



Nahuel
Moreno

**Open letter
to the PST(C)
about
A Luchar**

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1987

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Open letter to the PST(C) about *A Luchar*

Buenos Aires, January 1987

Dear Comrades,

Soon your Congress will be held, which will address a historical discussion, the most important since the founding of the party because you have to choose between two lines: one that tends to dissolve the party in *A Luchar*¹ [To Fight], adopting its newspaper as the central instrument for our political activity, and one that proposes to strengthen the Trotskyist party more than ever, with its newspaper, its politics and its program.

If we are not wrong and the discussion is raised in these terms, our letter means to explain what our position is. To do this, we will address five central problems. First, the method with which the IWL–FI² leadership has addressed this discussion. Second, the points in which there is complete agreement between the International Secretariat (IS) and the whole of the party leadership. Third, the centre of the debate — whether we dissolve in *A Luchar*. Fourth, the analysis and main policies for action the party has had in the last two years. And fifth, the current situation of the party and *A Luchar*.

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

The close collaboration between the leadership of the IWL–FI and the party has made many mistakes, but their enormous successes weigh most heavily. Thanks to it, we have built a small party that began to break with its marginality and student character to penetrate some sectors of the worker's movement, such as among education workers. A party that today is located ideally in the strip of *A Luchar* and that has achieved such

1 *¡A Luchar!* was a political movement in Colombia, formed as a coalition of various progressive trade unionist and social movements.

2 Following on Moreno's death in 1987, the International Workers League – Fourth International (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), www.uit-ci.org.

important victories as a deserved place in the direction of the CUT. The Congress and the discussion you are now holding is part of that common path begun a decade ago.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I. The method of the IS and the IWL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the IEC of September 1985, the Colombian comrades raised the discussion about the characterisation that there was an ongoing civil war in the country. The document presented included very valuable contributions on the characterisation of the revolutionary situation, on the need to have a "hardened party" for action, on the urgency of responding to paramilitary violence, and so on. However, the IEC pointed out the fear that some

characterisations of the document, such as a civil war, could lead us to the conclusion of politically subjecting ourselves to the guerrilla side, abandoning a class analysis.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We further pointed out that any alliance or agreement with these leaderships is temporary and on short-term problems, since the revolution they want is opposed to ours because they are against deepening the national revolution, developing the world socialist workers' revolution, with all which it implies, having as a priority the construction

of the International, and fighting for workers' democracy at all levels and at all stages, before or after the taking of power. These fundamental implications are openly against the conceptions of the members of *A Luchar*, and primarily of its constituents, the guerrilla dictators, who solve everything according to their will.

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

The meeting concluded, again, with an agreement of all those present, including the Colombian representative.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For this reason, the IS of the IWL proposed, first, to postpone any discussion in the rank-and-file of the party until the end of the CUT Congress, and called on the comrades

who opposed the line to dissolve politically in *A Luchar* to facilitate the application of the party line, creating the best climate to facilitate the discussion of this problem, once the Congress of the CUT ended.

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

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

To contribute to this debate, we published the *Theses on the Guerrillas*,³ by Moreno, Greco and Frank, and now we send this letter, which we hope will serve to clarify the discussion and to make a case for the unity of the party at the Congress.

II. What is not under discussion

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

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

1. An acute revolutionary situation

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

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

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

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

2. Work in independent trade unionism

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

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

With a long delay, the leadership of the party accepted the proposal, and this positioning, which remains until today, allowed us to resolve the previous crisis and

³ Available for download in www.nahuelmoreno.org/textos.php?i=en.

place ourselves in the most combative strip of the Colombian working class, beginning to overcome marginality, by our structuring in the education sector and in some other unions.

3. The defence of the guerrilla

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

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

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

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

4. The revolutionary united front

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

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

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

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

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

Our next World Congress has as one of the main points of its agenda the evaluation of the tactics of the revolutionary united front, but we can already anticipate that the IS proposal will be to ratify this tactic, with the addition that its field of application has expanded greatly in the trade union arena, but maintaining more than ever the struggle to

achieve true revolutionary united fronts in the political arena with working-class currents, as a precursor to the revolutionary workers' party.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This formulation was not shared by the leadership of the party, who continued with the old strategy of transforming *A Luchar* into a political organisation.

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

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

In Information Bulletin No 30 they pointed out that *A Luchar* was the agreement of three currents "very dissimilar in their tradition, program, and method", that it operates "around political agreements of the leaderships without a democratic centralist type operation and without common grassroots organisations", that *A Luchar* is influenced by "organisations that define themselves as political-military", and that "it is not explicit in any of the forces

(that make up *A Luchar*) the need for the construction of the revolutionary workers' party and the need of the world party of the revolution".

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who is irrational?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who is rational?

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

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

First, because there are “very dissimilar programs and methods”, and in both physics and politics dissimilar or opposing forces cancel each other out, according to the parallelogram of forces law. Second, because *A Luchar* is influenced by “organisations

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

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

Many comrades, impacted by the trade union successes of *A Luchar*, wonder with some fear whether we are for the breakup of it. On the contrary, we must continue in *A Luchar* more than ever before, but as a political agreement and in the trade union arena, now basing ourselves on CUSI, which prevents us from confusing the political with the trade union. We must be clear and fraternal with the comrades of *A Luchar*, and tell them we cannot merge for everything that is in the internal bulletins: that we are “dissimilar”, “opposites”, that we are against the leadership of the guerrilla, that the guerrillas must subordinate themselves to working-class organisations — of mass or of vanguard — with workers’ democracy, and that we disagree completely about the need for international and militant internationalism and about the character of a revolutionary workers’ party, which must be at least democratic centralist. In other words, we have to say to *A Luchar*’s comrades we wish to have our hands free to criticise them fraternally but systematically and that our priority task is to strengthen our party, from finances to newspaper, to growth and consolidation. We want to have our hands free to criticise the inevitable support of the guerrillas to the different popes who live in or visit Colombia. We must point out it seems to us quite right they have the same freedom to criticise us, since while we work together on the points that unite us, we want to follow this political discussion from our press organs and also orally, given the innumerable differences we have.

