



# Nahuel Moreno

## Letter to the Delegates to the PST(A) Conference

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Bogota, 7 April 7 1979  
PST(A) document for internal use only

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[www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org)

[www.uit-ci.org](http://www.uit-ci.org)

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## Foreword 2025

The text we are presenting, *Letter to the delegates to the PST(A) Conference*, was written by Nahuel Moreno from exile in Colombia, in April 1979. Argentina was three years into what was and has been the most violent civil-military dictatorship in local history. Among the 30,000 disappeared detainees, the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers Party of Argentina, PST(A)), contributed, if this term can be used, over a hundred comrades assassinated and disappeared.

In 1974, before Peron's death, the PST suffered the first assassinations of its militants. Also under the Peronist government, attacks against its premises were multiplying. From 1975 onwards, the PST acted with increasing clandestine measures. On the eve of the coup, and in anticipation of its eventual triumph, preparations were being made for a section of the leadership to go into exile. Moreno, who had already been included in the lists of the Triple A, was to lead it. One of the first decrees of the dictatorship was the total ban of the PST. In July 1976, Moreno continued from Bogota (Colombia), with the growing support of the Socialist Bloc, which the following year would become the PST(C), with the construction of its international current and other tasks, such as the transfer of Editorial Pluma, which had been operating in Buenos Aires since 1973.

By mid-1978, the Argentine Military Junta was beginning to show signs of weakness, as a result of the rise of the workers' movement. In the Argentine PST, its new leadership began to have growing difficulties in the face of these incipient changes in the situation. In a few months, in Moreno's words, there will be "one of the most tremendous leadership crises in the party we have had so far". The resolution of this crisis will come with the direct intervention of the leadership of the Bolshevik Faction and particularly of Moreno from Colombia. This letter, addressed to the Party conference held in clandestinity, in April 1979, was the result of multiple meetings and discussions with the leaders and cadres of Argentina, in writing and through different trips. On one of them, in August 1978, Moreno and another comrade fell prisoners of the Brazilian dictatorship. They were released and were able to return safely to Bogota in November, thanks to a strong international campaign for their release.

Today, reading Moreno's letter is a phenomenal lesson in how a revolutionary party acts in the face of a crisis in its leadership and how to resolve it by appealing to the method of democratic centralism and within the organisms of the organisation. Even in the underground. In the party tradition remained etched the definition made by one of the protagonists of the peak of the crisis: the "coup d'état", referring to one of the important mistakes committed at that time. And also, to value as a substantial part of his methods Moreno's vindication of those heroic leaders who led the construction of the PST during the worst years of clandestinity and repression.

In all the mentions of female or male comrades that we could, we have completed the names. The notes have been added by the editors.

**The editors**

July 2025

# Letter to Delegates to the Conference of the PST(A)

Bogota, 7 April, 1979

Dear Comrades,

Unfortunately, against my will and for obvious reasons, I cannot attend your conference which, I have no doubt, will have historic results for the progress of our party and will mark a very important milestone in its development.

Despite my insistence, all the comrades in the leadership — either individually or through collective votes — have refused to allow me to return to the country to rejoin the party's work. This is truly what I want most but it is quite possible that they are right.

Since I will not be able to participate directly, I am compelled to send this lengthy letter to express my opinion on a number of issues. Among them, I do not at all take into account the personal role that fate has assigned to me in these three years of the party's clandestine life. In fact, this letter, in a very summary way, without any pretension and without an exhaustive reading of the documents, without an exhaustive reflection on the facts, as is our custom, does not pretend to provide a solution to all the problems but rather it intends to make a general analysis of the party and its leadership during these three years. It is a contribution that may leave much to be desired but this analysis is an indispensable task. Let's cut to the chase.

This conference is taking place against the backdrop of — and even more so, as the immediate cause of — one of the most tremendous leadership crises in the party we have had so far. A serious leadership crisis is nothing new in the history of our party since its entire trajectory is plagued by several. What is different about this one is its spectacular character, its form, and the fact that its resolution did not take place at the level of the leadership itself but has been, to a large extent, in the hands of the rank and file of the organisation and some of its most prominent militants.

When I say that there have been similar crises in the party, I remember some of them. Comrade Eduardo (Exposito), in the talks we had in Bogota, also laughingly recalled some of them: crises of organisational teams, of union teams, of secretariats, that is what we have had in abundance in our permanent eagerness to try out new leaders. And these leadership crises at certain times have also been serious political crises. The most serious that I remember, which almost wiped out the party, occurred in the early 1960s when I was released from prison after almost a year in jail.<sup>1</sup>

The National Directorate of the party, made up of very capable comrades, oriented the party towards work in the Peronist Youth. Tito (Ernesto González), who was in Tucuman, was against this line. To prevent the catastrophe, urgent surgical measures had to be taken: to send everyone back to the factory or to the rank and file and to orient the party back towards the workers' movement, pulling it out from entryism in the Peronist Youth and Peronism, entryism which had not been the orientation of the party, and to go back to the sources, to work on the Peronist union movement. That crisis was resolved quickly, in 15 days, without fissures or serious problems, almost without personal crises. Comrades Pedro (Alberto Pujals), Fierro (Alberto Shachtman) and Eduardo belong to the generation that assimilated this crisis and in six months transformed our party, making it once again a party of dozens and dozens of union cadres, intimately linked to the workers' movement.

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1 We suggest reading the chapter "The Argentine Crisis and the Deviations of Palabra Obrera" in the book *El trotskismo obrero e internacionalista en Argentina* (Workers' and Internationalist Trotskyism in Argentina), volume 3, part 1. Coordinator: Ernesto Gonzalez.

The crisis that we are witnessing, in a first approximation — and the fact that it is a first approximation does not mean that it is not correct — is the particular refraction that the rise of the workers' movement and the political, social and economic destabilisation of the country have at this stage in the life of our party. This rise and destabilisation have been reflected in the party as a serious crisis of leadership and as a strong reaction from the rank and file and the best militants.

