



**Nahuel Moreno**

**Early criticism of  
Brunello's and  
Robles's draft**

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Bogota, January 1980

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## **First part:**

### **On the first three questions and statements in the document about facts, characterisations, and policies before March 1976**

#### **CHAPTER I**

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## Foreword

The PST (Argentina) was immediately banned by the genocidal military dictatorship that took office on 24 March 1976. The decree established that the mere fact of belonging to the PST was a crime. Since then, the party began to act in conditions of extreme and total clandestinity and had numerous members arrested and disappeared.

Nahuel Moreno, along with other leaders and militants, settled in Bogota shortly after the coup, to continue publishing *Revista de America*, continue with Editorial Pluma and promote the international Morenoist movement, which was still operating within the Fourth International (Unified Secretariat). In 1979–1980, when these debates took place, it was called the Bolshevik Fraction (BF).

Jorge Brunello and Juan Robles were leaders of the Uruguayan PST and had been in exile in Buenos Aires since the military coup in Uruguay. In April 1979, a national underground conference was held in Buenos Aires, which debated and run important debates and problems that had been taking place within the leadership of the PST (A).

As Moreno says in his introduction to this work — which is published for the first time — a week later, Brunello and Robles presented in Buenos Aires a letter to the Central Committee of the Argentine PST, titled *In defence of the Bolshevik Faction, in defence of the PST(A)*, which was accompanied by a “rough draft” that constituted the personal report to “the leadership of the PST (U) for discussion”, and to the Executive Committee of the BF, which gave continuity to some discussions of the conference and reflected the existence of a majority and a minority within the Argentine leadership.

The letter arrived directly in Bogota when, in June 1979, two comrades from the majority of the EC of the Argentine party and three comrades from the minority faction (Brunello, co-author of the “rough draft”, Armando and Osvaldo) travelled. Several meetings were held with the leadership of the Bolshevik Faction. Several agreements were reached but the discussions continued.

In January 1980, a national congress of the Argentine PST was held in Bogotá. Dozens of delegates travelled, together with the clandestine leadership, to participate in the event. This work by Moreno, a critic of Brunello and Robles’ “rough draft”, was part of the materials that were read and discussed.

Comrade Jorge Brunello remained as a leader of the PST (A). When the crisis and the outbreak of the current occurred, after Moreno died in 1987, Brunello formed a group that claimed to be Trotskyist and Morenoist. For his part, Juan Robles withdrew and eventually joined the Mandelist sector of Trotskyism.

To respect the archive material, we have kept “First part” in the title although it does not appear to be a second part.

**The editors.**

## Introduction

Bogota, January 1980

On 28 April 1979, a week after the Conference, Comrades Jorge Brunello and Juan Robles presented a letter to the Central Committee of the Argentine PST, entitled “In defence of the Bolshevik Fraction, in defence of the PST (A)”, which was accompanied by a “rough draft” that constituted the personal report to “the PST (U) leadership for discussion”, and to the Executive Committee of the BF [Bolshevik Faction].<sup>1</sup>

In Bogota, we learned about this document in July, when two comrades from the majority of the EC of the Argentine party and three comrades from the Minority Faction travelled. One of those three comrades was Jorge Brunello, co-author of the rough draft in question. On that occasion, we discussed very hard several of the positions presented in the document and the comrades of the minority had the opportunity to consult the party archives to document both their claims and those of the majority of the PST leadership and ours. Based on all this, we advanced a lot in the discussion, and we even came to agree on some points, as we will see later. Since then, I had the intention of preparing a comprehensive response to all the problems that the minority raises and also to the Faction Platform led by Comrades Brunello and Robles, which arrived in Bogotá several months after July and which I did not read as I was most of the later time abroad. However, I could only start this job. Given the very near holding of the World Conference and the Party Congress, it seems to me it is very possible I may not have the time necessary to complete that response. That is why I have decided to round off the few chapters I had ready since last year, as a first contribution to the discussion, notwithstanding that I complete everything necessary about that document and that platform as soon as I have a little more time.

### **It is not proper for leaders to present a “draft” to the party ranks as an official report to a sister party and the leadership of the BF**

Before getting directly into the subject, I want to make some considerations about the nature of the document and the purpose its authors gave it. They clarify the document is a “rough draft” and ask 33 questions on key points to which they do not answer.<sup>2</sup> They end up making three clarifications,

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1 This document is reproduced in the compilation of internal materials that the party leadership has just made — *History*, volume I — between pages 26 to 52. We will quote it according to the page number in which the quotations appear in that compilation.

2 “Before concluding and as this rough draft covers numerous aspects (...) we ask the comrades of the Argentine Central Committee to respond clearly on some points that are key for us.” (*In defence of the Bolshevik Faction, in defence of the PST(A)*, p. 51; emphasis NM.)

where they say they are fully aware of their *mistakes*, insist on the *draft* nature of the document, and ask that it be published on an internal discussion bulletin.<sup>3</sup>

Surely, more than one comrade has already guessed where we are going. How can it be that two old leaders present as an *official* report to the Uruguayan party and the leadership of the BF, with a request for publication in a bulletin for the entire rank-and-file of the Argentine party, a document that is a “*rough draft*”, with *unanswered questions* and with “*inevitable mistakes*”.

This is an attack on the seriousness that any document or position of leaders that is presented to the rank-and-file of the party must have. Just as the class struggle is the litmus test for every leader, how to act in the face of internal party discussion is no less so. Both, the statements and the questions, are a demagogic display of false modesty and a misguided polemic manoeuvre, which leads them not to act as leaders. A leader cannot bring unanswered doubts and questions to the party rank-and-file. What is magnificent and commendable in a rank-and-file militant is inadmissible in a leader, whose role is to give clear answers and definitive documents.

Are the 33 questions authentic and the authors do not know how to answer them? Or are they a rhetorical device since they do have categorical answers? In the first case, the comrades had every right to make them, but only to the leadership and, based on the answers they received, to advance or not in the political discussion. In the second case, the comrades had to give their *categorical answers*, without resorting to short-range political tricks. And those responses had to be thoroughly documented based on the statements of the Executive Committee, the internal bulletins, the newspaper editorials. Only in this way can we win — or lose — a serious discussion and educate the party. If a leader presents a document to the rank-and-file of the party, he has to be willing to demonstrate it and defend it down to its last comma. As long as he is not in these conditions, he must continue studying, documenting and discussing at the leadership level.

All these contradictions, coming from comrades of the political stature of Brunello and Robles, whose relations with the party leadership have always been extremely fraternal, led me to think that, when writing their document, the comrades were, at least, obfuscated. However, it is not my intention to start with strong methodological criticism of these aspects — despite its undoubted importance — since I consider the document as part of the crisis the party experienced last year and because I have seen comrades of the PST (A) who do not belong to the faction led by Jorge and Juan committing mistakes as serious or more serious than those I have just pointed out.

The goal of these methodological criticisms is to rebuild with Comrades Brunello and Robles and with those who follow them, the leadership team that has worked fraternally and intimately linked to us for so many years and with such good results. And it also has the goal of acting as a team with the comrades, so we can clarify the real differences, document them exhaustively and take them to the ranks avoiding confusing anyone with unfounded or ill-founded statements or accusations.

## Brunello and Robles violated the iron laws of a counter-revolutionary stage

From what the comrades raise in the document, another problem arises, this one indeed serious, because they insist that we are in a *counter-revolutionary* stage. Without discussing now whether they are right or wrong, this means that, for Brunello and Robles, the party is undoubtedly subjected to relentless persecution, one of the worst in its history. And the comrades themselves

3 “Before finishing we want to raise three things. The first is to reiterate once again that all the criticisms and doubts contained in this draft are made being fully aware of our great limitations and errors and that they are the criticisms of disciples of the leaders of the party, which, among other great merits, has been that of having been the creator of our party in Uruguay.

“Secondly, we want to clarify to the comrades that, forced by the haste imposed by the completion of the CC, this document should be taken only as a *draft* and that, later, we will write its *final text*.

“And, lastly, we ask the comrades of the Central Committee to discuss it and, if possible, to *publish it in an internal discussion bulletin*.” (*In defence ...*, p. 53; emphasis NM.)

point out the essential need to defend the party in these harsh circumstances. This is a matter of life and death, both for each comrade individually and for the entire party. In other words, it means that the greater the repression, the greater the party patriotism and the greater the adjustment of the defence mechanisms.

The experience of over a century of the struggle of the working and revolutionary class validates a permanent law for the counter-revolutionary stages: the government and its police committed to the utmost in destroying the revolutionary party, take advantage of every obfuscated controversy, every factional struggle, to that end. In a counter-revolutionary stage, the just eagerness for political and theoretical clarification should never lead us to forget this iron law, which implies avoiding like the plague harsh and factional confrontations that, in those circumstances, only serve the reaction.

None of this excludes the discussion, which can be very strong but which has to be careful, fraternal, always putting the integrity of the party as a fundamental concern, always showing the reaction, its police and its torturers, that clandestinity and the blows have united and solidified us more than ever. This is the first norm that rules the internal life of the party at such a stage. Comrades Brunello and Robles, despite their characterisation of the stage, promoted a factional struggle that could only weaken the party, which they did not pass through the sieve of the party defence. Moreover, having not taken into account the consequences of the counter-revolutionary stage in the internal life of the party, ignoring this aspect of reality, they did not realise the characteristics of the stage are the ultimate reason for the problems and crises. experienced by the party.



# **First part:** **On the first three questions and statements in the document about facts, characterisations, and policies before March 1976**

## **CHAPTER I**

### **The coup danger was always present, historically and immediately in the forecasts of the Argentine PST**

The coup danger was always present, historically and immediately in the forecasts of the Argentine PST

The “draft” of the two comrades has two central statements:

1. The party did not foresee the coup; therefore, it did not give the masses a policy to confront it and did not prepare the party for the possible passage into clandestinity.<sup>4</sup>

2. The line that it had from October-November 1975, and in particular the first three months of 1976, was totally incorrect. Furthermore, with it, we “disarmed the class” and “facilitated the military coup”.