What is CUSI?

After the *A Luchar* Convention, the CUSI [Independent Committee of Trade Union Unity] occupied the place *A Luchar* had before when grouping its trade union current.

We have the impression that CUSI is, like *A Luchar* before, a union revolutionary united front because it groups the activists of the different currents with the clear and only shared goal of making a revolutionary union tendency, with autonomy from *A Luchar*, with certain workers’ democracy, and where, it seems, there tend to be rank-and-file bodies or currents by trade union, which decide democratically.

The discussion to elect CUSI members in the CUT is an example: there was no agreement on who should go, but it was put to a vote and decided in a democratic and centralised manner. On another occasion, before the *A Luchar* Convention, this mechanism had been applied in connection with the election of the members of *A Luchar* in the leadership of FECODE [Colombian Federation of Educators], and we understand there has also been a vote on other occasions.

We are very careful with the definition of CUSI because we do not know its dynamics with certainty. To define it precisely, we would need to know whether in the different guilds, such as teachers, for example, trade union tendencies have been formed that decide democratically or there is a trend for them to be formed.

If so, then we are facing a union revolutionary united front. If on the contrary, this is not the dynamic, if each CUSI force acts separately in different departments or guilds without submitting to democratic voting or forming common trade union tendencies,

then it is likely that we should define CUSI in a similar way to *A Luchar*, as a trade union agreement. But we do not know, and we believe it is up to you to specify its true dynamics.

We note this because, in other countries, such as Brazil and Argentina, union tendencies have been formed by guilds, which, without being nation-wide or covering all trade unions, as CUSI does, begin to be trade union revolutionary united fronts. Besides their incipient anti-bureaucratic and anti-government program, they hold democratic votes. Their policies and tactics are not the results of an imposition of our parties, much less of political agreements, but true trade union currents with autonomy and internal democracy.

IV. The policy of the party and *A Luchar*

Now we have to see what the concrete policies were, for action, which emerged from the irrational policy towards *A Luchar*.

This intimate brotherhood between our party and “dissimilar”, “opposing” organisations, subordinated to the guerrillas, produced, as it could not be otherwise, a common policy for the main facts of the class struggle in the country.

For a revolutionary party, elaboration and political work go through three stages. First is the characterisation of the concrete situation and the elaboration, based on it, of forecasts or hypotheses. Second is the definition of a policy to act on reality, based on these characterisations and forecasts, which takes into account the whole of the workers’ movement. Third, later on, is to corroborate whether our characterisations and forecasts were verified and to take stock of our activity and of the strengthening or regression of the party.

Our parties are not commentators of the class struggle, hence, we will not dwell on post-event analyses, even if they are important, but, fundamentally, in the points, we pointed out earlier. This is why we want to see, in light of the main facts of the class struggle in the last two years, the political activity of the party and of *A Luchar*.

These facts are for us: the general strike on 20 June 1985, the taking of the Palace of Justice, the elections, union disputes and strikes, the Pope’s visit to Colombia, and the founding of the CUT.

Let’s look at them one by one.

The strike of 20 June 1985

As we pointed out at the outset, we do not want to start a polemic of “I said—you said”. With the June 1985 strike, for example, the IWL leadership believed in the analysis of the party leadership, which said we would assist to an impressive general strike. In Argentina, we got tired of giving lectures throughout the party, making propaganda in favour of the general strike, saying it would be totally different from the Argentinean peaceful strikes because there it would have characteristics similar to those of the National Civic Strike. As they say in Buenos Aires, “we pumped up” the strike.

The party leadership said “the 1977 civic strike was a general rehearsal for the next national strike”; that unlike 1977, when all the pro-bosses bureaucracy and the CP made the strike, this time the bureaucracy refused to take part, the CP has stifled its realisation for over a year and, in spite of having finally approved the date, the CP “remains stronger than ever supporting the Betancur government”.

But despite all these factors against, “the fundamental, decisive, differentiating element between the two strikes is the participation of the guerrillas” (Internal Bulletin No. 248, 3 June 1985).

On the basis of this characterisation, the party leadership made a prognosis and defined a policy of participation: we had to “fight to turn the strike into a true workers’

and popular general strike, stimulating its possible semi insurrectional, spontaneous and geographic insurrectionary outbreak”.

On 20 June, the day of highest workers attendance in the country, there was no “semi insurrectional outbreak”, not even a peaceful and dull general strike, nor did any major production sector stop. Nothing happened. The leadership of the party and the IWL were mistaken from beginning to end.

It was such a scandalous mistake it is almost a model to start our cadre schools saying: “We foresaw a semi-insurrection and that day no one missed work. Let’s study why we made such a big political mistake.”

It is not a question of not making mistakes because we live off that. In our international current, we have made much bigger mistakes than this. The problem is to find the reasons and explain them exhaustively, publicly and internally; it is to have the self-critical attitude of systematically reminding the militants of this mistake, to alert them of our weakness as leaders.

The balance-sheet of party activities presented for the 1986 Congress states that “the mistake we committed has to do precisely with the problem of the CP”, because “we did not take into account the CP”, and did not notice that the strike “ran a very serious risk of not being realised due to the CP’s truce policy and its line to stop it”.