This first analysis does not explain the characteristics and forms that the crisis took on: the violence, the harshness of the struggle, the deliberative state the party entered, the emergence of a strong grassroots current that repudiated the leadership, that is, the specific characteristics of the crisis. To explain them, it is not enough to point out that it is the expression of the beginning of the rise of the workers' movement and the destabilisation of the regime. It might not have happened despite these circumstances. There must then be other reasons that combine. I believe that the other factors that we must take into account without fail are to be found in the history of our party.

## A bit of history

This bit of history will start with the coup. Leaving aside the discussion of the character and date of the coup, its inevitability and the character of the stage it opened — whether reactionary or counter-revolutionary — it is indisputable that our party had a correct policy regarding the possibility of a coup.<sup>2</sup>

It systematically fought against the ultra-left currents that said the coup had already taken place with Lopez Rega<sup>3</sup> and that there would be no coup, and against the right-wing currents that argued that there was no coup with Lopez Rega but that there was no possibility of one taking place either. We always pointed out that there would be a coup against the Peronist regime; that it was a permanent danger, and there is an enormous number of documents to highlight these analyses and policies of the party. The coup was so much a part of our calculations that I don't remember whether immediately before or immediately after the coup we adopted a political-organisational resolution and a resolution on the location of the comrades which, in my opinion, are the most important political, organisational, and orientation response adopted by our party since the coup until now. A measure that was not only correct and indispensable but which was the master key to all our current successes, to our survival in clandestinity and, ultimately, to the reaction against the leadership that took place in the last few months.

This simple, seemingly modest, inconsequential measure was the resolution to liquidate most of the party professionals, to send them along with almost all the militants to work in factories or capitalist establishments. This was the fundamental response of our party to the stage that was opening up, of several years of retreat and clandestinity. With this, we ensured that our militants integrated into the class, and we did it in this way because we considered that — due to the clandestinity — it was going to be very difficult for the party to make contact with the class as a whole through a superstructural, propagandist or agitational channel. The coup was coming — and it came — and the coup meant defeat — and defeat came — and we had to prepare for several years of underground work and our first response was to accompany our class in their workplaces as the last trench of the resistance and the first of the counter-offensive.

This line of sending everyone to work was accompanied, dialectically complemented, by the opposite pole: to structure strong clandestine apparatuses that would allow us to have a magnificent infrastructure of propaganda and agitation at the service of the party. And our party was able to create these apparatuses. These two measures were complemented by another of enormous importance and which had to do with the leadership: we had the line of removing the best leaders, trying out a new national leadership and having a replacement leadership abroad. I insist on this clear strategic line: after the *coup d'état* we had

2 To delve deeper into the policy developed during this period, we suggest reading Nahuel Moreno's text *Early Criticism of Brunello's and Robles's Draft* (1980), available at [www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org), and Volume 3 of *Historia del PST* (History of the PST) by Ricardo de Titto, Cehus, Buenos Aires, 2024.

3 **Jose Lopez Rega** (1916–1989) was an Argentine politician and minister, known for his influence on Juan Domingo Peron and Maria Estela (Isabel) Martínez de Peron, his esoteric practices, and his nickname “the Sorcerer”. He was Minister of Social Welfare, and from there he organized the Triple A, a far-right paramilitary terrorist group that carried out attacks and selective murders against working-class and popular activists, the left (particularly the PST led by Nahuel Moreno), artists, writers and intellectuals. and even bosses' leaders opposed to the Government. The mobilisation of the “Rodrigazo” caused his fall.

the line to get the best leaders out, to get a replacement leadership abroad and to use clandestinity to test new comrades in the highest national leadership.

To apply this line, we gave ourselves a transitional program: not to remove the entire old leadership at once but gradually, and to try out the new comrades little by little. That is how it was decided that the first to leave immediately for a foreign country would be me. When I left, in June 1976, the secretariat, made up of Tito, Pedro, Marcela (Silvia Díaz) and myself, was somewhat weakened. Comrade Marcela produced a rather weak written assessment of the national reality, which was criticised by Pedro there and by us here, although, as a leadership, they formed a solid team. They had some somewhat bureaucratic characteristics, which led to a very rich and fraternal discussion between the leadership that remained in the country and me, who was already living in Colombia, about Pedro's actions in Colombia and a series of other questions. One of them was how to deal with clandestinity, whether we were too lenient with the comrades, whether we had serious organisational or clandestine failings, or not.

In this sense, my position was the hardest, that there should be a very rigid morality in judging clandestine and organisational mistakes that compromised the party or other comrades and about other problems. All this discussion, although very strong, was done within a great sense of unity and fraternity.

In these conditions, it was decided that Comrade Marcela should leave, on the one hand, as a way to strengthen her, and on the other, to overcome the elements of crisis in the old leadership and to strengthen the replacement leadership in exile, since Marcela was our most important leader. She was replaced by Comrade Martin (Hernandez). Pedro, who together with Tito were our other two top leaders, also left. Hector (Ruben Saboular, aka "Mujik"), Valentin (Orlando Matolini) and Miguel (Sorans) came in, and we began a trial run with this new leadership with Comrade Martin as its axis. Tito insisted on staying and continuing for a much longer period of time because his departure was also being considered. He, rather, wanted to work with the new leadership, considering that they formed a good team. We always insisted that he leave, although we accepted his suggestion.

We had chosen Colombia on Pedro's advice and because of the possibilities we saw for the Socialist Bloc. I settled in with Comrades Mercedes (Petit), Rita (Strasberg) and Roberto (Fanjul) with the plan to continue the publication of *Revista de America*, to edit the *Writings of Leon Trotsky*<sup>4</sup> and to prepare the founding of the Tendency.<sup>5</sup> Regarding the latter, we had been considering it in the leadership of the Argentine party because of the profound and incompatible differences that had arisen with the leadership of the SWP over the Portuguese revolution first (1975) and Angola<sup>6</sup> later, although we opened a waiting period when, in the IEC of February 1976 — in which we withdrew from the Leninist Trotskyist Faction (LTF) — we agreed with the then International Majority Tendency (IMT) on the policy for Angola, which could mean some possibility of change on the part of the latter and of achieving a theoretical-political rapprochement. Unfortunately, this possibility did not materialise, because when we got to know the draft European

4 Editorial Pluma started its activities in 1973, in Buenos Aires. It published numerous books, firstly by Trotsky and Moreno, but also by Ernesto Gonzalez and George Novack. And the inevitable *Communist Manifesto*. From Bogota, in the second half of 1976, Moreno and other exiled comrades took up again the publishing house tasks. One of their most important achievements was the publication for the first time in Spanish of the eleven volumes of the *Writings of Leon Trotsky*. Numerous books of general interest were also published. It was the most important Trotskyist publishing house in Spanish.