Before going into a careful discussion of both statements, we must distinguish the great difference that separates them. The first refers to *events* that took place, that are documented, that it is very quick and easy to prove them, which categorically prove this statement is completely false and irresponsible, rare in leading comrades with so many years of Trotskyist tradition and experience. The second statement refers to a policy, and as such, it is totally legitimate to discuss it, within the framework that corresponds to a historical discussion such as that.

### **We foresaw the coup and prepared the party and the masses to face it**

We will unravel the first statement of Comrades Brunello and Robles. It is no coincidence that in the letter that I addressed to the April 1979 National Conference of the Argentine party, I began by recalling the discussions about the possibility of a coup, since this was a question that

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<sup>4</sup> In chapter one, point III of the “draft”, it says: “We did not foresee the coup, we did not call the masses to confront it, nor did we prepare the party for the counter-revolutionary stage (...) In the mini balance-sheet of Comrade Moreno's letter, it is stated that we foresaw the inevitability of the coup. This is true historically but not concretely. More precisely, when the period of preparation for the coup opened, we self-criticised for having called to confront the coup and discarded its immediate possibility” (p. 27). The title of chapter three reads “The party did not foresee the coup nor did it prepare to go into clandestinity” (p. 32).

had been raised since the victory of FREJULI.<sup>5</sup> Many sectors of the left, and in particular some of the main leaders of the Unified Secretariat, said the coup had already taken place under the Peron government. Only we said categorically and from the outset that this was not the case and that there was a danger of a Pinochet-style coup by the oligarchy and imperialism,

In September 1973, from *Avanzada Socialista*, we insisted on our alert that the Lanusse<sup>6</sup> plan closely resembled that of the Chilean military.<sup>7</sup> From the beginning of 1974, we specifically warned that the oligarchy planned to wait patiently for the government to discredit itself and then win the elections or give a coup.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of 1974, with the escalation of the Triple-A<sup>9</sup> and the advance of Lopez Rega's<sup>10</sup> cohorts, the party developed an intense activity denouncing the advance of the right and calling for the rejection of any *coup d'état*, open or covert.<sup>11</sup>

Comrades Brunello and Robles will say that they fully agree in all of the above, that they expressly clarify that the party historically foresaw the coup. But the party not only did that but also *made a permanent and systematic campaign to denounce the coup as of May 1975 and the possible coup triumph was a central issue of its politics* (despite the strange memory of the comrades) in February-March 1976. Proof to hand.

A little less than a year before the Videla<sup>12</sup> coup — I insist, May 1975 — we began to warn about two possible and parallel dangers that were just around the corner: the “auto coup” of the most reactionary wing of Isabel Peron's government and the “liberal coup” of the military, the bourgeoisie and imperialism. And we were not saying it in a historical sense, but we were referring to “the two

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5 **FREJULI**, the acronym for the Justicialist Liberation Front, was an Argentine electoral alliance formed in 1972, after the agreements between Lanusse, Balbin, and Peron — the Great National Agreement (GAN) — for Peronism to recover legality and join the efforts of the bourgeoisie and the army to channel and divert the ascent revolutionary started in 1969 with the Cordobazo. It was made up of the Justicialist (Peronist) Party with other minor parties. It ran for the presidential elections of March 1973 and September 1973, winning both times with the candidacies of Campora-Solano Lima and Peron-Peron, respectively. [Editor]

6 **Alejandro Agustin Lanusse** (1918–1996), de facto president of Argentina from March 1971 to May 1973. Great architect of the so-called Great National Agreement. On 25 May 1973, he handed over the presidency to the Peronist candidate, Hector Campora. [Editor]

7 *Avanzada Socialista*, No.7, 26 September 1973, article “Seven million look at Peron”: “We have been warning for some time that the Lanusse plan of 11 March resembled the plan of the Chilean military.”

8 *Avanzada Socialista*, 15 March 1974, analysing the electoral course of FREJULI, we said: “The new plan of the oligarchy is to wait patiently for the discredit of the government to win the elections or overturn it through the coup.”

9 **The Argentine Anticommunist Alliance** (usually known as **Triple-A** or **AAA**) was a far-right death squad that initiated the assassinations of state terrorism under the Peron government in 1974, encouraged by a sector of Peronism, the union bureaucracy and the armed forces. The Triple-A was secretly led by Jose Lopez Rega, Minister of Social Welfare and it was responsible for the disappearance and death of almost 700 people. [Editor]

10 **Jose Lopez Rega** (1916-1989) was a politician and Argentine minister, known for his influence on Juan Domingo Peron and Maria Estela (Isabel) Martinez de Peron and organising, from the position of Minister of Social Welfare, the Triple-A, a paramilitary right-wing terrorist group. His influence increased rapidly since 1973, especially after Peron's death in mid-1974, becoming a virtual prime minister because of his influence on Isabel Peron, to the point that almost all the cabinet was made up of men of his trust, promoted by him. Nicknamed “the Sorcerer” by his adversaries for his affinity to esotericism. [Editor]

11 In the multiparty meeting of October 1974 our axis was the denunciation of the coup, with the slogan “Fight the coup without supporting the government” (*Avanzada Socialista*, year III, No 125, 15 October 1974). The editorial of issue No 130, of 28 November 1974, proposes three points for the workers' struggle. The first says: “Against any coup d'état, open or covert.” We do not bring more examples since Brunello and Robles did not question this “historical” aspect.

12 **Jorge Rafael Videla** (1925–2013) was the general who led the genocidal coup of March 1976 together with Admiral Massera and Brigadier Agosti. Between 1976 and 1978 he served as the de facto presidency of Argentina, in the first stage of the civic-military dictatorship self-titled National Reorganisation Process. [Editor]

currently possible coups ...".<sup>13</sup> So current was the problem then, that a few weeks later the "self-coup" took place, with the Rodrigazo,<sup>14</sup> that was forced to back down by the workers' strike.

Comrades Brunello and Robles say that as of the "liquidating self-criticism" of the extended CC in October and my direct intervention (during August I had been abroad and, on my return, I presented a critical position in the EC, which was accepted, regarding the line we had given during August), we discarded the possibility of the *coup d'état*.

Let us recall the forecasts of that celebrated Central Committee of 10 October 1975 and see, in the light of subsequent events, whether they were correct and we were right or they were wrong and Brunello and Robles are right today. We characterised that, after the Rodrigazo, the possibility of a coup had receded since we had entered a situation of revolutionary or pre-revolutionary crisis, that the bourgeoisie was terrified of the possible course of the situation, and that there would be no coup until it demobilised the workers. We said that the danger of a coup would materialise if the workers' movement failed to defeat the counter-revolutionary offensive, which at that time was in the hands of the government of Isabel Peron. Either it would be defeated, or it would almost inevitably change hands (with Isabel in front of the military or the military directly). The perspective was towards another great battle of the workers against the government of Isabel, and it was based on that perspective that we set our policy.

What happened? Almost exactly what we forecasted: there was no coup in all those months; there was a second struggle against Isabel. This second struggle was much weaker than the first, the betrayal of the bureaucracy demobilised the workers and the coup took place. If Brunello and Robles were more serious or at least had a better sense of humour, they should congratulate us as good fortune-tellers instead of criticising us for being blind.

As of the October CC, as in previous months, we always kept in mind as a latent and ferocious threat the danger of the coup, crouched behind Isabel Peron's armchair. And this is how we kept denouncing it in each issue of *Avanzada Socialista*. Let's recall a few examples.

The year 1976 began amid a climate of unrest and, to a certain extent, the question of the coup hung in the air. In the first issue of *Avanzada Socialista* that came out, in February, it was published as an editorial a call from the Executive Committee to the Communist Party and the Peronist Working Youth to launch a united front to face the crisis in the country and the offensive against the workers. We proposed a unitary Trade Union Conference and one of our central points to be approved at that conference was a *categorical pronouncement against the coup d'état*, "a new looming threat".<sup>15</sup> In an article in the same issue, from which we called for a working-class and popular solution to the crisis, it said: "To the extent that this bosses' united front strengthens, the possibility of a new coup d'état will open up, under the banner of the exploitation of the workers' movement. This terrible blow for the

13 The article "We are at War" ended: "These young comrades may fall victim to the mirage of the 'liberal' bourgeoisie. Their hatred of the democratic abuses committed by the government and the fascist gangs can throw them into the arms of the 'liberals'. Confused by the government's contortions, they can rely on the democratic mask, which the oligarchy and imperialism sometimes use to reach power and execute the most anti-worker and undemocratic of dictatorships.

When our party poses, in the face of the political crisis, that we oppose both the ultra-reactionary self-coup, which may be brewing within the government itself, as well as the coup of the liberals, of the military who promise to defend freedoms, it is not that we have an abstentionist position, or that we are against coups d'état because of an ideological or moral principle. We are against the two currently possible coups because both are the back door that leads to much worse regimes for the masses than the current one. Faced with them, we cannot help but call the workers to continue searching and contracting our own class path, independent of imperialism coup variants, the oligarchy and the bosses." (*Avanzada Socialista*, year IV, No. 148, 31 May, 1975.)

14 **Rodrigazo** is the name given to a package of economic adjustment policies announced in Argentina on 4 June 1975, and the workers' mobilisation that followed. The package was announced and implemented by Celestino Rodrigo, Argentine Minister of Economy in the government of Isabel Peron. The measures included: 150% devaluation of currency for the commercial exchange rate; 100% increase in utility and public transport prices; 180% rise in the price of fuel; 45% increase in wages and the freezing of collective bargaining. The social protests resulting from these measures put the government of Isabel Peron in crisis. [Editor]

15 "Our party considers that, together with these defensive proposals, the conference must declare itself categorically on the coup d'état, a new threat looming on the political ground, the possibility of a coup that is reflecting the bosses front which is actually forming in the economic field." (*Avanzada Socialista*, year V, No 173, 9 February, 1976.)

country and the workers would imply that the bulk of the bourgeoisie would detach itself from the Peronist government, after having squeezed it to the end.”

