or an inaccurate approximation, the slogan that we have raised up to date, of the Federation of Soviet Socialist Republics of Central America and Cuba. We consider as much more appropriate the slogan of For the Socialist United States of Central America, which takes into account the historical experience.

The dominant trend towards the formation of a single nation or nationality materialised, historically, for example, in the United States of America, while the unity of different nationalities, which could not be constituted as a single nation, had a historical expression in the constitution of a Federation of Socialist Republics, in the USSR.

2. Workers revolution and imperialist counter-revolution

For all of the above, we believe that it would be false to “add up” definitions of the different Central American countries to define the reality of the subcontinent — it is revolutionary in El Salvador, non-revolutionary in Costa Rica, in Guatemala... The right method is the opposite — an overall characterisation should be formulated on the situation in Central America, and from that definition to point out the differences from country to country.

Using this approach we must define that the triumph of the Nicaraguan revolution against Somoza opened a revolutionary stage throughout Central America, which is a more correct characterisation than to limit oneself to see the impact of the victory against Somoza in the revolutionary struggle in El Salvador. We could clarify even more, pointing out that before the fall of Somoza the situation was pre-revolutionary, even though its vanguard, which was Nicaragua, already lived a revolutionary situation, of civil war. The victory of the Nicaraguan masses against the dictatorship made the whole Central American situation change.

As in any revolutionary situation, there are vanguard sectors and there are also sectors — in this case, countries — in the rearguard, but all Central American nations are part of the revolutionary maelstrom. This is what explains the immense importance Yankee imperialism gives to El Salvador, as well as the complicit silence of the imperialist press about Guatemala. Any analysis that takes as a point of departure the characterisation of one or another country is, therefore, mistaken and is falling into the trap laid by imperialism and the counter-revolutionary politics of Stalinism and Castroism.

The confrontation to this counter-revolutionary policy must, therefore, begin by affirming the characterisation that in Central America there is only one objective and overall process of a workers' revolution against Yankee imperialism, which tends to unify in one state the whole isthmus.

This unique revolutionary process has an uneven development. In Nicaragua, we have already witnessed a triumphant revolution, which defeated Somoza, and which, for its consequences and class character, has been a workers' revolution. Indeed, on the one hand, it dismantled the structure of the bourgeois state and on the other it was based on the struggle of the workers to defeat the dictatorial bastion of the bourgeois Nicaraguan regime, the Somozist bourgeoisie, servant of Yankee imperialism. This anti-dictatorial and anti-imperialist triumph has not reached the end, the political and economic expropriation of all exploiters, due to the Castroist and Stalinist influence, as well as the petty bourgeois character of the Sandinista leadership, but this is the task that is raised.

In El Salvador and Guatemala, we witnessed a civil war of the masses against two bloodthirsty and pro-imperialist dictatorships. This means that we are facing a democratic revolution because of its immediate objectives, and workers' revolution because of its class character and the enemy it faces.

In Honduras, Panama, and Costa Rica, there has been an accumulation of workers' and popular struggles in the midst of a growing crisis of the bourgeois regimes.

The revolution underway in Central America, which by its immediate objectives in some countries appears as democratic — to bring down bloody dictatorships —, is in terms of class dynamics and general objectives, a workers' and socialist revolution. In each of the countries, the workers are confronted with governments which are bourgeois and direct agents of Yankee imperialism; therefore it becomes a struggle against the political and economic expression of capitalist and imperialist exploitation. On the other hand, as a joint struggle of the Central American masses that aim towards state unification, it is directly confronted with Yankee imperialism, which sustains and gets the maximum benefits of the division of the region into six different national states.

In Central America, there cannot be a revolutionary triumph that remaining isolated in some of the countries can be maintained for a long time. This is due to a set of reasons derived from the geographical, economic and even political unity of Central America. A triumphant workers' revolution would be an easy target for the armies of other countries in the region closely linked to the US military apparatus. This danger could only be conjured up by the general development of the revolutionary process throughout Central America, which on the other hand would be inevitable given the enthusiasm and repercussions of all kinds such a triumph would arouse.

It was Yankee imperialism which, as a modern capitalist metropolis, kept and imposed the national atomisation in Central America, in order to more easily maintain the semi-colonial status of all these countries and to better exploit the masses. Neither is this a purely literary statement, for indeed division has been one of the tools that help to facilitate the brutal super-exploitation of the masses and the plunder of the wealth of these nations. The balkanisation made it more difficult for these Lilliputian countries and their workers to offer greater resistance to imperialist domination. It is enough to compare the situation of the isthmus with the relations that Mexico has managed to establish with the United States, to see clearly that effectively the balkanisation offers innumerable advantages for the metropolis of the north. The ill-concealed hostility and sabotage of imperialism in the face of the abortive attempt to establish the Central American Common Market is yet another ancillary confirmation of what we are saying.

The counter-revolutionary strategy of US imperialism in Central America, therefore, has a clear priority — first of all, to prevent the objective process of revolution throughout the region from becoming a conscious process. To maintain the balkanisation of the states, they need to balkanise the same revolutionary process.

From this derives the main reason that imperialism has had to keep a limited economic aid and a conciliatory attitude towards the revolution headed by Sandinism. It is not just a matter of limiting this workers' revolution for its dynamics within the suffocating limits of capitalist production relations, but also trying for it not to exceed the national borders of Nicaragua, which is but another convergent way of suffocating it.

This is also the explanation of the true obsession with isolating the civil wars declared in El Salvador and Guatemala from all foreign assistance and all interaction with the Central American revolution as a whole.