5 In February 1976, faced with the growing decadence and crisis of the SWP leadership, the majority of the forces of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction (LTF) withdrew and in August 1976 the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) was founded in Bogota. The main political differences between Morenoism and the SWP leadership were around the revolutionary processes in Portugal and Angola, and in their positions of capitulation to Mandelism, the majority of the USec.

6 In April 1975 a popular revolution put an end to the Caetano dictatorship in Portugal. One of its immediate consequences was the end of its colonial rule in Africa. In the case of Angola, it was agreed that the formal act of independence would take place on 11 November 1975, but in August a bloody civil war broke out that would last more than 20 years. The confrontation between the MPLA (supported by the USSR, Cuba and the communist parties) and the FLNA-UNITA took place when the Portuguese colonial army had not yet withdrawn. There were different positions in the Fourth International (Unified Secretariat). The differences were maintained and deepened when, after the withdrawal of the colonialists, the confrontation between the MPLA and the FLNA-UNITA directly supported by South Africa and its troops continued. Moreno polemized with both the US SWP leadership and the Mandelist majority headed by the French LCR. This polemic can be read in Moreno's 1979 text *Angola: the Black Revolution Underway* (1975), for the polemic on Portugal see *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Portugal* (1975) and *Our Differences on Key Issues* (1975), available at [www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org).



document of the majority, we could see that its ultra-left deviations continued, without positively changing its orientation, and that our differences were becoming increasingly more profound.

All the comrades know that the leadership of the Socialist Bloc did not receive us with open arms, but with evasions, did not commit itself to help us in the publication of *Revista de America* nor to adhere to the Fourth International and had not sent the note of support for Pedro's actions in Colombia, as they had committed themselves to do. This forced us to wage a strong political and factional struggle, relying on the comrades led by Ricardo Sanchez, who were in favour of immediate incorporation into the Fourth International. We carried out a strong tendential struggle that lasted a little more than a month and we achieved the total overturning of the comrades to the positions of the Argentine PST, of criticism of the SWP and the IMT, and their incorporation into the Fourth International. Then, with the Socialist Bloc and comrades from Brazil, Venezuela, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay and Mexico, in August 1976, we founded the Bolshevik Tendency (BT). The leadership of the Argentine party, both old and new, will have a constant line of total support for the construction of the BT. An unstinting support in the best sense of the word, that is, making any kind of effort to build the tendency. Understanding that there are setbacks in Argentina, we could almost say that the new leadership of the PST is putting a considerable amount of effort, militants and leaders into the construction of the BT and later of the Bolshevik Faction (BF). When taking stock of these last three years, the assessment and definition of the BT and the present BF must be a fundamental chapter of the balance sheet.

The new Argentine leadership ensures the regular publication of a rather poor newspaper, organises the party or continues with the existing organisation. At the end of 1976, the first resistance of the workers' movement to the new government arose and the actions of the new leadership were almost non-existent; it ignored these conflicts. At the beginning of 1977, three comrades from the new leadership came to visit us and made it clear to us that they were self-critical of these mistakes and the lack of reflexes to act on the workers' movement. They made a quite positive readjustment: from that moment on they no longer neglected attending to workers' conflicts as they did initially, they returned to the reflex of engaging in every conflict in the workers' movement and, together with this, we took the line of trying to use every legal margin, working on the church and the possibility of the emergence of a socialist movement in Argentina.

In the second half of 1977, Comrade Tito left and from that moment on, the party leadership must be considered as a completely new leadership. In September 1977, we met with several comrades of this new internal leadership [of Argentina] in a country bordering our own and there we came to the conclusion that the work on the Church and the socialist movement could not be an essential orientation for our party since the axis of our activity should be towards the union movement, its reorganisation, which means a different phenomenon from factory reorganisation. In terms of analysis and party policy, this great leap was made at the end of 1977: we overcame the tendency to make a mechanical comparison with 1955, believing that we were going to repeat that experience in relation to the trade union and factory movement. It is a different situation to that of 1955, although in some respects it has similar features. In 1955, everything began with a process of factory reorganisation, because all the trade unions had been taken over. As a consequence, the only possible union work was the work from the factories, which were also taken over and with internal commissions<sup>7</sup> appointed by the military comptrollers of the unions or approved by them. But now the situation was different, with many unions not taken over, with their authorities and open, and many branches of the different taken over unions in the same situation. So, it is necessary to take the union movement as a whole, not only in the factories with their internal commissions. We had to achieve the combination of factory and trade union work. It was in the second half of 1977 that the party refined its union line on the one hand and gave the line of orienting itself entirely towards union reorganisation, speculating on the possibility that in 1978 the government would promulgate its law on professional associations and legalise the trade union movement. We abandoned the Church and the socialist movement as important sectors of the party's work, to orient ourselves definitively towards union reorganisation combined with factory work. This is another of the main lines of the party at this stage. Along with it, great stress is laid on the need for the newspaper as a collective organiser, on its distribution, on giving enormous importance to political recruitment, to meetings to discuss international issues, and

<sup>7</sup> In Argentinian labour legislation since the 1940s enterprise or workplace committees are called **internal commissions**.



to the production of educational pamphlets or polemical bulletins. We began the battle against sectarianism and organisationalism, working inwardly, and to save the party apparatus.