On 17 February, the party had the opportunity to make a brief statement on Channel 7, which was later published as the editorial page of the newspaper. There we said that we had to “*speak out against false or even worse alternatives, in the first place, the one that could attempt a military coup.*”<sup>16</sup>

The central page of the 25 February issue was dedicated to insisting on the need for a working-class and popular solution to the crisis and there we pointed to the *pro-coup groups*, “*apparently minority*” that “*want to ‘solve’ the problem with a slash of the sword, applying a Pinochet-style dictatorship.*”<sup>17</sup>

Undoubtedly, the national situation was very confusing, which was reflected in the discussions that took place and in the disparity of positions that existed within the party. In an internal bulletin of 3 March, the national leadership pointed out that there were three positions in the party: those who did not believe in the possibility of a coup, those who considered that it was inexorable, and the third, of the party leadership, “*which considers that whether the coup happens or the current situation continues and we get to the elections, it will be a consequence of a combination of circumstances and events and not the product of a single phenomenon.*”<sup>18</sup>

On Friday, 5 March, the country was shocked by the television announcement of a brutal plan of economic super-exploitation, the Mondelli Plan.<sup>19</sup> If until that time the axis of our policy was to seek a working-class and popular solution to the crisis, denouncing both the Peronist government and the coup threat, from that day on the whole party launched itself to promote and lead the mobilisations against Mondelli, which began almost immediately. But the forecast of the coup is still present, it does not depart for a minute from the pages of the newspaper or the concerns of the party. One of the headlines of *Avanzada Socialista* on 15 March said: “*Coup d’état: prevent it with the mobilisation.*” In the same issue, the Executive Committee of the Socialist Youth called on the youth, workers and students to confront the Mondelli Plan, saying: *we did not ignore either the danger of a coup that lurked in the country and we called for a general strike of the workers’ movement to face it.*<sup>20</sup>

16 “For this reason, together with expressing the main responsibility of the government and the inconvenience of continuing for just one more minute, we must speak out against false or even worse alternatives, in the first place, the one that could attempt a military coup. The memory of the tragedies of 1955, 1963, and 1966 is still fresh in our memory, when different military dictatorships with their Pinedos and their Alsogarays as ministers, attacking and taking over unions, ended up bloodily confronting the workers and plunging the country into crises as terrible or more terrible than the current one.” (*Avanzada Socialista*, year IV, No. 179, 23 February 1976.)

17 The central-pages article, under the title “For a working-class and popular solution”, said: “(...) there are apparently minority pro-coup groups who want to ‘solve’ the problem with a slash of the sword, applying a Pinochet-style dictatorship.” (*Ibid.*)

18 Internal Bulletin of 3 March 1976: “Around the possibility of a coup d’état in the immediate term, a fruitful controversy has arisen within the leadership and the entire party militancy. Saving logical nuances, three analyses of this possibility are outlined. First, the analysis holds that, as in August of last year, since the bourgeoisie does not plan a coup, nothing will happen. The coup d’état is a mere theoretical possibility, not a political one, more or less like the possibility the Portuguese socialist party will carry out the workers’ revolution. This possibility may exist theoretically but today there is no political possibility it will take place. The second analysis, that considers there has been a coup plan by the Armed Forces since last year, and therefore everything that is happening inexorably brings us closer to the achievement and fulfilment of that plan. Therefore, the coup is inevitable and is already nearby. Third, the analysis of the party leadership that considers that the coup, if it takes place, and likewise if the current situation continues and we reach the elections, will be a consequence of a combination of circumstances and events and not the product of a single phenomenon, as the comrades supporting the other two positions reason and who believe there is practically no possibility of a coup. The party leadership holds that the only determining factors are the rise of the workers’ movement and the plan of the bourgeoisie. For those who believe the coup is inevitable in a more or less immediate term, the determining element is an alleged coup plan by the Armed Forces. Even if it were true that the bourgeoisie as a whole continues to cling to bourgeois democracy and the GAN, likewise if the Armed Forces are behind the coup, none of these trends works in a vacuum. These trends, in the field of class struggle, have to deal with the plans of imperialism, as well as with the struggles of the working class. Not only in physics does material resistance exist; with as much or greater reason this phenomenon occurs in the class struggle.”

19 **Mondelli Plan** was the name given to an antiworker economic plan launched in February 1976. Its promoter was the Minister of Economy, Emilio Mondelli. [Editor]

20 *Avanzada Socialista*, year V, No. 181, 15 March 1976.

The last issue of the newspaper is dated 20 March. The central article *begins by talking about the imminence of the coup d'état, which took place four days later.*<sup>21</sup>

We believe that so far, it is evident the party had the coup permanently present as a historical and immediate danger and its policy (about which we will discuss separately) had it in mind as a very serious problem.

## The party prepared for clandestinity for a year before the victory of the coup

The permanent presence in our analysis of the danger of a coup, and the direct repression we suffered, meant that the problem of clandestinity had been raised daily long before the victory of the coup. Many comrades will remember from their direct experience and from the tragic deaths we suffered at the hands of the death squads that the party, although it maintained its legal status as a national party until 1976, had already begun to have a semi-clandestine operation in many aspects for almost two years before the victory of the coup.

As of 1974, we had to increasingly reduce the use of the local headquarters (and the ones we used were with a thousand security and defence measures), but in May 1975 — as an inevitable internal face of the political analysis that we already recalled — an adjustment was made in the measures, when we gave the order to face the activity almost as if the triumphant coup were immediate: “The situation forces us to make this request to all the comrades: *let's exaggerate the security measures, watching the pace of events. Let's not use the premises even to the minimum extent that we were doing. Let us take care of the call to meetings and adopt the most rigorous security measures. Let there be no panic and that all comrades be aware that these are necessary minimal preventive measures and let us not make mistakes.*”<sup>22</sup>

Referring to this date, during the meeting in Bogota, Comrade Andres reminded Brunello that, when the Uruguayan leadership arrived in Buenos Aires, *in May 1975*, I myself made it clear to them that if they did not take immediate and effective measures of total clandestinity, we were going to expel them since we were preparing for the possibility of an imminent triumphant coup.

Regardless of whether or not it was the most likely variant from the point of view of the political analysis, the party leadership formulated a categorical internal organisational policy long before March 1976: to increasingly act as if the triumph of the reactionary coup were imminent. This was so for a simple reason. We could not bet on the other variant, because if we were wrong (we did not prepare and the coup came), they would sweep us off the surface of the earth.

This is why, as of 1975, it was decided the best leaders of the party would dedicate themselves to preparing the clandestine apparatus. It was voted that all the comrades, especially the leaders, would change their address and that three clandestine printing apparatus would be built. All the zonal directorates and the national directorate had clandestine offices for their operation and to centralise the activity. A month before the coup, the party already had two clandestine printing apparatuses.

Because these are issues related to clandestinity, there may be many comrades who ignore much of what we are saying. But Brunello and Robles should have been more serious about their claims since they did know much of this. Since they like questions: Where were the party archives? Why didn't they fall in the hands of the police? Where did the party leaders live in the year before the coup? How come none of the members of the party and the zones leadership was taken to prison? Why, when the coup took place, did we have so few prisoners in the whole party? How and where could the party leaders continue to function from the day of the coup? How, in less than three months, the main leader and the International Commission were transferred to another country where they had been expected for a long time? We do not leave unanswered questions, when they

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21 *Avanzada Socialista*, year V, N0. 182, 20 March 1976.

22 *Internal Bulletin* of 15 May 1975.



are rhetorical, like these. The answer is common to all questions: because for a long time the party was internally prepared in case the coup triumphed. We asked Comrades Brunello, Armando and Osvaldo almost all of these questions when they visited us, and at that time they did not know what to answer. The measures of clandestinity had been so drastic that, for example, Comrade Brunello does not know today where any of the comrades of the party leadership lived when the coup took place or the location of any apparatus.

Let's return to the bulletin of 3 March 1976. In very careful language, given that we still had legal status, 20 days before the *coup d'état*, we alerted the entire party that we should fundamentally prepare for it: "We believe we can pinpoint exactly whether that moment, the moment of the coup, has arrived or not. Because from the answer to this question two diametrically opposite orientations are derived; elections or clandestinity (...) it would be political and methodological irresponsibility to eliminate in such a delicate matter a series of phenomena that could liquidate the party. For reasons not only methodological but also for partisan precaution, we must consider the less probable hypotheses, but which, if they take place and we are not prepared for them, could mean the liquidation of the party."<sup>23</sup>

## This aspect of the discussion was settled

We have to confess we did not like it much when we read in the document of Comrades Brunello and Robles their statements that we had not foreseen the coup, nor had we prepared the party for the possibility of its victory. Perhaps many comrades in the rank-and-file at the time or those who joined the party in the harsh years after the coup may have doubts about these events, or directly ignore them, and this is very legitimate. We also know that there is always a contradictory relationship between the lines put forward by the leadership, the official positions, and the individual expectations of each comrade, the nuances and, as reflected in the internal bulletin that we quoted, that there was a lot of discussion about the coup.

To all these new or then rank-and-file comrades, we have to tell them that for more than two years within our party and at different levels, three positions on the country's prospects were heatedly discussed and from the clash between these positions our policy was gradually outlined. The Coral wing systematically stated, about once a month, that the tanks were already on the streets. During 1974 and 1975 they summoned an urgent meeting of the Political Bureau eight times to report the coup had already been declared. These comrades lived during all that time in anxiety, almost desperate. A second wing held that there was no possibility of a coup and that the election was inevitable. This position was almost the majority at the rank-and-file of the party. Most of the leadership, of which I was a part, argued that Isabel's government was increasingly going to the right, which was the prelude to the coup, but that before the coup could be defined, major battles were pending between the Peronist government and the workers — such as the Rodrigazo and the fight against Mondelli. The coup would only be struck upon the defeat of those future battles of the workers against Isabel. This is why we considered the wing that discarded the coup was suicidal since that danger existed without any doubt, and the wing that denounced it minute by minute, without fair characterisations, disarmed the party, preventing it from fulfilling its role as a mobiliser. The internal reality of the party between 1973–1974 and the coup was that. Most of the leadership kept arguing with these other two positions practically the entire time that the Peronist government lasted.

