



# **Nahuel Moreno**

**Opportunism, Trotskyism,  
and the Popular Front  
governments**

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# Opportunism, Trotskyism, and the Popular Front governments

Note: These theses were prepared by Nahuel Moreno, put to a vote and approved by the founding conference of the International Workers League - Fourth International (IWL-FI) in 1982.

Those who wrote the theses of the Fourth International (International Committee) [FI-IC]) believed that the problem of the policy with which Popular Frontist- governments should be confronted was solved by Trotsky's analysis and with the one the Joint Committee of the Bolshevik Faction (FB) and the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI) had made in relation to the Government of National Reconstruction of Nicaragua.

The arrival of Mitterrand to power has revealed to us that this was not the case, that there are gaps and serious problems that have not been solved or are being reconsidered. As any unresolved theoretical problem, this causes profound differences in policy and practice. Added to this is the fact that all the front-populist governments have provoked responses, both opportunist and revolutionary, on the part of leaders, currents and organizations of revolutionary Marxism itself. Both the opportunist and the revolutionary responses have had, throughout this century, almost the same characteristics and even the same words. Due to the youth of the cadres and sympathizers of the Trotskyist movement in general, we will outline the answers, both of the opportunists and the revolutionaries, to serve as a basis for this and the programmatic regrouping that we are undertaking in the IWL-FI. Let's see what those characteristics that are repeated are and which we can generalize:

## 1. In relation to the popular frontist Governments

The central point that differentiates the opportunists from the revolutionists, and today revisionism from Trotskyism, is the one that has to do with politics regarding this type of government. Opportunism and Trotskyism differ sharply in three fundamental aspects of their politics.

The first point has to do with support or not. The opportunists are characterized by giving their support to the popular-frontist government. This support can be open or shameful; it may be a support to the measures of the government or a de facto support, when it is not clearly opposed to such measures, or any other variation of this kind. In opposition to that, Trotskyism is characterized by not giving any support, under any circumstances, neither the government nor its measures. This does not mean that they do not defend those measures when they are attacked by the counterrevolution. On some occasions, Trotsky — not Lenin — called for support for this defence; but it was a support given the attack by others. But when there is no attack on these measures, we never support them when the government proposes them.

Second, the opportunists are characterized by a complicit silence about the government. They do not denounce it as a bourgeois government and, like every bourgeois government, as

counterrevolutionary. That is, there is no policy of systematic denunciation, of confrontation and frontal opposition to the government.

The revolutionist, however, makes a systematic and implacable denunciation of the government as bourgeois and counterrevolutionary; the revolutionist calls not to believe in any of its promises or measures.

Third, the opportunist is characterized by not raising slogans of power which are the axis of all his politics and agitation. That is to say, the axis of his policy is not the vindication of a type of government opposite to the existing one.

Against this line of the opportunist, the axis of Trotskyist politics is the systematic agitation of a type of workers' government diametrically opposed to front-populism, in order to counterpose it. They are slogans of government which are agitated minute by minute, such as: Bourgeois ministers out of the government!, Government of the SP and CP!, Workers' and peasants' government! Trotsky has even raised the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat or of workers' government or the most famous of all of All Power to the Soviets! Always, always, Trotskyism has a great slogan, which is the fundamental one: the slogan of power to oppose the popular-frontist government. This does not mean that when the masses still trust the government, Trotskyism raises the slogan of overturning it. But neither does it mean that it conceals from the working class its characterization and politics. We prepare ourselves to overthrow the government when we convince the workers that it is a counterrevolutionary government and that we have to throw it out. To convince the working class of this urgent and essential need, there is no other way than to denounce the popular-frontist government minute by minute.

## **2. In the face of the bourgeoisie, imperialism and the feudal reaction**

The opportunist only denounces the bourgeoisie, imperialism and the feudal reaction as enemies of the workers, keeping silent on the popular—frontist government as if it were not an executor of counterrevolutionary politics. The opportunist has a mania for attacking the bourgeois parties that were displaced by the popular—frontist government. Within the Bolshevik party, the opportunists had a mania for attacking the tsar and for saying nothing about the government. The revolutionists, instead, without ceasing to attack the bourgeoisie, imperialism and the feudal reaction, systematically denounce, by taking every opportunity, the government that is ultimately the direct or indirect agent of all of them.

## **3. In the face of imperialism**

The opportunist does not make permanent agitation on the imperialist character of the government or the country itself. Since the rise of the popular—frontist government a criminal silence takes place in relation to this character of the government and the country. In contrast, the revolutionist denounces the imperialist character of the government and the country as much or more strongly than previously.

## **4. In the face of nationalist movements and oppressed nations facing the exploitation of imperialism**

On the part of the opportunist, there are no agitation campaigns, no struggles or demonstrations, or statements in favour of the colonies, semi-colonies or the nationalist movements that oppose imperialism itself. In contrast, the revolutionist makes more agitation than ever, because the situation allows him to carry out practical actions in his favour. He systematically raises the slogan of independence of the colonies and semi-colonies, or the absolute right to national self-

determination. The revolutionist also vindicates nationalist movements, even when he disagrees with their policy, defending them unconditionally in a public and agitational way.

## 5. In the face of the state apparatus

The opportunist does not denounce the government as unconditional defender of the bureaucratic structure of the state and, therefore, does not make a permanent agitation for the destruction of the bourgeois state. The revolutionist, on the contrary, systematically denounces the policy of the popular—frontist government of defence of the bureaucratic apparatus of the bourgeois state and calls to destroy it to impose a new type of state: commune according to Lenin, Soviet according to Trotsky.

## 6. In the face of the armed forces

The opportunist does not denounce the sinister government policy of consolidating the hierarchical structure of the armed forces, the last bastion of the capitalist regime. Consequently, he does not campaign to destroy them. The revolutionist, by contrast, at this stage makes a fierce campaign and has a transitional program to destroy them.

## 7. In the face of the counterrevolutionary workers parties

The opportunists, as soon as the counterrevolutionary workers' parties come to power, abandon all criticism and denunciation of them as counterrevolutionaries and as the highest guarantee of survival of the capitalist and imperialist regime. Thus, he abandons one of the primary tasks of revolutionary Marxism. As a consequence, he tends to dilute the differences with other parties instead of exacerbating them. The revolutionist does exactly the opposite: he denounces these parties more than ever as counterrevolutionaries, agents of imperialism and the bourgeoisie, and he tries by all means to mobilize the masses to confront and fight against them. That is to say, he increases his denunciation and accentuates the differences taking advantage that these parties are part of the bourgeois and imperialist government. And just as the revolutionist does not support any measure of the government, he does the same with the counterrevolutionary parties: he makes no pacts with them to prevent their repudiation from increasing.

## 8. In the face the world revolution

The opportunist ignores the world revolution and has no policy to develop it. This is how all questions are abandoned — on the part of Nin as well as Molinier-Frank, or Kamenev-Stalin in Russia — of development of the world revolution. The revolutionary, on the contrary, attaches as much importance to the development of the world revolution as to the revolutionary process of his own country, and denounces the government as agent of the world counterrevolution, fraternal partner of Yankee imperialism, cop of cops, attacking the Chauvinist character of the popular—frontist government.

## 9. In the face of the Fourth International

The opportunist, abandoning a strict delimitation from the counterrevolutionary workers' parties, when ceasing to denounce them daily, abandons the main task of our program, which is to put to the mass movement and the vanguard to repudiate the counterrevolutionary workers' parties, that the main task is the construction of a revolutionary party to confront them. That this party cannot be other than a Trotskyist or Trotskyist-like party with mass influence. §