We insisted, and the comrades in the leadership agreed, that the party was inward-looking, with too much fear, without engaging with the workers' movement. Hence our eagerness to make the newspaper the tool that would allow us to break this isolation, this tendency to sectarianism. We thought that we couldn't live dependent on the apparatus and meeting in a closed circle. Although it is repetitive, I would like to insist that, by the end of 1977, the new leadership and we agreed on the need for courses, for political documents, to use the retreat and the clandestinity to penetrate more than ever into the workers' movement, to train ourselves, to raise our political level, to create a high internationalist consciousness by publishing the documents of the entire International and forcing the whole party to study them.

As a way of breaking sectarianism, we pushed hard for a financial campaign at the end of 1977, even if it was improvised, to clearly understand what we were and what we had. At that time, there was a discussion about whether we should postpone the financial campaign. We insisted that it should be carried out as soon as possible because through the financial campaign we could have a thermometer to know exactly to what degree we were sectarian. The financial campaign was carried out; it was a success but it revealed the ultra-sectarian character of the party's activity and that we were working well within ourselves and our periphery. This reinforced the tendency to achieve a newspaper that would be distributed in large numbers.

## The year 1978

The plan to combat sectarianism through the newspaper and the financial campaign exposed organisational flaws which we discussed in depth with the comrades from 1978 onwards. The comrades insisted that the party had 400-500 solid cadres, some made that number reach 800. We insisted on the need to put each one of them in a social sector, fundamentally union or factory, but in some activity of resistance to the government and around these cadres to organise small zones as the best way to combat isolation on the one hand, and to develop the middle cadres on the other.

We agreed that these small zones would be created based on reality without any artificial changes. That is, starting from the existing organisation, without modifying it but making it transform itself little by little, getting the cadres to position themselves, to do a job, then a team, and then to give them the leadership of that already existing, real team.

Thanks to the determined support of the new leadership of the Argentine party, at the end of 1977 and the beginning of 1978, we managed to overcome the terrible financial crisis of the BT, caused when one of the key people – recommended by one of the leaders of the Socialist Bloc we trusted the most – pulled a manoeuvre and swindled us. Thanks to the tremendous effort of the leadership as a whole, we weathered this situation and in mid-1978 we managed to set up the BF,<sup>8</sup> holding a truly spectacular meeting of which you will already have reports. In a little over a year and a half, the BT, which was very weak, with small groups in Brazil and Colombia, which were the two strongest groups, and a handful of comrades in a few other countries, found that we had more or less solid work in over 15 countries. It is a solid, disciplined, well-organised faction, which is taking very significant strides in Colombia, Brazil, Central America, Mexico, Spain and fundamentally Italy, and we are beginning to penetrate – with many difficulties – in several other European countries. A small group of black comrades from Guinea-Bissau sent greetings to the BF meeting.

During the BF founding conference, a meeting was held with the Argentinean comrades where the organisational problem, the problem of the zones and the problem of the national leadership were discussed again. There it became clear that there was confusion in the characterisations and the line, and it was decided to hold an urgent meeting with the cadres most closely linked to the work in the workers'

8 In 1978, as the differences with the new majority of the FI (USec) (Mandelism and SWP) deepened, the BT transformed itself into the Bolshevik Faction, to strengthen its political battle towards the Twelfth World Congress to be held in 1979. An important growth had been achieved, since 80% of the forces that had confronted the guerrilla deviation and other erroneous policies of the Mandelist majority joined Morenoism, distancing themselves from the influence of the SWP. Almost 20 parties and groups, most of them Latin American, headed by Argentines, Colombians, Brazilians and Peruvians, among others, joined. And with the presence of several European countries, such as the Spanish State and Portugal.

movement, which I was to attend. In light of what happened later, it was also raised at this meeting, although I did not see it in its entirety at the time, that there were two comrades, one from the old national leadership and one from the new one, who were in quite an acute crisis: Marcela and Martin. As far as Comrade Marcela was concerned, I had no doubt, but I have to confess that I had not noticed Martin. That said, Comrade Martin insisted that he wanted to leave Argentina, mainly to go to Brazil.

After the BF meeting, we again insisted on the need for a broad meeting of the Argentinean party, as there were many obscure points, difficult to resolve. The comrades of the Argentinean national leadership were very optimistic about the financial campaign and the possibility of making a big leap and achieving a big growth on the basis of the small zones. But it caught our attention that, despite all the proposals, we were not able to see the progress of a party that would thoroughly establish itself within the workers' movement. There were very positive developments on the one hand but, on the other hand, we did not see a process of consolidation. We, the leadership of the BF and I personally, pointed out that we didn't know why we didn't manage to get off the ground and stabilise. We developed the interpretation that there is a process of immobilism: the government has no way out, but neither does the workers' movement at the moment. The analysis was that the government could not find a way out of the situation because the workers' movement had not yet got moving, and so there was a situation of general immobility, with a very slow tendency to change.

We then considered the possibility of a congress within the country, a proposal we made throughout 1978. The comrades insisted that they did not see any possibility. Thus, we came to an agreement that the best country to hold a broad meeting, as we had requested, was Brazil. The one who insisted most on Brazil was Martin. He relied on the advice of the Brazilian comrades and his own knowledge of the country to assert that there were large legal margins. The Brazilians also insisted on the need for the meeting, to study the possibilities in their country, and the BF considered that it was the place with the greatest possibilities for growth. Adding up all these needs and analyses, it was decided that I would travel to Brazil. The most important objective was the broad meeting of our party. The reality was different from what was portrayed. Three days after arriving we were already in prison.<sup>9</sup>

We found that the analysis of the Brazilian comrades and that of Martin — whom we hold primarily responsible — had been astonishingly irresponsible. The laws had not been studied, nor were there the legal margins they had predicted. We were dealt a tremendous blow whose consequences we are still suffering.