Comrades Brunello and Robles knew perfectly, if not the details, at least the general lines of these discussions. Given their ties to the newspaper's editorial staff, Brunello, in particular, participated in numerous discussions. In the political memory of the two leaders there cannot remain the anecdotes, the nuances, the jokes or comments to support an entire document to present to the leadership of the BF, to the leadership of the Uruguayan party, to the rank-and-file of the

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<sup>23</sup> *Internal Bulletin* of 3 March 1976, already quoted.

Argentine party and to alert a secret faction in the latter. It is a method unbecoming for leaders and alien to ours.

The discussion in Bogotá, for this very reason, was quite heated on this point. But the evidence of the facts was overwhelming; in a single day we could prove exhaustively and without the slightest doubt to Comrades Brunello, Osvaldo and Armando that the statement of the “rough draft” regarding the forecast of the coup and the preparation for clandestinity was totally false. One of the first points of the minutes of the agreement signed by the BF leadership and these three comrades says that it was achieved “... a common general balance of the party's history, based on the existing documentation in the FB archive, documentation that the parties, for obvious reasons, had not been able to consult and that it exhaustively demonstrated that:

“c1) during the entire period of the Peronist governments, the party anticipated and pointed out the political and theoretical possibility of the coup, but the pressures generated by four years of legality, resulted in the forecast and the concrete alert against the *coup d'état* being imposed through the polemic, in which there were different positions, which was reflected both in the newspapers and in the Internal Bulletin (IB), despite all of which, unquestionably, *there are express resolutions of the EC to arm the party against the immediate possibility of a coup;*

“c2) it is clear from those resolutions that *the party had a policy against the coup*, the fairness and degree of fairness of which remains a matter of discussion;

“c3) in May 1975, the party voted to go into clandestinity and the preparation of the clandestine apparatus, with the contradiction implied by the need and the possibility of maintaining a certain legal activity as a party; (...).”<sup>24</sup>

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24 Minutes-agreement between the Secretariat of the BF and the delegations of the EC and the MF [Minority Faction] of the PST, summarising the meetings of 19 and 25 July 1979 in Bogota. *Addendum to Internal Bulletin* No. 43, of 3 August 1979.

## CHAPTER II

### Two opposing policies

Entering now the political discussion, Comrades Brunello and Robles accuse us of having had a totally incorrect policy during the second half of 1975 and in particular in February-March 1976, until the military coup triumphed. According to them, our sins were:

- 1) Having helped destabilise the bourgeois government of Isabel Peron;<sup>25</sup>
- 2) Having stated that the greatest enemy of the Argentine workers was the government of Isabel-Kerensky, without giving us a policy in the face of the danger of a coup, the “greatest enemy” of the workers;<sup>26</sup>
- 3) To have called to mobilise with everything against Mondelli;
- 4) Allowing ourselves to be used by Calabro,<sup>27</sup> who was playing his own game, when we called to fight against Mondelli and Isabel and for new leadership of the workers’ movement.<sup>28</sup>

For the accusations they make to us and what they propose as an alternative policy, according to Brunello and Robles:

- 1) The bourgeois government of Isabel Peron had to be stabilised;
- 2) The main enemy of the Argentine workers between the last months of 1975 and the first months of 1976 was not the bourgeois government of Isabel-Kerensky, but the danger of a Videla-Kornilov coup;
- 3) It was not necessary to mobilise thoroughly against Mondelli but against the “danger of a coup”;
- 4) It was not necessary to seek by any means the development of a new leadership of the workers’ movement that would push them and lead them to a victory against Isabel and Mondelli.

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25 “(...) we politically disarmed the class and helped to further destabilise the government and facilitate the military coup.” “In March, we were the left-wing that contributed to destabilising the government so that the military prevailed.” *In defence ...*, op. cit., pp. 31 and 29.

26 “(...) we politically disarmed the class and helped to further destabilise the government and facilitate the military coup.” “In March, we were the left-wing that contributed to destabilising the government so that the military prevailed.” *In defence ...*, op. cit., pp. 31 and 29.

27 **Victorio Calabro** (b. 1929) is an Argentine Peronist politician and trade unionist. He was a leading bureaucrat of the Metal Workers Union. In 1973, he was elected lieutenant governor of the province of Buenos Aires and then assumed as governor on 24 January 1974 after the resignation of Oscar Bidegain. He was demitted on 26 March 1976 by the coup d’état by Jorge Videla and the Junta de Comandantes. [Editor]

28 “Our ideology made us dance to the beat played by Calabro and company (...).” “We did not realise that Calabro was betting on the coup and that, at that moment, he could accept allies who, like us, played along with his coup strategy.” “Calabro played his game (...).” “What we do remember is that at that time we were doing ideology about the new leadership that emerged in the CGT, with Calabro at the head.” *In defence ...*, op. cit., p. 30.



Leaving aside the exaggerations into which Comrades Brunello and Robles fell, inevitable given their factionalist position, we go to the content of the two opposing positions. For that, before touching on each of the four points that the “rough draft” raises, we will recall the first battles that our party had to fight against the counter-revolution, which began *two years* before the military coup of 1976 triumphed and that, inexplicably, seems to have been completely erased from the memory of the comrades who presented the draft.

## In the fight against the Triple-A, we faced the outpost of the counter-revolution

On 29 May 1974, in Pacheco, three Argentine PST militants were assassinated. A week earlier, another working-class comrade had been assassinated, also in the northern zone. We recall these dates to quickly place all the comrades in what were the years 1974 and 1975 in Argentina. At that time our ferocious and concrete struggle began against the outpost of the counter-revolution, the fascist death squads, the AAA. Until June 1975, the axis of our struggle against the government of Isabel went through the denunciation of the advance of the right, of the united front of Isabel with the military to repress with methods of civil war the workers' and revolutionary vanguard and especially the guerrillas.

To confront the attacks of the fascist wing of the union bureaucracy and the lumpen sectors that Lopez Rega encouraged from the Ministry of Social Welfare, we took measures of all kinds. Internally, it was the time when we began to defend our local headquarters that continued to operate while closing many of them because of the impossibility of defending them.

Outwardly, our policy was essentially directed towards the political superstructure, since the workers' movement, which was not directly attacked, did not feel yet the threat of the fascist danger. It was the time of the multiparty meetings to denounce the advance of the rightist offensive, of the much-discussed “meetings of the nine”.

Our party, which was the most attacked among all the legal parties in the country by the Triple-A, played a leading role throughout this period, boldly advancing all the variants and slogans that we believed may catch on to confront the extreme right. This is why we raised the defence of the bourgeois institutions against the attack of the counter-revolution. This is why we tried, when Ortega Peña the grassroots Peronist MP was assassinated, a beginning of self-defence of the organisations of the left, which we could not concretise. The more attacked it was, the more the party refined its policy and the more the morale of our militants and workers' activists was tempered, who began to see us as leaders, for whom our slogan became flesh: “Fascism is not discussed, it is destroyed”.

## Did we have to “stabilise” the government of Isabel?

In June 1975, with the Rodrigazo, a new chapter in the history of the Argentine workers' movement was opened. For the first time, it took to the streets *en masse* to demonstrate against the Peronist government and won a colossal victory. It overthrew the Minister of Economy and his super-exploitation plan (“economically Pinochetist” we called it then) and caused the downfall of the hated Minister of Social Welfare, Lopez Rega. Until the general strike that liquidated Lopez Rega, the point of reference of the party's policy had been precisely the advance of the counter-revolutionary wing headed by the sorcerer-minister. From that moment on, the centre stage of the national scene was taken by the mobilised workers' movement, the workers' rise to overturn the government.

This was the situation that we analysed in the CC on 10 October, in which I made the analogy of Isabel's government with a lemon, as the “rough draft” recalls. We said the Argentine bourgeoisie was acting very cunningly, that it was “squeezing” the last drop of Isabel's government since it could still use it to go against the workers, repressing and super-exploiting them, and that, inevitably, when

it finished using it — even if we could not foresee the exact moment when it would happen — it would be thrown away, as is done with a lemon.

We added that the only possibility for things not turning out like this was that the workers' mobilisation would knock it down beforehand and that we had to push in this sense. For us, the fall of Isabel's government was inevitable and the question was who would overthrow it, whether the rising workers' movement or the military-bourgeois-oligarchic-imperialist front, once it no longer served them. According to our analysis, to the extent that an alternative workers' leadership capable of guiding the mobilisation to its ultimate consequences did not emerge, the more the Isabel government was discredited, the closer the danger of a coup.

Based on these characterisations, the CC guided the party with a clear policy: to continue to the bitter end the fight against the main enemy, the bourgeois government of Isabel, until it overthrew it and imposed a provisional president chosen from among the workers' deputies of the parliament. Explicitly, the danger of the coup was in the background since we were perfectly aware that the general strike had momentarily pushed the coup away and the great immediate enemy was the government of Isabel in a united front with the military, and the only possible axis for workers' mobilisation passed through there. Comrades Brunello and Robles recall that I used, to substantiate this policy, the analogy with the Bolsheviks, who only called to fight against Kornilov in August, when the coup took place, and not in the previous months.<sup>29</sup>

Today, we reassert that the characterisations and policies we gave in that CC were very correct, they armed the party and allowed us to have a vanguard role in the last workers' struggles that preceded the Videla coup. Thanks to them, we were able to clearly confront the liquidating policy of the Peronist union bureaucracy, which in all those months kept saying: "Be careful with the coup, do not fight Isabel because that encourages the coup plotters."