What is at stake is to prevent, by all means, that the intimate bond of the Nicaraguan, Salvadoran and Guatemalan revolutions be maintained. The imperialist calculation is evident. First, to isolate, compartmentalise, atomise the revolutionary process in line with the atomisation of the nations of the area; then to crush the masses without mercy as in El Salvador, or to negotiate treason as in Nicaragua.

This policy constitutes for imperialism a matter of life and death. Washington knows full well that a revolutionary war consciously sustained throughout Central America, taking into account that the objective conditions are more than ripe for it, would be the prelude to the extension of the revolution to Mexico and to the very heart of the United States. On the one hand, imperialism would be drawn into a direct military intervention, transforming Central America into a new Vietnam, with all that this would mean in its internal politics. On the other hand, this would make explosive the existing communicating vessels with the numerous and exploited Latin and Black communities of the United States. This is exactly what Yankee imperialism tries by all means to avoid.

3. The politics of Stalinism, Castroism and the nationalists

It is not possible to understand the magnitude of the actively counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism and Castroism against the mobilisation of the Central American masses if we do not locate it in the context of the revolution in Central America as a whole.

Like imperialism, its accurate counter-revolutionary instinct led Stalinism and Castroism to make the most vigorous efforts to first restrain and later crush the Central American revolution, jealously watching for the constraining of each process within the framework of these national states imposed by the United States.

Both Stalinism and its alter ego, Castroism, have a conscious policy and behaviour to betray and defeat the revolutionary movement of the masses. It is in function of this policy that they can move from the alliance with reactionary bourgeois governments to the intervention in the very heart of the revolted masses, like a fifth counter-revolutionary column. We are not dealing with a revolutionary leadership that “makes mistakes”, not even of a leadership that is hesitant because of its petty-bourgeois composition and policies, but with the deliberate and systematic behaviour of a caste that moves consistently according to consciously counter-revolutionary objectives.

With all this, we want to emphasise that Stalinism, at this stage of the world revolution in which its immediate enemy is the rise of the mass movement and not a hypothetical military confrontation with imperialism, prefers not to take any risks. The Kremlin bureaucracy and its agents do not manoeuvre with the mass movement, nor do they speculate that the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses will allow them better negotiations with imperialism, but on the contrary the first objective of Stalinism is to act to stop or crush the revolutionary process, to keep it within the limits of the bourgeois regime and to demonstrate that it is totally committed to the peaceful coexistence with imperialism.

Castroism has the same policy and if it uses the inheritance and relations that come from its former character as a revolutionary nationalist movement, it is to better betray and compartmentalise the revolutionary process, whether in Africa or Central America, always in the service of “peaceful coexistence”, which, as they themselves frankly acknowledge, is the centrepiece of their policy.

We insist: Stalinism does not bet to let the revolution be in order to better blackmail imperialism, but it is set on getting the revolutions diverted or defeated as soon as possible. Only after achieving this, it does worry about “sending the invoice” to imperialism, being happy with having done the work if, as is commonly the case, it fails to collect. And in this, there is nothing of naïveté but the cold calculation of a caste that knows it is directly threatened by each revolution.

The petty-bourgeois nationalist leaderships not beholden to Stalinism (directly or through Castroism) are, however, relatively progressive. There is no need to repeat that neither their program nor their methods are what we consider the most correct and we can reiterate that these leaderships have political failures that are the product of the insurmountable limitation of its petty-bourgeois character. But what we want to emphasise here is that its limitations and errors are just that and not a deliberate and conscious counter-revolutionary policy, as it is with the agents of Moscow. In this sense, these currents are qualitatively different from Stalinism and Castroism.

The *raison d'être* of these currents, their appearance in political life, has to do with the objective necessity of the struggle against imperialism and the dictatorial governments and is a partial but limited response of a democratic and anti-imperialist nature. Therefore, these movements fulfil during a stage of the revolutionary process, the anti-dictatorial and anti-imperialist struggle stage, a progressive role.

Without being confused with them, since programmatically, methodologically and theoretically they are different from Trotskyism, we must be aware of the relatively progressive role they play at a certain point in the revolutionary struggle. Equally, without ignoring that given their petty bourgeois character these movements and their leaderships tend and ultimately end up agreeing with Stalinism and the bourgeoisie, we must emphasise that precisely in the first stage of the revolutionary struggle, the petty bourgeois nationalism participates and at times leads the confrontations against the dictatorships and imperialism. It is here when their difference with Castroism and Stalinism becomes most clear because of the latter act in a consciously counter-revolutionary form.

These considerations are of immense political importance and usefulness. They are, for example, essential to correctly address the evolution of the guerrilla movements and the front they constituted in El Salvador. In the course of the civil war against the Military Junta, the various petty-bourgeois nationalist groupings, with an undeniable mass influence, have played a limited and inconsistent revolutionary role. But the integration and influence of Stalinism in the FMLN transforms or tends to transform the Front into a counter-revolutionary tool (which can obviously lead to friction and confrontation, but this is another problem). Thus the so-called "final offensive" in El Salvador has to be judged not as an erroneously prepared battle, but as a counter-revolutionary trap carefully set by Stalinism and Castroism to defeat or halt the revolutionary rise, and in particular its victories and consolidation in the countryside. That this trap failed to achieve the goal of defeating the masses is not because Stalinism did not want it, but because it was prevented by the heroism of the Salvadoran workers and the organic character of the Central American revolution.

Another example of the same is the case of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, which during the anti-Somozist struggle showed such sensitivity to the mass movement that cannot be truly understood without stressing the fact that Stalinism was not involved in it. During this peak period of struggle against the dictator, Sandinism was sensitive to the pressures and demands of the mass movement. The Stalinist apparatus, in contrast, is practically insensitive to the pressures and demands of the masses since it is set and educated to respond faithfully to the changing tactical needs and to the permanent counter-revolutionary politics of the bureaucracy. §