In November, shortly after I was released, we had the joy of receiving a new cadre in Bogota. It was the first time in all this period that we had seen a completely new face, a girl who was deeply involved in the rank and file of the party. The official documents and reports on the new financial campaign, together with the talks with Paula, gave us serious concerns. The official reports and the opinion on the organisation of the financial campaign that we had, provoked two reflections: on the one hand, that it was the best organised, most vigorous, with greater predictions than any financial campaign in the history of the party. It was a very well prepared, serious document, like almost all the documents of the new national leadership but, together with this, a very dangerous orientation, which we considered completely wrong; that everything was centred on the need for money, completely removed from any political and union orientation.

The arrival of comrade Paula expanded and clarified this criticism about the financial campaign because we found that not only with regard to the financial campaign but also with regard to the activity

9 On 22 August 1978, Moreno and another comrade, Rita Strasberg, leader of the Argentine PST and exiled in Bogotá, were arrested by the police in São Paulo, Brazil. Antonio Sa Leal, a Portuguese leader, and 13 members of the leadership of the Brazilian Convergencia Socialista (CS) were also arrested. The Brazilian police did not realise that the purpose of the trip was to meet with members of the Argentine PST leadership, who had travelled to São Paulo for that purpose. Thanks to the effectiveness of the clandestine operation that had been carried out, all of them were able to return quickly to Argentina without being detected. The FB launched a major international campaign for their release. In Portugal, Mario Soares led the efforts that allowed the entire National Assembly to make a statement. In Spain, Felipe Gonzalez, among others, lent his support. Political parties, unions, and labour federations in several countries protested in Europe. Something similar happened in Latin America, with the support of Juan Lechin in Bolivia and several constituent deputies in Peru, among others. The entire Fourth International also lent its support. Sa Leal was released on 6 September, followed by the CS detainees. The UN High Commissioner visited Moreno and Rita in prison and took personal steps to prevent their deportation to Argentina, where their lives would have been at great risk. At the beginning of November, both were released. They were received at the Colombian consulate in São Paulo and were able to return safely to Bogota. See *Opcion*, the clandestine newspaper of the PST, Year I, No. 7 and No. 8, September and November 1978.

in the university, where this comrade was active, there was a whole organisational focus of collecting dues and newspaper readers. We found ourselves with a magnificent cadre who knew nothing of the other tendencies, of the process of the student movement, of the positive currents that may exist, the places where she and the other militants can position themselves to lead some favourable objective process. On the contrary, we find that she criticises meetings of 100 or 200 students because they are led by other currents without giving them any importance, being very happy to gather seven or eight comrades and ignoring the reality of those 100 or 200 students gathered outside of us. We find that there is no work to lead the student body or any section of it. We are happy with strengthening the apparatus, with essentially organisational activities and of distribution of the newspaper; with recruiting a few comrades, which is relatively easy because no party is competing with us. But we see this as very dangerous because we are not recruiting the best leaders of the resistance. Added to these criticisms and concerns was the failure of the meeting in Brazil, which we have already analysed. At the end of the year there was the repression in Rosario and in other regions, which all the comrades know about. This caused us deep concern about the clandestine measures and made us intensify our criticisms. In this situation, with the criticisms we made of the financial campaign, of the carnal, vital reports by Comrade Paula and Comrade Martin on the problem in Brazil, to which was added the problem of clandestinity, with the falls in Rosario and other regions, the January 1979 meeting was prepared with the most select members of the national leadership of the party.

## The January 1979 meeting in Bogota

For all that we have been saying, the January meeting, not for its number but for the quality of the comrades present and their contributions, was the richest of all the meetings we held. It was preceded by a letter from Comrade Eduardo, another from Comrade Nora (Ciaponni) and was attended by Comrade Fierro. Initially, the letters from Eduardo and Nora made an impact on us, it seemed to us that there were many true elements and that, in general terms, they were both correct in relation to the state of the party.

In the previous talks, Comrade Fierro contributed a series of criticisms about the depoliticisation of the party and the poor orientation towards the struggles. We raised our concern about Paula's report, to which I referred earlier. In general, we got the impression that Comrade Martin accepted many of the criticisms but felt that they were generally exaggerated and that hasty conclusions were being drawn. In contrast to this, Comrades Hector, Miguel and Tisico (Norberto Aldana) were more self-critical but we also got the impression that they felt that Fierro, Eduardo and Nora exaggerated the criticisms, although they accepted many of them as correct. The comrades said that there was criticism from the rank and file, a certain unease. Comrade Pedro was the most self-critical, saying that yes, there were more serious problems and that, in general terms, he agreed with Eduardo's letter, but he was very close to the rest of the leadership, not so much to Comrade Martin.

These are all subjective impressions. But they are intended to explain what was the position of the BF leadership and my personal position. We prepared, then, for a long meeting and for the possibility of a long discussion about the party's situation. We therefore requested for the meetings to be recorded or minutes be taken because we felt that there would be a substantive discussion, as for us all the doubts of 1978 had been confirmed.

The agenda of the meeting was: I. Balance of activities: a) general situation of the party (minutes, letters from Eduardo and Nora); b) financial campaign; c) trade union, youth, democratic, socialist, women work; d) propaganda, publications, newspaper; e) security; report on recent falls in Rosario; f) leadership; g) finances. II. National situation. III. Tasks of party orientation; organisation, faction, world congress, growth, newspaper, publications. IV. Party cadres school. V. Miscellaneous: a) Cayetano; b) editorial.

In our first report, which unfortunately was not recorded due to a technical error but from which exhaustive notes were taken and on the basis of which the first document of the national leadership, that of February, was drawn up, we said, in summary, the following:

— The secret of the success of any revolutionary party is summarised in one word: seize opportunities to develop the party and the class struggle. Our party was very strong and lived on the legacy of seizing

opportunities since the decline of the military government of Onganía:<sup>10</sup> utilisation of legality, the line of the Workers' and Socialist Pole, and so on. In other words, a series of political successes that consisted only in taking advantage of the opportunities that reality offered us, providing us with a line to use them to the end.