For a time, the IWL leadership shared this self-criticism, but now we believe it to be wrong. It is true the party leadership undervalued the CP, but this was not the fundamental mistake because all documents before the strike warned a thousand times the CP was against the strike, despite having approved it. The central mistake of characterisation and prognosis was to have overestimated the guerrillas, to have said that “the fundamental, decisive, difference between the two strikes (1977 and 1985) is the participation of the guerrillas”. For the leadership, this participation was sufficient counterweight to the boycott by the bureaucracy and to the opposition by the CP for a whole year. Because of this weight of the guerrilla, the strike of 1977 was to remain only as the run-up or preview of the 20 June strike.

But just a few days before the national strike, the M-19 picked up all its camps in all the popular neighbourhoods, entered the scrub, and did not shoot a single shot in the national strike. The other guerrilla organisations did almost nothing, and the planned semi-insurrection became a hard defeat.

The party’s balance of activities does not say this. The party newspaper does not say this. This error of prognosis and characterisation gave rise to a much more serious one, the mistake in the political line to be carried out: fighting to convert the strike “into a true workers’ and popular general strike, stimulating its possible semi insurrectional, spontaneous and geographic insurrectionary outbreak”.

Nor does the balance of activities make a self-criticism of this concrete policy, for action. On the contrary, it concludes by saying we should have noticed the strike was in danger of not being realised, but in spite of this “we committed to death to the strike, and that if it was done it was against the CP”. Does this mean that it was great to have committed to the strike, even if we had characterised that it would not happen? What method of doing politics is this? To characterise we are going to a defeat and in spite of that to push with everything?

What would the party say if in Paz de Rio or in Satexco the comrades of the cell approved that the axis of the party is to strike at a certain date, not only to strike but to occupy the factory and have strike pickets, and on the day of the strike not a single worker stops working? What would the party demand from the Satexco or the Paz de Río cells? Would it not demand a self-criticism, not only internal but public, informing the workers the cell was never so wrong?

What would the party say if that same cell, in taking stock, acknowledges the strike would not happen because of the bureaucracy, but in spite of this it was “committed to death to the strike”, and in the event of being done it was against the bureaucracy?

The mistake was not to take into account the conditions of the whole of the workers’ movement, but only those of the popular, non-working-class vanguard, and to define a policy for action — to stimulate the semi-insurreccional outbreak — for the vanguard and not for the workers’ movement as a whole. It was an adventurous and ultra-leftist action, totally disconnected from the whole Colombian working class.

Third, it is necessary to take stock of the party’s activity with this policy. As far as we know, militancy was committed to the strike and put all its energy and enthusiasm to its service. However, there was almost no political presence of the party: from February to June no issue of *El Socialista* came out. There were five [issues of] *A Luchar* since February, but it seems to us quite a little, considering that the party was preparing for a semi insurreccional outbreak.

Finally, we want to know whether our strike policy strengthened the party. Do we leave with a bigger political presence? Did we recruit comrades? Or did the opposite happen? The comrades who throughout the day of the strike walked through Bogota, Cali, Medellin, and Barranquilla trying to take part in some demonstration, exposing themselves to the police repression totally isolated from the masses, what do they say?

Let us note, by the way, that this second prognosis or characterisation is totally opposite to the one we always held about abstention in Colombia, which we always defined as backward, depoliticised, unconscious and non-combative.

But everything can change, and it was possible that the abstention of 1986 would turn 180 degrees, becoming “conscious, qualified, combative and radicalised”.

From these characterisations, a policy emerged: “The only political line truly revolutionary, unitary and of mass in the electoral arena is the call for a national campaign for the masses to protest and not to vote” (*El Socialista* No 296, 31 January 1986).

And from this political line emerged an “anti-electoral political campaign” with *A Luchar* of “national character” that “covers the months of April and May, subordinating other tasks”, with two central slogans: “For life and freedom: National Popular Assembly” and “Do not vote, fight for workers’ and popular power”. “Central events for 14 May” will be scheduled in many cities, and in the meantime, “forums, seminars, and activities”.

As instruments: *El Socialista*, *A Luchar* and a National Manifesto of 50,000 copies.

Now then, what happened?

First, the party will have to study and revise its characterisation of the “abstentionist behaviour of the majority” of Colombians, taking into account the 1986 parliamentary and presidential elections registered one of the lowest abstention rates in the country’s history, about 50 percent, that is, as much or more than the percentage of voters in the United States.

Second, was it verified that abstention was more conscious, qualified, combative and radicalised? If so, how many abstentionist mass rallies were there in the country? How did this “strip of millions protesting against the regime through conscientious abstention” express itself? How many abstentionist rallies did we do and how many thousands and thousands did we gather in them? How many thousands and thousands did we recruit for *A Luchar* or for the party out of that “strip of millions”?

Now let’s move on to the policy of the party. Is it true that the “only revolutionary, unitary and mass policy” is abstention? It has never been like this for us. Our party was born by breaking with the infantile and ultra-leftist positions of the Colombian guerrillas that placed abstention as a principle. Lenin said, although elections are a tactical matter, the vast majority of the time we must be involved, to contend for the masses with bourgeois and reformist parties, unless they can be boycotted to make the insurrection.

It is another matter if for reasons of weakness, technical, or tactical (in this case, not to break unity with *A Luchar*), we do not take part, but this does not mean it is politically correct.

Did we have a Leninist policy for the elections in Colombia? Did we battle in *A Luchar* against the criminal abstentionist principle of its members? Were our militants armed to argue with those of *A Luchar*? Has *El Socialista* devoted articles and articles to show that there is no worse political crime than to leave the workers to the bourgeois and Stalinists in the elections? Did *El Socialista* say we were against abstention but we agreed to abstain because we had not convinced them?

Nothing was like this. Not only did the party do nothing of this but it made a campaign of praises to abstention.

We gave in to the guerrilla who heads *A Luchar*, which is the enemy of doing a patient political work to convince the whole working class, liberal, conservative and communist, of a revolutionary policy. The guerrilla believes in its exemplary actions, distrusts the masses, and therefore refuses to politicise them.