For this reason, four years later, the accusations made by Comrades Brunello and Robles fill us with pride. For us, it is a merit to have "destabilised" the Argentine bourgeois government through workers' mobilisation. What worries us is that leaders of tradition and experience such as Brunello and Robles may have such an opportunistic position regarding a bourgeois, "reactionary and anti-worker" government.<sup>30</sup> Because if we put in the affirmative what they criticise us for, during the last months of 1975 and the first months of 1976, the reactionary and anti-worker bourgeois government was *not* the "main enemy" of the Argentine workers and it had to be stabilised. This is the fundamental content of the position of the "rough draft", which translates into the expression "defend Isabel" that they use in the questions. A bourgeois government is never to be "*stabilised*" when there are possibilities to mobilise the workers against it. This is the golden rule of Leninism. Whoever says otherwise is a traitor to the workers' mobilisation. This is why Lenin taught that never, never, not even with the Cossacks in General Paz,<sup>31</sup> do we defend or support a bourgeois government or stabilise it; we always do everything possible to destabilise it with mobilisation.

## As long as it existed, until its last breath, there was no worse enemy than the government of Isabel

Comrades Brunello and Robles commit a serious revisionist mistake when they repeatedly claim the main enemy of the workers was the *danger of a coup*. One thing is the coup and another is the danger of it. If the coup takes place, it is an enemy present, which is there, you can see the tanks in the street. As long as that doesn't happen, it is a ferocious but *potential* enemy. As long as the tanks, the workers and we are not there, we will have an enemy present, which is there, which is the bourgeois government. If the workers do not have the strength and leadership capable of leading them to face the enemy present, they will most likely be defeated by the potential enemy when it

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>31</sup> **General Paz** Avenue is a motorway that together with the Rio de la Plata and the Rio Matanza-Riachuelo delimits the city of Buenos Aires. [Editor]

decides to strike. Our policy towards the danger of a *coup*, towards the coup *in progress*, has to be part of our politics of deadly confrontation towards the bourgeois government of the day because as bad or worse than not anticipating a coup is not preparing the workers every day to fight the government they have.

Only through the experience and the practice of mobilisation against that government, will the workers be able to acquire the mettle and the leadership that will allow them, when the coup *takes place*, to change immediately, in a day, in a minute, their *form* of struggle and defeat the military. As long as this is not the case, they will be politically disarmed both in the face of the bourgeois government and in the face of the coup if it occurs.

To be clear, we are going to answer two questions that, in their new rhetorical style, Brunello and Robles place in the text of the draft and do not answer: "Or it would have been necessary that Videla or Menendez<sup>32</sup> marched with their troops on Buenos Aires? Aires to launch the battle cry of 'shooting Videla over Isabel's shoulder'?"<sup>33</sup> I would answer emphatically, YES.

And, so there are no doubts: "And if there was no march onto Buenos Aires, should we focus our batteries on Mondelli?"<sup>34</sup> Absolutely, YES. As Lenin taught, up to the minute of the coup, our call had to be one: all against Isabel, that is, all against Mondelli: "That is and must be the axis of our intervention in the class struggle, without forgetting for a second that as soon as the possibility of a *coup d'état* is set, the immediate danger will be that reactionary coup, with the strategic line against the government *passing for a few days* to the background."<sup>35</sup>

## All against Mondelli!

In March 1976, Isabel, in a total united front with the military, made her last attempt to impose the economic plan of super-exploitation that had failed with Rodrigo and that would finally be applied with Martínez de Hoz<sup>36</sup> and the military in power. This caused the second great battle of the workers' movement against the Peronist government. Unlike June 1975, the bureaucracy did not reject united the Mondelli Plan, but the Lorenzo Miguel<sup>37</sup> wing refused from the outset to mobilise and the Calabro wing, after a first faint, did the same. Despite the heroism of the vanguard, which was willing to take the plunge, the mobilisation was much lower than that of June 1975 and led, a few days later, to the military deciding to overturn the government of Isabel because it no longer had the massive support of the workers' movement and was no longer useful to them.

When the new economic plan was known on 5 March, the workers' mobilisation began almost immediately. The party was not taken by surprise. As the "draft" relates, we immediately said, "let's fight Mondelli like before we fought Rodrigo". We knew this was the only real way to mobilise Argentine workers. If we won, there would be neither Mondelli nor a coup; if we lost, there would be not only Mondelli but probably also a coup. The coup could not be stopped with statements but with the workers in the streets, and only the workers strengthened by a victory against Mondelli could

32 **Luciano Benjamin Menendez** (1927–2018) was an Argentine military man who led the repression in the 1970s from the III Army Corps (1975–1979). He played a leading role in the arrest, torture and murder of political and social activists. In 2005, he was prosecuted for crimes against humanity and sentenced to life imprisonment. [Editor]

33 *In defence ...*, op. cit., p.30.

34 *Ibid.*.

35 "Speech of NM in the CC of 10 October 1975", in *Peronism in its definitive crisis*, PST, Buenos Aires, January 1976, p.17.

36 **Jose Alfredo Martinez de Hoz** (1925–2013) was an Argentine executive and policymaker. He served as Minister of the Economy under the military dictatorship of Jorge Rafael Videla, between 1976 and 1981. He is considered a political representative of the "Chicago school" of economic liberalism at any cost and intimately linked to international financial agencies and centres. [Editor]

37 **Lorenzo Miguel** (1927-2002) was one of the historic chiefs of the Peronist trade union bureaucracy. Head of the powerful metalworkers' union (UOM) since 1970. During the government of Isabel Peron, he linked with Jose Lopez Rega to give birth to the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance or Triple-A a death squad that appeared on the scene in 1973. After the coup against Isabel Peron, Miguel was sent to prison, but his close relationship with Junta member Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera protected him. [Editor]

stop the military coup plotters. And we knew that if the workers did not continue the mobilisation against Mondelli, there would be no way to stop the coup. That is the summary, the essence of our policy, which we consider to be not only correct but also brilliant, one of the great sources of our current strength and an example of Leninist politics.

Today, Comrades Brunello and Robles hold that our policy was criminal, that it served the coup. As an alternative, they propose for the last months of 1975 and the first months of 1976 the policy of denouncing the danger of a coup, calling on the working class and the CGT to confront it in an armed manner.<sup>38</sup> And by March 1976, when the Argentine workers began to spontaneously take to the streets to repudiate the Mondelli Plan, according to them they had to be told: “stop, comrades, make no mistake: forget your stomachs and your lives because the great danger is the coup in progress”.<sup>39</sup>

It may be that today, when we all know that the mobilisation against Mondelli failed, despite the heroism of many working-class activists who were willing to stick their neck out, despite the calls of the party; when we all know the military coup triumphed on 24 March 1976, some comrade may be shocked or in doubt by the new positions of Brunello and Robles.

Just as we assert that the policy the party had then was the best because it was the only one that could mobilise the workers against the bourgeois government, we also assert that what Brunello and Robles propose today would have been, on the one hand, a complete capitulation to the bourgeois government of Isabel Peron and, on the other hand, it would have played into the hands of the coup plotters since, as they acknowledge in the “draft”, it was impossible for it to mobilise anyone, it was a demobilisation policy against the only possible mobilisation, the fight against Mondelli.

Have they forgotten that, in those last months, the government of Isabel Peron was almost the same as the military? It would seem they have forgotten not only the pages of *Avanzada Socialista*, the internal bulletins, the clandestine measures in which we lived for years but also what life was like for workers in the last months before the coup.

Have they forgotten the runaway inflation, starvation wages, the ban on strikes? Have they forgotten the murders by the Triple-A, the brutal repression in the direct hands of the military? Have they forgotten the “Operation Independence”<sup>40</sup> and the military courts? Have they forgotten that the Mondelli Plan froze wages and brutally raised prices in a single day? That in the case of urban transport the increase was 150%? And all this was done in a united front between Isabel’s government and the Armed Forces, which — contrary to what the comrades say — were very united on one point: how to massacre and super-exploit the workers more and better.

## Was it right or wrong for us to take the plunge to promote a new leadership?

In April 1979, attacking the party leadership, Comrades Brunello and Robles discovered what is the key to what happened in Argentina in 1976: “Today we can see that Calabro (...) stopped the mobilisation (against Mondelli) at the right point to help the coup and to prevent it from acquiring such great proportions as to also face the coup plotters.”<sup>41</sup> What took three years for these two comrades to discover, the party knew while our militants, from the factories, from the zonal coordinating committees, promoted the mobilisation against Mondelli.

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38 In defence ..., op. cit., p. 31.

39 Ibid., p. 30.

40 **Operation Independence** refers to the action ordered by the government of María Estela (Isabel) Martínez de Peron, to the Argentine Army and Air Force, to “neutralise and/or annihilate” the actions of what was defined as “subversive elements” in the Province of Tucuman. The operation included combats and repressive acts against the guerrilla organisation Revolutionary People’s Army (ERP). [Editor].

41 In defence ..., p. 30.

The obsession of the party in those days, in a race against time, was to see from all sides how, on the back of a mobilisation that had started practically spontaneously and in which at first the Calabro wing of the bureaucracy, sectors of the Peronist left and our party had a prominent role, it was possible to endow the workers' movement with a leadership that would be capable of consistently leading it to mobilisation until the defeat of Mondelli and Isabel.

We knew — and we said — that both Miguel and Calabro were part of the reactionary game of the bourgeois government and the bureaucracy against the workers' movement. We pointed out the reason for their circumstantial differences: while Miguel was playing the top-down and Bonapartist project, Calabro played the anti-top-down bourgeois-democratic project. Above these differences, both bureaucratic wings were part of the united anti-worker front.