— In the period of clandestinity, due to the objective situation and subjective situation of the leadership, our party had been strengthened or consolidated or maintained because of the previous political successes. As there had been no opening of new opportunities, this was not serious but a success. To continue exploiting or maintaining previous political successes, to maintain itself by the weight of inertia when objective reality does not open up new possibilities or opportunities, is logical. But, because of the youth and weakness of the leadership, because of its lack of experience, we found ourselves stuck at the fact that we were now beginning to miss opportunities of some importance — among them the Beagle<sup>11</sup> — which indicated that a scissors phenomenon was taking place; in the eagerness to preserve the party apparatus and the activity of publishing the newspaper, which was a positive attitude, we were moving further and further away from the class struggle, from political activity and from participating fully in the big or small opportunities that the objective situation provided us. This meant that, in these scissors, the negative factor of the distancing from the class struggle and political activity on the part of the leadership was increasingly dynamic. I pointed out that if we missed one or two more opportunities, the party would enter into a tremendous crisis. That such a crisis would be very serious, possibly the liquidation of the party because there were obvious symptoms that the situation was beginning to destabilise. I pointed out that the situation was stable for the moment but that this characterisation had to be modified towards the future, towards the new year, because destabilisation had begun. That all the political and social processes in the country were beginning to acquire a certain dynamic. This made the weaknesses of the leadership all the more serious because no party can live on inherited capital, which is being spent. It has to renew it, and that renewal is achieved by putting in place a leadership capable of using the opportunities given to us by the political process and the class struggle.

— I pointed out how this process of living off accumulated capital inevitably leads to a serious crisis, as demonstrated by the [Mandelist] French LCR. The LCR managed to become a fairly strong and hegemonic party on the extreme left at a certain moment due to the great success of May 68.<sup>12</sup> But, from then on, they didn't know how to use any new opportunity because it was a bad leadership, tied to the United Secretariat (USec), and as a consequence of that we have today a chronic crisis of the French LCR. I said that we were seeing a very similar situation in our party. We had a very weak leadership, we would almost dare to say a leadership very poor in the use of opportunities, which made it fall into a closed circle mechanism. This factor meant that the whole militancy was stuck. I insisted that the failure of the meeting in Brazil was an immense disgrace for the party because a thorough discussion was necessary to see how we could get out of this quagmire. That the return of the comrades living abroad, voted on at the BF meeting in July (1978), could begin to solve this crisis, this serious crisis of leadership.

10 **Juan Carlos Onganía** (1914–1995) was de facto President of Argentina from June 1966 to June 1970. He rose to power as military dictator after toppling the president Arturo Illia in a coup d'état self-named "Argentine Revolution".

11 The **Beagle Conflict** was a territorial dispute between Argentina and Chile over the determination of the course of the eastern mouth of the Beagle Channel, which affected the sovereignty of the islands located south of the channel, east of the Cape Horn meridian and its adjacent maritime spaces. In December 1978, the country was on the brink of war, which was postponed when papal mediation began. The PST denounced both dictatorships and defined it as a fratricidal conflict. In October 1984, a peace treaty was signed between Pinochet's dictatorship and Alfonsín's Radical government. Alfonsín called a plebiscite in November to approve the treaty. The party denounced it, calling for a boycott of the vote. When the Peronist leadership called for abstention, the party took that position to promote unity of action and dialogue with Peronist workers.

12 Starting in **May 1968**, a major workers' and student uprising began throughout France, marked by demonstrations, general strikes, and occupations of universities and factories. President Charles de Gaulle secretly fled to West Germany on the 29th. The unrest began with a series of far-left student occupation protests against capitalism, consumerism, US imperialism, and traditional institutions. Heavy police repression of the demonstrators led French trade union confederations to call solidarity strikes, which spread much more quickly than expected to involve 11 million workers, more than 22% of the French population at the time. The peak of the mobilization lasted seven weeks, after which De Gaulle returned and resumed the presidency, but he was mortally wounded. The Trotskyist organization of Mandelism, which adopted the name Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) in 1969, played an active role and grew significantly. One of its leaders, Alain Krivine, became one of the main figures of that revolution.



This analysis of the scissors effect led us to the conviction that there must have been a lot of unrest in the party, greater than the comrades pointed out. There must have been a lot of criticism.

We insisted that this crisis situation caused by a leadership incapable of seizing opportunities had total consequences: how finances were dealt with, the organisation, everything. The whole party was mis-directed. It was geared to collecting money and distributing the newspaper and not to fully engage in the resistance. It prevented the party from mobilising quickly, positioning itself in all the sectors where it was possible. Thus, everything was wrong.

All the comrades, starting with Comrade Martin, were in complete agreement with the critical report I made. Practically none of my proposals were questioned. The comrades themselves, in an attitude that does them credit, gave further elements to exemplify my criticism. From that first meeting, Martin considered himself a protagonist and a fundamental part of the mistakes and weaknesses of the new leadership and as being directly and personally responsible for some of them: the financial disaster and Olga's disaster. From the second meeting onwards, everything was recorded. We don't have any recordings here because they were taken away. That's why we have to resort to our memory. But it would be good if the comrades listened to the tapes.

At the meeting on the national point, there was a discussion between Hector and myself about the prospects of Martinez de Hoz's<sup>13</sup> plan. We all agreed with Comrade Hector, who argued that the plan had no chance of achieving a strong capitalisation of the national bourgeoisie and a development of national production, of the Gross National Product (GNP), but rather it was a plan that only enriched, through usury, the financial sectors.

Regarding the overall national analysis, we did not agree with the general character of the report made by Pedro and Hector and pointed out that the essential characteristic was destabilisation, and we all agreed.

About Miguel's union report, I began by pointing out that it had three weak points that undermined the whole report. These were: 1) Who can we win to be or become leaders of our union work? Miguel replied that he didn't know. 2) We don't have, and must have, an answer to what to do in every factory or union where we have important work. This should be specified in the union report. 3) We do not have a national union orientation. We know almost nothing about Peronism, the 25, the CNT,<sup>14</sup> Stalinism; what plan the leadership of the Union of Commerce Employees has.