But in addition, the guerrilla refuses to go to elections because it is terrified of being counted, and to prove it represents a very small minority of the population.

If, as comrade Luciano Casas says, we accept that the FARC is at least 50 percent of the guerrillas in the country, and they took 5 percent of the vote in 1986, we must conclude that all the rest of the guerrillas have at most an electoral support of another 5 percent, which is a tiny minority.

In conclusion, our party misjudged two electoral forecasts — maintenance and qualification of abstention — and had an ultra-left abstentionist position because it did not elaborate its policy for the whole of the workers' movement, but for the guerrilla vanguard led by *A Luchar*.

Participation in workers' disputes

The other fact of the class struggle has been labour disputes. As we are so far away, it is difficult for us to know the number of strikes that took place in these two years and the participation and politics of the party towards them. It is up to you to evaluate in depth how our participation in them was.

But for what little we know, the party had an outstanding participation in the Caracol strike, which seems to have been one of the most important in 1986, and achieved very important successes in the ADE [District Association of Educators] elections in Bogota, and advances in ports and railways.

The party's turn towards the Caracol strike was very important, as reflected in the newspaper and in the internal bulletins. We know that, because of this participation, we recruited a good team of comrades in Bogota, and that this activity allowed us to start the recovery of the party after the crisis.

We also know we had an outstanding participation in ADE, because our slate was the one with the highest voting, above all the old leaders of the teaching profession, reinforcing one of our main union works.

We were informed that in ports we achieved the vice-presidency of the union, and we understand that we have had an outstanding participation in the railway struggles and that a good party team has been consolidated in this sector.

This participation in the workers' struggles is very important and shows us that the decisive axis of partisan work is the structural workers' fronts where we participate, and we have the impression it is this participation that most enables us to recruit and consolidate the party. It seems to us, moreover, that it is precisely the structuring that we have achieved in some sectors as in teaching, which has allowed us to cope with the crisis and begin to recover from it.

The Pope's Visit

What characterisation did the party make regarding the Pope's visit before his arrival? What political line did it propose against the visit? Which party campaign was decided? How many rallies, flyers, newspapers, press releases, graffiti were made as part of that campaign?

Was there systematic propaganda pointing to the workers that the country would be visited by the Reagan in cassock. Was the Pope condemned as an enemy of the Nicaraguan revolution and confessor of *gusanos contras*?⁴ Was the FSLN defended from the papal accusations? What did the party say about the CNG [National Guerrilla Coordinating Body] declaration of December 1985, which wanted "the best development of the papal visit" and proposed a meeting with the bishops "to make such an exceptional spiritual moment the search for a climate and opportunity for life and human dignity"?

Well, the party did not say a word about the papal visit, either before or during his stay. It did not make predictions or characterisations, it did not define a policy to take part or made any campaign. It did nothing, faced with a decisive event in national politics: the visit of the Reagan in a cassock.

Only after the visit of Negro E., who formulated a harsh criticism of this absence of policy regarding the visit of Reagan in a cassock, the party brought a resolution to the Convention of *A Luchar* and published an article in the newspaper when the Pope was already gone.

But our parties are not commentators of the class struggle; they do not make journalistic articles after the facts but act upon them. Therefore, it is very serious to note that the party was silent about the papal visit.

If we agree that the Pope is Mr Reagan's envoy, as *El Socialista* says, or that he is a Reagan in a cassock, what would you have said if Reagan were to go to Colombia and the party neither says anything nor makes a political campaign against him, nor calls the whole left to protest?

The party not only did not say or do anything during the papal visit, but it refused to condemn the CNG for its support of the Pope. When he had left, under pressure from the IWL, it published in *El Socialista* No 302 an article where it says: "it is really incomprehensible that... there were sectors of the left that held attitudes of expectation in face of the results of the papal visit, or that encouraged among workers hopes for his efforts in Colombia. In this camp are some of the declarations of M-19 and CNG in which the alleged papal virtues are put in place in the search for peace". Why did the party not say this before and during the visit? If you regard *A Luchar* as a revolutionary political organisation, why did you not propose to them a campaign against the Pope and call them to condemn that CNG statement as well? Do you not think this a criticism with silk gloves? What would you say if we replaced the Pope's name with Reagan's? Listen to what it sounds like: "It's really incomprehensible... that there were sectors of the left that held attitudes of expectation in face of the results of Reagan's visit, or that they "encouraged (...) hopes for his efforts in Colombia".

Finally, why did you publish a special supplement to the 1,000-person *A Luchar* Convention (which seems fine to us), but did not publish a single leaflet to address the millions of workers who went out to meet the Reagan with cassock?

4 **Gusanos** (worms) is the term Fidel Castro used to describe the wealthy white former landowners who fled Cuba after the overthrow of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. Since then it has become a scornful term to designate counter-revolutionaries in exile.

Contras were the various US-backed and funded right-wing rebel groups active from 1979 to the early 1990s in opposition to the Sandinista Junta of National Reconstruction in Nicaragua.

The CUT and trade union unity

Of all the facts of the class struggle we have mentioned, the decisive, the enormous, the most important of all is the founding of the CUT, which brings together more than half of the unionised workers' movement in Colombia, and which is the result of profound unitary processes, of rupture with the old centrals of the working class. It is, let us say, the greatest achievement of the country's revolutionary situation, and one of the greatest workers' achievements in decades, which will certainly allow the working class to become the main protagonist of the class struggle in the country.

Now, what did the party foresee, and what line did it have to take part in it?

It is a fact that, since the National Seminar on Trade Union Unity organised by FECODE in February 1986, the party approved, together with *A Luchar*, a policy of union unity, proposing a classist, democratic and revolutionary Central and participating in the unitary process that began to take place between independent trade unionism and the CSTC [Union Confederation of Colombian Workers]. The IWL leadership had not clarity on this but the party leadership was correct.