When Calabro initially promoted the mobilisation in March 1976, for Brunello and Robles it was a sin to have given him [support] because they were playing their bureaucratic game. For us, it would have been a betrayal not to take advantage of any circumstance that would help the mobilisation. The party did know very well that Calabro himself — a bureaucrat — could abandon the struggle at any time, agreeing with Isabel, the military coup plotters or whoever it might be; that is why we warned from day one about the arguments they would use to lift the mobilisation, that is why we almost desperately promoted the coordinating committees.

Comrades Brunello and Robles make an irresponsible, false and unfair statement: "The party leadership (...) had no answer when the Calabro sector abruptly abandoned the struggle."<sup>42</sup> The comrades who were calling to continue the mobilisation against Mondelli "until the very morning of the coup" (as Brunello and Robles recall among their criticisms when referring to those who picketed the last issue of *Avanzada Socialista* that morning at the gates of the factories), they cannot help but react indignantly. The party had its answer at all times: to continue the mobilisation, and that is why it denounced the capitulation of the bureaucrats and promoted the mobilisation and the organisation by factory and zone. Neither the class nor the party had enough strength to blow to smithereens the bureaucratic slab and confront the bourgeois government and the military coup. But all the vanguard who fought against Mondelli and who was willing to continue despite Calabro, just like our party, we are proud to have fought a great battle together, even though we have lost it.

## A petty-bourgeois method

By raising their disastrous policy, Comrades Brunello and Robles are using a fatal method, typical of petty-bourgeois thought, separating an isolated and tendentious element from all reality, and transforming it into the determinant of all our politics for a period. Let's give an example of what we mean. Let's suppose there is a strike in a factory of a national bourgeois, to which we go and say: "Beware, comrades, be careful with imperialism. If this factory is destroyed, imperialism will get relatively stronger in our country, it will deepen its penetration. With our strike, we play into the hands of imperialism." It is true that if the national bourgeoisie is weakened, imperialism can be strengthened. But it is also true that if the workers' movement strengthens and fights, both imperialism and the national bourgeoisie will weaken. Going back to the factory, we are for the workers to occupy it, to advance as much as they can, because that is their struggle. The concrete misery of that "national" factory leads us to launch a strike against that misery, and we cannot dissolve that reality in the more general fact that imperialism more or less dominates the country.

Brunello and Robles use a method opposite to the latter in their document. From the fact that there is a latent danger of a coup, they derive the criminal and opportunistic policy that we should not fight against the bourgeois government, which is starving and repressing the workers, but against the danger of a coup.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 30.



In a sense, the comrades have fallen into the error we have always criticised Mandel<sup>43</sup> for. Our policy is concrete and immediate, for today and not for the future. With the policy of Brunello and Robles, to attack a future danger, which has not yet happened, they renounce attacking the ferocious and immediate enemy that we have before us.

We will put forward concrete policies to fight against an ongoing coup — without ceasing to attack the government — but when this ongoing coup has concrete demonstrations, or against the fascist danger when fascist gangs emerge. In 1955, we could have a concrete policy of struggle against the coup from months before 16 June because there were demonstrations by Catholics and Radicals against Peron. That was a political fact and we could say: let's repudiate that demonstration for so and so and let's do this, and anyone would understand us. In Chile, the right-wing had the coup posed from the day after the electoral count. However, only after two years did they decide to give it when they promoted the demonstration of the "empty pots". An immediate response had to be given to this concrete action of the right.

In Argentina, in 1974, 1975, where was Videla's counter-revolution politically expressed? Who did we have to fight in the streets? As we have already explained, when fighting against the Triple-A, against the Lopez Rega wing and their murderous gangs, we were fighting with the concrete coup expressions that existed then in the country. As far as we know, in 1975 or 1976 there was no pro-coup demonstration in the streets or something like that and we did not denounce it, we did not present a policy.

The combination of circumstances meant that political currents did not emerge that took to the streets as a prelude to a counter-revolutionary coup. The middle class was leaning to the right but it was still in electoral expectation and the outbreaks that anticipated the counter-revolution were an outgrowth of the Peronist government itself, the murderous gangs. The coup confirms our characterisations and politics. As we had described months earlier, the government was thrown away like a squeezed lemon. No one resisted. If Brunello and Robles had been there trying to mobilise with their politics, they would not have found a listener, not even that day. If there had been an attempt of resistance, we would have been the champions of the unity of action with all those against the coup, Isabel included. But only at that moment, at that point of qualitative change.

## A capitulating and defeatist policy

The same Comrades Brunello and Robles warn that the proposal to call to face the coup "in progress" as the main enemy was very likely not to be heard by anyone (according to the "draft" because of political confusion). They explicitly say that their politics did not serve to mobilise.<sup>44</sup>

Sometimes a policy is correct, it is the one we must put forward, even if it does not manage to mobilise the workers. For example, our policy of forming armed CGT pickets in 1955 did not mobilise anyone, and it was extremely correct. When there is a policy that can mobilise workers, it is a crime not to raise it. The policy that mobilises the workers against the enemy class is the policy raised by the Trotskyists.

The crime that Comrades Brunello and Robles commit in their proposal towards the past is that they reject as criminal the only mobilising policy and propose as correct a policy that they recognise was not useful for mobilising.

We don't want "successes" to tell workers who were right *post-festum*. Our obsession is to discover which call favours the mobilisation. The working class, unfortunately, usually does not choose the arena of the struggle and all the art of the party goes through posing the mobilising

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43 **Ernest Mandel** (1923-1995), born in Belgium, was one of the main leaders of Trotskyism since the post-war period and also a Marxist economist. Together with Michel Pablo, he promoted the reorganisation of the Fourth International after the assassination of Trotsky and, since the beginning of the 1950s, they led the opportunist sector, responsible for the crisis and dispersion of Trotskyism since then. From the 1960s until his death, he headed the so-called "United Secretariat" of the Fourth International. [Editor]

44 In defence ..., op. cit., p. 31.

slogans. There is nothing more unnecessary than the false prophets who, once the battle is lost, criticise those who committed to what they failed to do. I wish the Argentine workers had had enough leadership and experience to have fought against Isabel, against Mondelli and the military coup plotters, defeated them, imposed a provisional workers' president, made armed pickets to defend that conquest and thus continued until the dictatorship of the proletariat. If there was a heroic vanguard in Argentina in March 1976, which to the best of its ability fought against the Videla coup, it was the hundreds of activists (many of them from our party) who took part in the mobilisations against Mondelli.

Our party can proudly say that it gave them a correct fighting alternative, that it stuck its neck out together with them until the end, "until the very morning of the coup", and that it will continue together with them, leading the resistance to the counter-revolution, forging the alternative leadership. that the Argentine workers' movement seeks. Today, for Brunello and Robles, those activists who mobilised... brought water to the coup mill.<sup>45</sup>

## A wrong and dangerous characterisation of Isabel's government

Comrades Brunello and Robles characterise Isabel's government as Kerenskyist. They say it was a "reactionary and anti-worker" government, but bourgeois-democratic, with its main point of support in the workers' movement, via "the transmission belt of the union bureaucracy", that it was a weak government, which Isabel tried to arbitrate, and that "basically resembled Kerensky's", which had Kerenskyist elements. So that there is no doubt, they appeal to the analogy: Kerensky/Isabel vs. Kornilov/Videla.<sup>46</sup>

We completely disagree with this novel characterisation. From the first words, the contradictions begin. The comrades reaffirm the *reactionary and anti-worker* character of the government. Although on a historical and general scale every bourgeois government is reactionary and anti-worker, this statement disqualifies the definition of Kerenskyist. It is also true that Isabel tried to play as an arbiter but that precisely defined her as a Bonapartist (since while a Bonaparte *arbitrates*, a Kerensky *conciliates*). It is also true that — although friction was growing — the union bureaucracy played as a transmission belt; that belt sometimes came off and even broke in the June-July 1975 strike, but in a Kerenskyist government the workers' organisations are a *fundamental part, members of the government*.

The experiences not only of the distant past (the Russian revolution of 1917, the Spanish revolution of 1936), but also recent ones (Torrez in Bolivia, Allende in Chile, the Portuguese MFA government), show us what the real Kerenskyist governments are like, that they have absolutely nothing in common with Isabel's. Analysing the characteristics of the Portuguese MFA government, we said:

"If we take bourgeois democracy as the midway station of a railway line, if we move toward the right, we pass by the station of Bonapartism; the end of the line is fascism. But, if we go in the opposite direction, we will pass by the station of Kerenskyism, and cross the class frontier we will arrive at the other end of the line, a worker's state.

"Kerenskyism is a combination of a worker's revolution and bourgeois counter-revolution. But a combination in which the dynamic and decisive element continues to be a worker's revolution on the rise. This is exactly opposite to a Bonapartist regime, in which the dynamic factor is the bourgeois counter-revolution, and the workers' movement is on the defensive."<sup>47</sup>

Based on historical and recent experience, we consider that Kerenskyism is the extreme left of the bourgeoisie, beyond which it cannot advance because the class border is crossed. It is a

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., p. .30.

47 Nahuel Moreno: *Revolution and counter-revolution in Portugal*, July 1975, CEHuS, Buenos Aires, 2016, p. 35. Available to download from [nahuelmoreno.org/en/english/](http://nahuelmoreno.org/en/english/).

government that lives making concessions to the working class and trying to *reconcile* the antagonistic classes while preparing the counter-revolution. Did Isabel's government live making concessions to the workers' movement, or "harassing it? If Isabel was Kerensky, what were Campora<sup>48</sup> and Peron in the first months? To begin with, we have to start by putting them as different variants of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Returning to the analogy of the train, for us, without a doubt, Isabel's government was moving decisively to the right, it was becoming increasingly Bonapartist, that is, "anti-worker, reactionary", and that is why it led to the ultra-reactionary regime of Videla. The entire government of Isabel was the prelude to the military coup, not the dictatorship of the proletariat. Videla–Martinez de Hoz were the continuation of Rodrigo–Lopez Rega–Isabel–Mondelli.