We said it was essential to solve these three problems. And it was proposed that it was indispensable to create a union leadership, based on the best rank-and-file working class militants, even if they were not party leaders: they had to be rank-and-file or union leaders. They had to be promoted immediately. Miguel said Osvaldo was very good; I mentioned Carloncho; Fierro insisted on Federico (Martedi) and Aguilar was mentioned in passing. This was present in all the discussions: the need to promote the best rank-and-file militants to the leadership. We don't remember if we also put it to the EC but we did insist that the trade union committee was the most important in the party and that all those comrades should go there. The comrades responded that Carloncho was not yet mature and that Federico could not go for the moment, although he was a great comrade, very reliable. The leadership insisted fundamentally on Pacho (Juarez).

On all these points, I insisted on the need for me to go there, that I didn't see any major dangers. Unanimously, in all cases, they voted that I should not go.

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13 **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.

14 The CGT was divided in two sectors. The **Commission of 25** grouped trade unions that opposed the military dictatorship in Argentina established in 1976. Formed at the end of 1977 by the unions of taxi drivers, naval workers, truck drivers, miners, brewers, among others, it included among its demands the release of imprisoned leaders and delegates, the restoration of labour and trade union legislation, while fighting against the dictatorship's economic policy and for the return of democracy. It called the first general strike against the dictatorship on 27 April 1979. Its main figurehead was Saul Ubaldini, secretary of the beer industry workers. The **National Labour Commission (CNT)** (mostly large unions under government control) was formed in 1978 and was known for its willingness to engage in dialogue and negotiation with the military. Its most prominent leader was Jorge Triaca, from the plastics industry union.

About the internal situation, the comrades said that there was unease. I insisted again that, according to my analysis, there should be quite a lot of unease, perhaps even more than we thought, as shown by some minutes, criticisms and comments that the comrades themselves had made. In talks, we don't know whether officially, the comrades pointed out that in fact everything we were saying had been raised, although not with the same clarity, by Comrade Pachó and that then, for them, for the whole leadership, Pachó had been right if we, those of us from Bogotá, were right.

It was agreed that to solve this serious problem of the leadership, of its weakness, it was necessary to propose to Eduardo not to travel to Peru and to stay. The question of the axis of the leadership team was considered a serious problem since only Pedro could be considered for this task and it was necessary to transfer comrade Hector from organisational to political activities since we saw him wearing out and becoming increasingly unilateral, administrative, when he had a great talent for study and elaboration. After it was decided that Hector would leave the organisational role at my suggestion, we concluded that there was no one who could replace him. Tisico was considered and it was said that he was too weak for the organizational role. Mariano (Barba) was considered and the same thing was said. Marcela was considered but she still couldn't go and besides we didn't want her to take on organisational tasks that would develop her weakest points. For us, her situation was similar to that of Hector. In a new vote, we resolved that unfortunately, by default, we had to keep Hector in the organisational leadership, but then the leadership would essentially revolve around Pedro, teaming up with Hector, with the condition that Marcela would be the political-organisational link.

We analysed that Martin's crisis was not a psychological crisis as Comrade Martin interpreted it, or rather, that it was a psychological crisis caused by the fact that Comrade Martin was the first to realise that the leadership was not working out and the party was heading towards a crisis. That his sensitivity had led him to this feeling of helplessness which had provoked the psychological crisis.

We insisted that Hector was one of the greatest leadership promises of the party but that he was still too young, too immature, capricious, individualistic, that he went off by himself, that he had administrative deviations. So, the focus was on Pedro as the axis of the leadership but with great doubts because we were unsure if the comrade would have enough character and personality to be the axis of the whole leadership. We said that he was the only one who could guarantee an effective relationship with the faction to completely change the party and the leadership. We insisted on the need for the Pedro-Hector axis as the only possibility for the moment and on Pedro-Marcela-Hector, when comrade Marcela travelled.

Comrades Hector, Pedro, Miguel and Tisico strongly insisted that we discuss even the smallest measures to be taken when they returned. They considered that the first measure had to be a broad self-criticism to put an end to the unease and criticisms from the rank and file. My opinion was that if they agreed with the self-criticism, if they truly felt it and considered it as such, as a fundamental self-criticism, then it was not advisable to begin with self-criticism but it was convenient to begin by adopting a series of revolutionary measures; that the entire functioning of the party needed to be revolutionised, from the national leadership to the rank-and-file militants, and then a series of measures and advice were outlined. For example, it was necessary to ban the members of the national leadership from meeting every day. They had to meet once a week: every member of the national leadership had to go to a grassroots team, the one with the most promise, to set an example. They had to give essentially political and front-oriented objectives, not organisational ones. We advised them that they had to have one or two rank and file working-class comrades as friends, to visit them, to understand the situation of the party. There should be no more administrative meetings. When talking to a leader, the first thing to ask was how the political situation was and what the union orientation was, how they viewed the situation in their factory, their bank, their union, and what their political-union program was.

The precise advice was given to suppress the numerical questions — how many newspapers you sell, how many members you have — to ask what line they have for their place of militancy.

It was voted to reduce the sale of the newspaper to place the comrades in the class and to safeguard clandestinity. The important thing was that every party militant should have an activity within the objective process of workers' and people's resistance to the government. Every party militant has to have a role



as a leader in some sector — we said — fundamentally working class, which is resisting. This was the great task of positioning our militants and reorganising the party.

We had to promote to the leadership all the comrades who had been emerging as very capable in the rank and file.

We insisted that everyone should live in the neighbourhood where they worked, and in a better social environment. Incidentally, those who could not do factory work should do neighbourhood work. We were against the national leadership going to live in the neighbourhoods because it hindered their activity. A series of measures were decided upon to defend ourselves against a possible repressive blow against the top leadership. The need for the small zones was insisted on but the comrades had to be placed first. And it was agreed to cancel the party cadres' school.

About finances, there was a memo that presented a good situation and it was not explicitly or implicitly questioned. Nobody questioned the sending of money to the BF.

All agenda items were discussed exhaustively. The framework of the discussion was that we all agreed that we had a very weak leadership, that it had messed up a lot and therefore we wanted and needed this analytical discussion to arm ourselves.