However, the party had only a policy of union unity for a section of the working class, independent trade unionism, and the CSTC, and not for the working class as a whole. The party did not foresee or predict the process that led to the CUT, and did nothing, no political campaign calling for the unity of the entire working class in a single central. The party came late to the political fact of the most important class struggle in many years and had no policy-prior to the fact. It is telling, for example, the National Document adopted at the Party Congress where the only thing said about union unity, is the following: "First, faced with the bureaucracy and Stalinism, the policy of unity of action and eventually united fronts around certain disputes must be taken into account. Second... we must study how we deal with tactics of union unity that take into account both the situation of Stalinism and independent trade unionism."

But in addition, the IWL proposed in July 1986, during the visit of Negro E., that the axis of party politics should be union unity. This was a month before Jorge Carrillo called to the foundation of the CUT.

The Report to the International Secretariat, written by the party Secretary, points out that "after this discussion, we note there is a difference with the comrade, who insists that the focus at the juncture should be union unity".

This report notes the set of slogans for the juncture: fight against the government; defence of wages; participation in the process of union unity that is promoted through the CUS [Committee of Trade Union Unity], in the process of democratic struggle, and in the campaign of solidarity with Nicaragua.

The report says, verbatim, that "from this body of slogans we privilege the first", later pointing out that "union unity, a process in which we are participating and for which we have a policy, although it is a process with objective seat (...) we still think it is managed at an entirely superstructural level and without a certain and clear dynamics"... This, a month before the call to found the CUT!!!

Furthermore, Information Bulletin No 34 of 20 August 1986 notes that a meeting of the expanded Executive Committee of CUSI was held one week before the convening of the CUT Congress became known. The Bulletin says: "Although the hypothesis of a central in which the three currents converge was considered the least probable, in fact, it was raised because the first superstructural talks already existed...".

A week before the emergence of the CUT, it was considered as the least likely!!!

Neither the CUSI, nor *A Luchar*, nor the party, were the vanguard in this process. On the contrary, as the Bulletin says, "it is a fact that the most audacious and dynamic proposals come from Jorge Carrillo and the CP...".

That the call to the CUT Congress caught the party totally unprepared is expressed in the language of the same Bulletin, which states “there is an *unforeseen turn* of events that places us at the gates of a new workers’ central”. And in terms of the national document published in Information Bulletin No 40 of 23 October 1986: “Unexpectedly, the FSD [Democratic Union Front] blew up in the air...”; “*an unexpected* pole of union unity”; “the outbreak of the FSD placed in the forefront the *uncertain* unitary process led by the CUS” (our emphasis).

So, for the leadership of the party the call to the CUT Congress was “an unforeseen turn”, “unexpected”, that was not part of any of our previous analyses.

In spite of the foregoing, the party, CUSI, and *A Luchar* had an outstanding participation in the Congress, having carried about 300 delegates (some 30 of the party), and obtained four members in the leadership. We must emphasise the fact our party has won a place in the leadership because it is historic and deserved triumph for so many years of struggle to build a revolutionary workers’ party in Colombia and of work on independent trade unionism.

But we are sure if the party had predicted this unitary process and made union unity of the entire working class its political axis throughout the year, we would have capitalised enormously on this process. Unfortunately, the vanguard was Carrillo and the CP, and we, CUSI, and *A Luchar*, were on the tail end.

Let us remember, otherwise, the tremendous political success of the party, before its foundation, when preparing the National Civic Strike. We were the ones who proposed the formation of the National Trade Union Council, who held the banner of the unity of the working class, and who for months had our focus in this unity and the Civic Strike.

Its results did not take long to be seen: seven days after the Civic Strike, the party held its foundation rally with 3000 people, the largest number of people we ever gathered. We made the best electoral campaign in our history, despite the factional struggle existing at that time, and our columns in the rallies of the following May Day were of 1000 to 1500, the third largest after the CP and MOIR [Revolutionary Independent Labour Movement].

The ANP [National People’s Assembly] and the Unity Congress

The party has approved the National People’s Assembly as its central political campaign for the coming months. We do not want to dwell on the political discussion about the meaning of this slogan because we have read a very good document that has been published by you for the pre-congress discussion.

We want to ask a series of questions: Does the political campaign around ANP take into account the state of consciousness of the broad worker, liberal, conservative and communist masses? With this campaign, will we be able to attract a few hundred of them around us and *A Luchar*? What sectors of the masses, independent of us, raise it? It is obvious that many of the slogans of our program, such as workers’ and popular governments, are not currently taken up by any mass sector. But the difference is that no one is proposing the central political campaign of the party for several months to be around “workers’ and popular government”, for example.

Are we not, again, before a vanguardist policy, elaborated only for *A Luchar* and not for the whole workers’ movement?

But in addition, we have read in *A Luchar* and in an internal bulletin of the party that, as part of that campaign, *A Luchar* will attend the Congress of Unity, which according to the call “it intends to be a leap forward in the formation of a political and mass alternative” against bipartisanship, with a democratic and anti-imperialist program. This Congress should serve to “really advance in the construction of the mass alternative the people claim, to constitute an organised expression of popular and democratic confluence”.

According to the *A Luchar* circular, this Congress will be attended by a bourgeois of renown, with titles, lineage and everything, Emilio Urrea, and some democratic personalities like Eduardo Umaña Mendoza.

This worries us because, as always, we believe from ultra-leftism to opportunism there is just one step, and this call to the Unity Congress is opportunism and popular-frontism in a chemically pure state because they call for a political alternative with sectors of the bourgeoisie. What do you think, comrades?