For all this, the party defined the government of Isabel Peron as essentially Bonapartist, with bourgeois-democratic forms.

This discussion is important so as not to allow confusion in our definitions, but in any case, we want to insist that, given the *bourgeois* character of Isabel's government (even if it had been Kerenskyist), it was for that reason the great enemy of the Argentine workers.

## A Trotskyist could never call to "defend Bordaberry"<sup>49</sup>

The eagerness to sustain their unsustainable policy of defence of Isabel's government during the last months of her administration causes a rare failure in the memory of Comrades Brunello and Robles. As they state in their "rough draft", I "taught" them at the time that Bordaberry had to be defended because his government was bourgeois-democratic, even if it was anti-worker, and therefore a thousand times more progressive than any Bonapartism.<sup>50</sup> Their statements have as many errors as words. And these confusions in their memories are more inadmissible if we take into account that in the Argentine PST and the entire Fourth International there was much discussion, in 1974-1975, as a result of the activities and politics of our party, on issues of the defence of bourgeois democracy at its various levels.

We strongly argued against those who criticised us then, pointing out that a bourgeois-democratic *regime* is more progressive than a Bonapartist one, no matter how curtailed democracy is, but that the regime is different from the *government*. As Lenin and Trotsky taught, we defend more progressive *institutions* against more reactionary ones. For example, the Chamber of Deputies against a corporative chamber. This does not mean that we defend the chairman of the Chamber of Deputies; we defend the institution. This confusion is introduced by Brunello and Robles when they speak of Bordaberry and Parliament in a united way. The first is the bourgeois government and we will never defend it; the second is an institution of bourgeois democracy that we are ready to defend against Bonapartism.

In the discussions we held in Bogota, Comrade Jorge [Brunello] insisted on his erroneous memories, pointing out that in 1974 I had held the same position that I now criticise.<sup>51</sup> we must stop at this point because what he proposes is no small thing. The Uruguayan comrades especially have to meditate very well because this official report to the party is stating that Bordaberry should have been defended against the coup.

48 **Hector Jose Campora** (1909-1980) was an Argentine politician. Peron chose him as his "personal delegate" in 1971. Candidate for Frejuli and including the conservative politician Solano Lima as vice president, he won the elections in March 1973 with more than 49.5% of the votes. In agreement with Lanusse, Peron forced them to resign on 13 July 1973, assuming the presidency Raul Lastiri, the president of the Chamber of Deputies. The latter called for elections again, resulting in the election of Peron and his wife, Maria Estela (Isabel) Martinez de Peron, as president and vice president in September 1973. [Editor]

49 **Juan María Bordaberry** (1928–2011) was an Uruguayan politician and cattle baron, who served as constitutional president between 1972 and 1973, and as dictator between 1973 and 1976. [Editor]

50 In defence ..., op. cit., p. 31.

51 Recorded tapes of the Bogota meeting (July 1979). "**Jorge**: you say the policy of defending Isabel is opportunistic. However, in the controversy of 1974 with the majority, you upheld the same policy that you now call opportunistic. **Hugo**: Well, bring me the quote where it says that we support a bourgeois government. I never said that."



Such was the mess caused in the International by our policy towards a bourgeois democracy increasingly threatened in Argentina in 1974, that it left us with several documents about this. Let us recall some quotation from my memorandum to respond to the United Secretariat: "Hence, a *sine qua non* for the defence of a bourgeois-democratic 'superior form' versus a 'fascist' or 'Bonapartist' form to be really revolutionary is that we do it critically and pointing out permanently that we are in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is to say, if the lagging class consciousness imposes on revolutionists the slogan of defence of bourgeois democracy, we defend it, but without defending bourgeois or reformist, partisan or governmental politics."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Nahuel Moreno: *Memorandum for the response of the PST(A) to the USec*, December 1977, CEHuS, Buenos Aires, 2017, p. 9. Available to download from [nahuelmoreno.org/en/english/](http://nahuelmoreno.org/en/english/).

## CHAPTER III

# Lenin's real policy

The “strong point” of the document by Comrades Brunello and Robles is its appeal to the Kerensky–Kornilov analogy. The authors, in developing it, had to be sure they were dealing a serious political blow to our performance. And perhaps many comrades — thinking that what we did in February–March 1976 was very good — would respond to Brunello and Robles saying: what you say is wrong since the situation was different. What you say about Lenin is all very good but it does not apply in that case.

What is strange about people of the tradition and experience of the authors is their profound ignorance — or lack of understanding — of Lenin's policy in July–August 1917 and which it was explained by me — as they recall — in the “tragic” CC of October 1975. This volume of the *Collected Works* is a classic of revolutionary Marxist literature, from which renewed teachings are always derived on how to confront reactionary or counter-revolutionary coups. And we hold — and we will prove forthwith — that what Lenin did in those days is *the opposite* of what Brunello and Robles propose and coincides one thousand per cent methodologically with the policy advanced by the party. Let's see what was the revolutionary policy of Lenin to mobilise the workers against a bourgeois government, that of Kerensky, and the variants of it (the Kornilov coup).

On August 25, 1917 (according to the old Russian calendar) the counter-revolutionary uprising of Kornilov took place, which the “rough draft” likens to that of Videla.

*Forty days* earlier (on 15 February 1976 according to the new Brunello and Robles calendar) Lenin referred to the Kerensky government, denouncing that the counter-revolution had taken power, turning the government into a military dictatorship, propped up by the Menshevik and social revolutionary ministers who had definitely betrayed the cause of the revolution. *Forty days* referred, for Lenin, the government of Kerensky (Isabel) had to be overturned.<sup>53</sup>

*Thirty days* earlier (25 February for Brunello and Robles), he said it was necessary to start from the fact that the bourgeois counter-revolution had already triumphed and that only the revolutionary proletariat could defeat it.<sup>54</sup>

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53 Lenin: “The Political Situation”, *Collected Works*, Volume 25, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 178 and 179.

“The counter-revolution has become organised and consolidated, and has actually taken state power into its hands.

(...) At present, basic state power in Russia is virtually a military dictatorship. This fact is still obscured by a number of institutions that are revolutionary in words but powerless in deeds. Yet it is so obvious and fundamental a fact that without understanding it, one cannot understand anything about the political situation. (...)

“The leaders of the Soviets and of the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties, headed by Tsereteli and Chernov, have completely betrayed the cause of the revolution by putting it in the hands of the counter-revolutionaries and by turning themselves, their parties and the Soviets into mere fig-leaves of the counter-revolution.”

54 In mid-July 1917, Lenin wrote: “We must, at the beginning of the new cycle, proceed from the triumphant bourgeois counter-revolution, which triumphed because the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks compromised with it, and which can be defeated only by the revolutionary proletariat. Of course, in this new cycle there will be many and various stages, both before the complete victory of the counter-revolution and the complete defeat (without a struggle) of the

Twenty-eight days earlier (on 27 February for Brunello and Robles), he described the Bonapartist features that the government was assuming and *called for fighting against the government of Kerensky (Isabel)* as the only way to defeat the counter-revolution.<sup>55</sup>

Seven days before the uprising (on 17 February, according to Brunello and Robles), we have the clearest and most synthetic expression of Lenin's policy. The article, which had the suggestive title "Rumours of a conspiracy", began by noting that on 14 August rumours had spread in Moscow of Cossack troop movements in counter-revolutionary actions.<sup>56</sup>

We consider it necessary, in this case, to reproduce Lenin's response to these movements and to the fact the government called in particular to the garrisons controlled by the Bolsheviks to help confront it.

"At small expense, having made up a stupid little 'rumour', they hope to gain 'access' to the Bolshevik army units and, in general, to strengthen confidence in the Provisional Government by assuring naive people that it is this government the Cossacks want to overthrow, that it is not in collusion with the Cossacks and is 'defending the revolution', and so on, and so forth.

"The little scheme is obvious. The rumour, of course, is absurd and clearly fabricated. But confidence in the Provisional Government they hope to get in cold cash, and, further, they hope to draw the Bolsheviks into a 'bloc' with them!

"It is hard to believe that there can be such fools and scoundrels among the Bolsheviks willing to enter into a bloc with the defencists at present. It is hard to believe, first, because there is an explicit resolution of the Sixth Congress of the RSDLP which says that 'the Mensheviks have deserted for good to the camp of the proletariat's enemies'. You do not conclude agreements or make blocs with people who have deserted for good to the enemy camp. 'The prime task of revolutionary Social-Democrats,' the resolution goes on to say, 'is to isolate them [the Menshevik defencists] completely from all the more or less revolutionary elements of the working class.' It is obviously against this isolation that the Mensheviks and S.R.s are fighting by spreading absurd rumours. And it is obvious that in Moscow as in Petrograd, the workers are turning away more and more from the Mensheviks and S.R.s, realising more and more clearly the treacherous, counter-revolutionary nature of their policies. And so, to 'remedy the situation', the defencists are compelled to resort to every trick in the book.

"The Congress resolution being what it is, any Bolshevik who came to terms with the defencists for the purpose of 'giving access', or *indirectly expressing confidence in the Provisional Government*

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Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, and before a new upsurge of a new revolution." ("On Slogans", *Collected Works*, ob. cit., p. 192.

55 "Now that the Cabinet of Kerensky, Nekrasov, Avksentyev and Co has been formed, the gravest and most disastrous error Marxists could make would be to mistake words for deeds, deceptive appearances for reality or generally for something serious.

"(...) If we *only* said the counter-revolution had temporarily gained the upper hand here in Russia, we should be dodging the issue.

"If we analysed the origin of Bonapartism and, fearlessly facing the truth, told the working class and the whole people that the beginning of Bonapartism is a fact, we should thereby start a real and stubborn struggle to overthrow Bonapartism, a struggle waged on a large political scale and based on far-reaching class interests." ("The Beginning of Bonapartism", *Collected Works*, ob. cit., p. 223 and 225.)