If *A Luchar* is a revolutionary united front, why does it call on Emilio Urrea to “really advance in the construction of this alternative of masses that the people demand”? Is this a policy of a “proletarian leadership”, of a “revolutionary political organisation”?

What is the cause of the mistakes?

For us, there is common a thread to all these political mistakes, which is the capitulation to the guerrilla, produced by that intimate brotherhood with *A Luchar*, for having lost all political independence from them, for considering that *A Luchar* is a “revolutionary political organisation” with a “proletarian leadership”.

This lack of independence led the party leadership to elaborate its entire political course with the eyes on the guerrilla and *A Luchar*, without taking into account the whole liberal, conservative, communist and backwards workers’ movement. This is why we predicted and fought for a semi-insurrectionary general strike that did not take place. This is why we forecasted abstention would continue equal to itself and we did an ode to abstention. This is why we abandoned criticism of the isolated actions of the guerrillas, such as the attack on the Minister of Government, to mention just one instance, and our criticism of their elitist character. This is why we did not strongly criticise the popular-frontist positions of the CNG, such as the statement about the Pope. This is why we did not make any political campaign against the Pope’s visit, addressed to the whole workers’ movement. This is why the leadership of the party could not foresee the most important event of the workers’ movement, the founding of the CUT, nor did it make union unity of the whole working class the central axis of party activity.

This is why, ultimately, our party is lurching from ultra-leftism to the most abject opportunism, launching a political campaign around the National People’s Assembly, and the “revolutionary political organisation”, *A Luchar*, is eager to participate in a Congress of Unity with distinguished bourgeois to seek a “political alternative”.

V. What is the situation of the Party and *A Luchar*?

After so much discussion about characterisations and policies, the time has come where words die. As Marxists, Leninists and scientists, we believe the correctness of a policy is measured in its practical results. Here, it is measured by the state of the party and the main tactics of building the party promoted during these two years, *A Luchar*.

How is the party today? How many new comrades do we have? How many have we lost? Are there political campaigns? Is there guidance for the fronts? Are there rich political discussions that would arm all militants to participate in the class struggle? Is there a permanent international discussion about *Correo Internacional* and the IWL documents? Are there party cadres’ schools? What is the political presence of the party in the country? How many people do we carry in the partisan columns to mobilisations? How many banners and placards of the party do we carry? How many partisan leaflets do we hand out? How many partisan press releases do we issue? How many newspapers do we sell? How are our finances?

In short, is the party better or worse than two years ago?

You will have to answer all these questions in the upcoming Congress, in the light of the main orientation to build the party during this period and the political lines coming out of it.

The result of irrationality

The axis for the construction of the party in the last period was, as Information Bulletin No 30 says, “to affect objectively and subjectively in the space of the new organisation (*A Luchar*) so that this takes the path towards the construction of the revolutionary workers’ party with mass influence”.

According to this Information Bulletin, the participation of the party is to “consolidate and develop the organisation that has emerged, to extend it and centralise it, to give it coherence, ultimately, to make it a solid revolutionary workers’ organisation with mass influence.”

As a conclusion, “our fundamental obsession must be to fully get the organisation (*A Luchar*) to do politics in the country (...) to take it and for it to be present in the political superstructural events of the country; to earn it a legal space; to build local leaderships; to place it in the disputes and the struggles, and especially that all this policy be reflected in the national circulation of a good fortnightly of *A Luchar* (...). In these aspects, *we will emphasise* the period that has opened” (emphasis in original).

For us, the application of this policy, totally opposed to the definition of *A Luchar* in the same bulletin, and the consequent and pernicious political errors derived from it have had as a result that our Trotskyist party was increasingly less “present in the political superstructural events of the country”; its banners and posters began disappearing from the demonstrations, its leaflets became increasingly scarce; the party lost “legal space” and went into clandestinity; *El Socialista* became monthly, and the party dedicated itself less and less to “doing politics in the country”, that is, to propagandise the whole of its Trotskyist internationalist program, and to endow itself with a policy for the entire workers’ movement .

And, above all else, the party abandoned a fundamental programmatic point of principle: our permanent criticism of the petty-bourgeois and guerrilla leaderships, their isolated and terrorist actions, their opportunist and popular-frontist policies, and their elitist character, detached from any democratic control by the organisations of the working class or of a revolutionary workers’ party.

But besides losing our identity as a Trotskyist party in the national political life, and abandoning decisive programmatic points, this policy provoked a brutal setback in all aspects of party activity. Let us see, then, the raw data of newspaper sales and party finances.

During 1984, the party sold 41 issues of *El Socialista* and one of *A Luchar*, to an average of 2,000 copies per issue, which gives a total, in a year, without *A Luchar*, of 82,000. The newspaper was financial and gave a very small profit.

During 1985 and 1986, the party published 21 *El Socialista* and 14 *A Luchar*; a total, between *El Socialista* and *A Luchar*, of 35 issues. If we calculate a sales average of 1,500, in two years 52,500 would have been sold, that is, 26,250 per year, less than a third of what was sold in 1984, being optimistic. We have joined *A Luchar* and *El Socialista*, to measure the whole outwards political activity of the party; and with everything included, in the last two years this activity was reduced to a third.

Finances

In December 1983, the party made a financial campaign in which about 5,000 raffle tickets were sold. Between the internal and the external campaigns, over two million pesos were collected (discounting prizes and expenses), that is, about US\$22,000.

In December 1984, the party sold 5,375 raffle tickets, which reported \$1,624,350; in addition, teaching sold 2,109 raffles (Internal Bulletin No 231, 31 October 1984), which gives 7,484 raffle tickets. The total of the internal and external financial campaigns, not including that of teaching, is \$2,201,910 (Internal Bulletin No 238). In dollars, it amounts to about US\$18,000.

Moreover, by the end of 1984, the party had a reserve fund. There was a deficit in the ordinary finances, but it was covered with the financial campaign and the IWL was paid dues without difficulty. The party had very few debts.

During 1985 and 1986, the party went through a catastrophic financial situation. If we remember correctly, at the end of 1985 no financial campaign was held, or it was suspended. In the two years, the reserve fund of the party was spent; we have been informed contributors have reduced to less than half, and that there are many debts. We do not know the exact situation, but we do know although the party made an extraordinary effort and paid its contribution to the IWL, it had to ask for a loan of \$400,000 (US\$2,000) at the end of the year to finish the year.

We still do not know the results of the financial campaign. We have been told that, despite not achieving the targets, it was more or less good, but we understand that its result is below those of 1984 and 1983.

What is the situation of *A Luchar*?

Those who pushed this policy never gave us a guarantee certificate on *A Luchar*. They were careful to warn us there were many difficulties in transforming it into a political, centrist or revolutionary, party.

But you told us that, despite all the inconveniences, the “dissimilar” character of *A Luchar*’s organisations, of the tremendous strategic differences with them, of their subordination to the guerrilla leaderships, it was entirely permissible to raise the hypothesis of building a common party with the guerrilla. You told us we should bet everything on this “theoretical hypothesis”; that we had to gamble all our capital on roulette, on the number called *A Luchar*.

And indeed, you gambled all our capital on that number. You gambled our party, our militants, our newspaper, our finances, our legality, our political presence, to “consolidate and develop” *A Luchar*.

There is no doubt the party came out very battered from that bet, as we saw before. But these comrades would score a very important point in the discussion if they showed us that it was worth it, and that, at the cost of a brutal party crisis, we have managed to “consolidate and develop” *A Struggle*, to make it “take the path towards the revolutionary workers’ party with mass influence”. Even then, we are not sure the political differences between us would end, but we would have to acknowledge that, this time, you were right.

If we are serious Marxists, let us apply the same objective criterion we had with the party, to see how *A Luchar* is today.

Comrade Moreno, in a letter dated August 1986, said to check whether *A Luchar* was marching towards a revolutionary workers’ front or an outline of such, it had to fulfil three conditions in three months. First, that the newspaper be sold by almost all the militants who claim to be of *A Luchar*, that it not be given away, and that it be not paid by methods other than the sale. Second, that numerous organised groups, common to all the tendencies of *A Luchar*, emerge, as a minimum, to organise the sale of the newspaper and discuss it. And third, to carry out an uncompromising struggle against the policy of the CNG, that is to say, that *A Luchar* show its independence from the guerrillas.

Four months later, we want to know the balance-sheet about the development of *A Luchar*. According to some reports and data collected from the bulletins of *A Luchar* and the party, we have the impression that none of the three conditions has been fulfilled.

In Circular No.33 of *A Luchar* we read that “the most important cities, such as Medellin, Cali and Barranquilla, have not paid a single peso of the three newspaper issues that have been sent”, and this is leading the newspaper to a “total illiquidity”, reason for which they approved “to suspend indefinitely the sending of the newspaper to all that do not catch up”.

What is the imposing conclusion, when the three cities having the most important work of *A Luchar* — Bogota is not the strongest — have not paid a single peso of the last three issues and they will suspend its shipment?

Second, how many cells or rank-and-file groups common to all the organisations of *A Luchar* have been set up in the country? We are not talking about coordinations from above because that is the typical procedure of the guerrilla, but of rank-and-file groups that vote and resolve.

We would also like to know how many delegates of the other components of the agreement raised in the *A Luchar* Convention the need to build a revolutionary workers’ party. As far as we know, no one, except our party, pointed out the problem, but we may be misinformed.

Regarding the third condition, we would also like to know how many non-party delegates to the *A Luchar* Convention made a strong condemnation of CNG’s methods, its isolated actions, how many called publicly to repudiate their communiqué on the Pope. As far as we know, none; but we may be wrong.

In short, we want to know how many *A Luchar* militants are today closer to building a revolutionary workers’ party and demanding that the guerrillas be subordinated to it and the discipline of the working class.

We believe that none, or very few because we have seen no evolution of *A Luchar*, no change reflecting they begin to break with the guerrillas to embark on the construction of that party with us. As a sample, just look at the latest newspapers of *A Luchar*. Not even with a magnifying glass can you find the slightest differentiation, delimitation or condemnation of the isolated and elitist actions of the guerrillas, of their front-populist and opportunist policies.

To continue with this scientific analysis, we would like you to make an effort to objectively measure the influence and weight of *A Luchar*. For example, we would like to know why so few people attended the National Convention. The installation rally was attended by only 1,000 people, of whom about 800 were delegates and the majority came from the interior of the country.

For us, that figure is very small and is far behind what our own party alone has mobilised. Many of you certainly attended the party’s foundation ceremony in 1977. The Lux Theatre was packed with over 3,000 people. We also recall our columns of May Day 1978 and 1979, in which, alone, we mobilised in Bogotá, with no one from the interior, many more than the *A Luchar* Convention, which mobilised the whole country.

Let us also compare the results of the mobilisation on 26 September for the CUT foundation, with those of the *A Luchar* Convention. At that demonstration, the column of CUSI and *A Luchar* led 5,000 people, while at the Convention, with the people of the interior, there were only 1,000. What explanation is there for this?

For us, all the above data shows that *A Luchar*, as a political project, mobilises very little, while CUSI, as a revolutionary trade union current, does have a considerable influence.

In conclusion, what did the party get out? It gambled everything on a “theoretical hypothesis” of building a party with *A Luchar*, went into crisis, regressed, and, to date, *A Luchar* does not gather people in its political events, its newspaper is not charged in the three main cities, there is no significant current of *A Luchar* breaking more and more with the guerrillas and proposing to build a revolutionary workers’ party with us, to which the guerrilla is democratically subordinated.