56 "(...) on August 14 the rumour was put about in Moscow that some Cossack units were moving towards Moscow from the front and that, moreover, 'certain military groups enjoying the sympathy of certain circles in Moscow' were organising 'decisive counter-revolutionary actions'. It also alleges that the military authorities had notified the Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies, and 'with the participation of Central Executive Committee members' (i.e., Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries) had taken steps to inform the soldiers of the need to guard the city, etc. 'Moscow Bolsheviks,' the item says in conclusion, 'were likewise invited to participate in these preparations since they are influential among many army units and were given access to these for the occasion.'"

Commenting on this last sentence, Lenin says: "that means there was a certain *bloc*, alliance or agreement between the Bolsheviks and the defencists on 'defence against the counter-revolution'." ("Rumours of a Conspiracy", *ibid.*, p. 247.)

(which is allegedly being defended against the Cossacks), would, of course, be immediately and deservedly expelled from the Party.”<sup>57</sup> (Emphasis ours.)

Re-read these lines, Argentine and Uruguayan comrades: according to Lenin, those who form a bloc to defend Kerensky (Isabel) against Kornilov (Videla) are expelled “immediately and deservedly expelled from the Party.” Let’s continue with the quote.

“There are, however, other reasons why it is hard to believe there can be Bolsheviks, in Moscow or elsewhere, capable of forming a bloc with the defencists, of forming anything like common, even temporary, bodies, of making any kind of deal, etc., with them. Let us imagine a situation most favourable to such rather unlikely Bolsheviks; let us assume that in their naïveté they actually believed in the rumours they hear from the Mensheviks and S.R.s; let us even assume that, to inspire them with confidence, they were given certain, likewise invented, ‘facts’. It is obvious that even in these circumstances, not a single honest Bolshevik who has not completely lost his head would agree to any bloc with the defencists, would make any deals on ‘giving access’, etc. *Even in these circumstances, a Bolshevik would say: ‘Our workers and soldiers will fight the counter-revolutionary troops if they start an offensive now against the Provisional Government; they will do so not to defend this government, which called Kaledin and Co. on July 3, but to independently defend the revolution as they pursue their own aim, the aim of securing victory for the workers, for the poor, for the cause of peace, and not for the imperialists, for Kerensky, Avksentyev, Tsereteli, Skobelev and Co.’* Even in the exceedingly unlikely situation we have assumed, a Bolshevik would tell the Mensheviks: ‘We shall fight, of course, but we refuse to enter into any political alliance whatever with you, refuse to express the least confidence in you. We shall fight in the very same way as the Social-Democrats fought tsarism in February 1917, together with the Cadets, without entering into any alliance with the Cadets or trusting them for one second. The slightest confidence in the Mensheviks would be as much of a betrayal of the revolution now as confidence in the Cadets would have been between 1905 and 1917.’ (Emphasis ours.)

“A Bolshevik would tell the workers and soldiers: ‘Let us fight, but not one iota of trust in the Mensheviks if you don’t want to rob yourselves of the fruits of victory.’

“It is all too advantageous for the Mensheviks to put about false rumours and allegations to the effect that the government they support is saving the revolution, while in reality, it has already formed a bloc with the Kaledins, is already counter-revolutionary, has already taken a great many steps, and is daily taking further steps, to meet the terms of this bloc with the Kaledins.

“To believe these rumours, to support them directly or indirectly, would mean, on the part of the Bolsheviks, betraying the cause of the revolution. The chief guarantee of its success today is for the people to clearly realise the treachery of the Mensheviks and S.R.s and completely break with them, and for every revolutionary worker to boycott them as completely as they boycotted the Cadets after the experience of 1905.”<sup>58</sup>

As we can see, Lenin’s situation was much more serious than ours. If we did not foresee the coup (according to Robles and Brunello), Lenin directly denied it, denounced it as a false rumour, as a manoeuvre. However, his policy was great because he armed the Bolshevik party to face the main enemy, that is, Kerensky, the Mensheviks and SRs. He denounces Kerensky for doing the counter-revolutionary policy that Kornilov would later do.

Years later, in the *History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky showed us how Lenin’s analysis was applied in reality: How Kerensky negotiated with Kornilov and the counter-revolution; in short, how Kerensky prepared the Kornilov coup.

We assert that Isabel prepared the Videla-Kornilov coup and that her government was a thousand times more reactionary than that of Kerensky.

Three days before the coup (on 21 March 1976 of the new Brunello and Robles calendar) Lenin wrote a leaflet that had as its *central slogan* the call to *overturn the Kerensky government*, the

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57 “Rumours of a Conspiracy”, *Collected Works*, ob. cit., p. 248-251.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 251-252.

Mensheviks and the SRs.<sup>59</sup> This was his policy throughout August and up until the moment of the coup. Exactly the reverse of what Brunello and Robles claim, “in the face of the scoundrel Kerensky” the Bolsheviks systematically called for him to be overthrown. And pretending to be the best Leninists, they tell us that, like Lenin, we had to *defend* Isabel and her government against the *danger* of the coup. Let them revise what they want but at the same time acknowledge their renunciation of Leninism.

Finally, the coup took place, the “Kornilovazo”, as we would say now. What then was Lenin's policy as the *Cossacks advanced on Petrograd*?

“The Kornilov revolt is a most unexpected (unexpected at such a moment and in such a form) and downright unbelievably sharp turn in events.

“Like every sharp turn, it calls for a revision and change of tactics. And as with every revision, we must be extra cautious not to become unprincipled.

“It is my conviction that those who become unprincipled are people who (like Volodarsky [Brunello-Robles]) slide into defencism or (like other Bolsheviks) into a *bloc* with the SRs, into *supporting* the Provisional Government. Their attitude is absolutely wrong and unprincipled. We shall become defencists *only after* the transfer of power to the proletariat, *after* a peace offer, *after* the secret treaties and ties with the banks have been broken — *only afterwards*. Neither the capture of Riga *nor* the capture of Petrograd will make us defencists. (I should very much like Volodarsky to read this.) Until then we stand for a proletarian revolution, we are against the war, and we are no defencists.

“*Even now* we must not support Kerensky's government. This is unprincipled. We may be asked: aren't we going to fight against Kornilov? Of course, we must! But this is not the same thing; there is a dividing line here, which is being stepped over by some Bolsheviks who fall into compromise and allow themselves to be *carried away* by the course of events.

“We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, *just as Kerensky's troops do*, but we do not support Kerensky. *On the contrary*, we expose his weakness. There is the difference. It is rather a subtle difference, but it is highly essential. and must not be forgotten.

“What, then, constitutes our change of tactics after the Kornilov revolt?

“We are changing the *form* of our struggle against Kerensky. Without in the least relaxing our hostility towards him, without taking back, a single word said against him, without renouncing the task of overthrowing him, we say that we must *take into account* the present situation.”<sup>60</sup> [Emphasis by Lenin.]

This is Lenin's policy that all Marxism adopts. Up to a minute before the coup, our worst enemy is the bourgeois government: this government is the one we attack and try to overthrow, regardless of whether we consider the alleged coup a rumour or a certain fact that is looming. When the coup takes place, we must change the form. Without giving up the task of overthrowing that bourgeois government, without giving it the slightest support, we fight against the coup.

The bitter irony of fate! As soon as we review Lenin with a bit of seriousness, we find that according to the policy proposed by Brunello and Robles, who is in the dock of the accused is no longer the leadership of the Argentine PST, but ... Lenin.

59 “Down with the war! Down with the Kerensky, Menshevik and SR government, which is cheating the people, protracting the war, safeguarding the predatory interests of the capitalists, putting off the elections to the Constituent Assembly!

(...) Let every worker and soldier explain to the people the need to overthrow the Kerensky government and set up a workers' government.” (“Letter Over the Publication of ‘Leaflet on the Capture of Riga’”, *Collected Works*, Vol 41, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 446.)

60 “To the Central Committee of the RSDLP”, *Collected Works*, Vol 25, op. cit., p. 289-290.

## CHAPTER IV

# Answers to the first six questions

To finish this first part, we will answer in a very brief way the first three questions about “key points” that Brunello and Robles formulated.

*1. Did the party foresee the coup or not, not historically but concretely?*

Yes. This is how we demonstrated it exhaustively before Comrades Jorge, Osvaldo and Armando, to the point that they themselves, without any doubt or factional reluctance, acknowledged it in one of the points of the minutes-agreement, based on the documentation that we presented to them and that we reproduce in Chapter I of this first part.

*2. Did we or did we not have the policy of calling out to the masses, during February and March, to face to death the “Videla”, the main enemy of the workers?*

*3. Should we or should we not have defended the restrained bourgeois democracy and the government of Isabel Peron against the Bonapartist coup?*

For us Trotskyists, during February and March 1976, the main enemy of the Argentine workers was the bourgeois government of Isabel Peron. We called on the workers to face that government and its super-exploitation plan to the bitter end, with the certainty that, if the workers gave and won that battle, they would also stop the coup or be in the best conditions to face it if it happened anyway. We should defend — and we did so — the curtailed bourgeois democracy. As Trotskyists, we should never defend the bourgeois government of Isabel Peron or any bourgeois government.

*4. Did the party leadership prepare the party for clandestinity?*

*5. Was there or not a strong clandestine apparatus even in the period of greater legality and was it qualitatively strengthened or not in the period before the coup?*

*6. Was the requirement 17 of the 21 conditions of the Communist International regarding the obligatory nature of the clandestine apparatus being fulfilled or not, its supremacy over the legal one, even when bourgeois democratic governments existed?*

Regarding questions 4 and 5, the answer is a categorical yes, as we demonstrated to Comrades Jorge, Osvaldo, and Armando, as stated in the minutes-agreement and according to the documentation that we present in Chapter I.

Regarding question 6, we answer yes, within the limitations imposed by the concrete possibilities of our party and the particular combination that was established between the need to continue taking advantage of legality and the preparation for clandestinity.