Resuming the principled course

During the previous period from 1982 to early 1985, the party had a principled, but sectarian policy. Since the assumption of Betancur, it placed itself in the opposition, it was the first to declare against the truce, which allowed the formation of *A Luchar*, we participated in the 1984 elections with a principled policy in agreement with the CP and the leadership of FECODE, we participated in teachers, ports and other struggles (although in some extremely slow), which allowed us to consolidate, especially in teaching and other sectors such as ports. The party published a regular newspaper, made major financial campaigns and cadre schools. Of course, it was sectarian. It did not give importance to the guerrilla, did not believe there was a revolutionary situation in the country, and did not place much importance in *A Luchar*. But it was a principled party, and so, despite many mistakes, the party progressed.

Then the party went into crisis because it deviated from the Trotskyist principles, moved politically away from the working class as a whole, approaching the petty-bourgeois leaderships and their policies.

The conclusion is evident: we must retake the principled and internationalist course, the path of revolutionary politics for the entire working class, overcoming the previous sectarian stage, and without abandoning what has been won in the last two years: the characterisation of the situation of the country as acute revolutionary, the defence of the guerrilla, and to keep those immense conquests that are *A Luchar* and CUSI, but without deceiving ourselves about their character.

Our party is small. It comes from a student current, which is why we have been marginal for a long time. But on account of having a principled policy for the working class as a whole, of being internationalist, and of working alongside our world current, we gradually inserted ourselves into certain workers' sectors and consolidated a few hundred valuable orthodox Trotskyist militants.

It is natural that in this country, many comrades are impacted by the guerrillas, which received a strong impetus after the Sandinista revolution. But unfortunately, there are no shortcuts for the construction of the revolutionary workers' party or for the national and world socialist revolution led democratically by the proletariat. It is possible that in Colombia the guerrilla will one day make a revolution. But it will not be the socialist revolution led democratically by the proletariat we want. It is going to be like the Nicaraguan revolution, and there is the example of Nicaragua today, and its dire Sandinista leadership.

Today, there is no more urgent task in Nicaragua, in Colombia and around the world, than to build and strengthen our Trotskyist parties and our IWL, to prevent petty-bourgeois leaderships such as Sandinism or the Colombian guerrillas from ending up leading the revolution to a blind alley, as they are doing in Central America.

But unlike Nicaragua, we have the impression that in Colombia the process is more in our favour. The foundation of the CUT is a decisive step of the working class to take charge of the class struggle. And if there is uprising and workers' struggles, our party, if it has a Trotskyist and principled policy, and if it continues, as it has until now, inextricably linked to the IWL, it will inevitably be strengthened.

Else, let us remember the founding of the party 10 years ago: the foundation rally and the huge May Day columns were possible because its baptism of fire was the greatest day that has been waged by the working class, the National Civic Strike, and because, thanks to the close collaboration between the party and the leadership of our international movement, we had a correct analysis and policy, directed at the entire workers' movement.

Well, today we are 10 times better placed than 10 years ago from every point of view. The whole world situation is in favour of the working class and Trotskyism: the struggle of the working class in the Southern Cone of the continent, the spectacular railway, and state workers strikes in France and the beginning of the political revolution in the USSR with the demonstrations in Kazakhstan and of the Chinese students.

The IWL begins to be an international pole of attraction; its parties have become more proletarian and have consolidated, we began to regain old comrades, like the Italians, and we have established relations with other Trotskyist groups, like the English WRP [Workers Revolutionary Party]. We begin to be an objective pole, a factor of weight in world Trotskyism.

And in Colombia, we are better placed in the working class, and the working class is, for the first time, coming to the fore of the class struggle.

Therefore, there is no objective or subjective reasons for despairing or disbelieving our class, Trotskyism, the IWL, or our small but great Colombian party.

Conclusion

To complete all this controversy, we allow ourselves to present four motions to the Central Committee and the Party Congress:

1. To confirm the characterisation of *A Luchar* made by the party leadership with the addition made by the IWL Secretariat on pages 5 and 6 of this letter.⁵

2. The main task is to fortify the party, since between us and the other components of *A Luchar* there is an “opposition” in almost all fundamental theoretical, political and organisational aspects, in spite of the important political and union agreements we have arrived to. This means we give full and absolute priority to the publication and distribution of the partisan newspaper, to our own finances, to the use of legality for the construction of the party, and to the opening of premises and the internationalist formation of our ranks. The fundamental slogan of the next party stage is: “to grow and consolidate the party”.

3. To reaffirm the political agreement or agreements existing with *A Luchar*, without advancing beyond them, preventing any unification or any attempt by the political agents of the guerrilla to integrate us consciously or unconsciously to a unified organism that would be, by fact or by right, a guerrilla collateral. On the contrary, in relation to CUSI, we will try to develop it as a union revolutionary united front, which means we will tend to make union tendencies, by guild and from the grassroots, of the CUSI. If these tendencies are not achieved in the short term, that is to say, that the basis of the tendencies is that everything is decided democratically, dissolving as fractions, we will re-examine the CUSI case, not to abandon it but to draw conclusions.

4. To make up a Commission composed of three comrades — one representative of those who do not want to dissolve or merge in *A Luchar*, another representative of those who do want to merge or dissolve, and a member of the IEC, accepted by both sides, to discuss in what way will be tested the hypothesis that *A Luchar* may transform, from what it is today, into a revolutionary workers’ organisation.

Of course, we recommend this Commission authorise at least Comrades Simon and Miguel Angel, together with a small group of comrades who are completely in agreement with them, to have a six month experience, controlled by this Commission. §

⁵ See heading III. *The crux of the discussion: the policy for A Luchar.*