During this meeting there was a small event that we did not like very much and which we now particularly remember. The comrades put a lot of pressure on Tisico to “understand” his mistakes. They were not satisfied with a first meeting and asked for another one. At that second meeting we protested against the comrades' method, saying that Tisico had every right to be upset for two reasons: one, because he was almost certainly against “understanding” his serious mistakes and deviations. The other reason, because the main culprit was the leadership and they did not thoroughly self-criticise. We defended the personality and the rights of Tisico. We are in the same position. Yesterday we defended Tisico from Ruben, Pedro, Miguel and Martin. Today we defend these great comrades from those who want them to “understand” their mistakes.

## The last meeting with Comrade Eduardo

With the arrival of Comrade Eduardo, the phone calls and various letters I received from comrade friends, we had a complex, strange panorama because we saw that the comrades in the leadership were very worried, Comrade Fierro, Pedro, about the situation of the party. There was a comrade who phoned me about a task and told me that there was a state of rebellion. But all the reports the leadership gave us filled us with joy because, for us, the rank and file of the party was rebelling to implement everything we had discussed in January. We didn't see where the problem was when we had agreed with the comrades of the national leadership that the rank-and-file comrades who were criticising were, in general terms, right. That's why the day Eduardo arrived we had a shouting match because we didn't really understand what was going on. If the rank and file said it was a clique, we had said it was a closed circle; if the rank and file said everything was wrong, we had said that if we missed another opportunity we would be left without a party, that we were on the verge of a total crisis. And we agreed that the key to everything was that we had a very weak national leadership, full of merits, full of capable but very weak comrades, with inexperienced comrades, very young, unproven in any fact of the class struggle and proven only in the clandestinity, which was a very great merit but nothing more. In relation to the revolution, it is a merit but it does not justify that they do not give a good line for the processes of struggle and resistance.

After an intense discussion with the comrade, it was clarified that this aspect of the January meeting had not been thoroughly specified and a series of measures had not been taken. For example, when we arrived, we did not go out and say “What a joy, we have arrived from Bogota, there we realised that Pacho is a monument, that he is completely right, long live Pacho”. And just as important as this recognition, which came from comrades Hector, Miguel, Tisico and Pedro themselves here, supported by Martin, should be the concrete measures to be taken, mainly the promotion of the best comrades from the rank and file and the total change of placement and activity of the comrades in the leadership.

Eduardo reflected a certain indignation about the methods of his fellow leaders. He spoke of a clique with very dirty procedures. Other comrades, who have written or spoken to me, express themselves in similar terms. We discussed these qualifications with Eduardo. Although we agree with the symptoms, we don't agree with the definition of the phenomenon: is it a clique and do they have bureaucratic methods because the comrades are bureaucrats and cliquish or because they are extremely weak? That is the key to the problem. We place the emphasis on the weakness of the comrades and mainly on the overall, structural, political-organisational problem and not on the subjective aspect of the comrades. We judge a team and not individual comrades. We believe that to judge individual comrades for serious failings of a structure or a team is to make a mistake that can set a dire precedent for the future. We never act like this. Whenever we criticise an orientation or a team, we criticise the orientation or the team and not the individual comrades. As personalities or individuals, there is logically a relationship between the individual comrades and the teams we criticise but the determining fact is the structure, the team, the whole and not the individual comrades. Those same individuals in another structure and orientation can be, are, of enormous, fundamental value. When we removed Arturo Gomez, our beloved Arturo, as general secretary because of very serious errors of orientation and application, nobody questioned the comrade's formidable political and tactical qualities. The same thing happened in all the other crises I have known: one team was removed to put in another and the problem was over. The problem is different when it comes to the discussion of tactical or political lines: the one that prevails has to impose its team to guarantee the application of the line voted. But when there is agreement, the problem is merely one of functioning and of more or less efficient teams. Even a politically majority line must also tend to team up with the best comrades, even if they are politically mistaken.

This explains the contradictions we see every day between teams and the individuals who make them up. Bad teams can have very good comrades and good teams bad comrades.

To provide a thorough understanding of how we saw the meeting with Eduardo and the situation of the party, I will allow myself to quote from a personal letter I wrote after the comrade left. The delegates to the Conference will excuse the tone, as it is a letter to a comrade of my intimate confidence. But at the same time, it can serve to show how we saw and see the situation and, also, to take some of the stiffness out of this letter and to use the tone that, for example, Federico uses in the plenum. A tone that, by the way, filled us with joy and made us feel part of our party, the one we have always been part of.

'Thanks to Eduardo's arrival, we know where we stand and why they were so worried. There was a somewhat comical situation. Pedro, always Pedro, spoke to us in melodramatic tones that the situation was going from bad to worse, that there was a very serious mess, that everything was going wrong. He was usually accompanied by Fierro to back up these proposals. According to what they told us, everything was bad because the leadership and the rank and file were clashing very badly, that the rank and file were in complete agreement with the analysis and the policy but were attacking the leadership as bureaucratic, that the latter was counterattacking by defining the best comrades in the rank and file as resentful or similar things. Each call was more melodramatic than the last in a crescendo that we didn't know when it would end. The last calls spoke of the entire old leadership being in complete crisis. Miguel, Ruben, Tisico, etc. That they were reluctant to accept criticism from the rank and file. Pestaña (Silvia Santos) called me to tell me that there was a true rebellion against the leadership and that Ruben was in a very big crisis. Mimi (Oliveto) wrote me a letter to tell me that Ruben and the rest of the leadership were incorrigible bureaucrats, that she, being a transmission belt of the leadership, had also incurred in bureaucratic attitudes on her front.

"By now, you may be wondering what was so comical about the situation. For us — Mercedes, Martín and I — the grave concern of Pedro and Fierro was incomprehensible. In January we had said that there was a very difficult situation, that the party was on the brink of a serious crisis if the methods and orientation were not changed, that there must be much more unrest in the rank and file than we thought, that we had to act quickly by adopting a series of very urgent measures, mainly to promote the best rank and file comrades to the union leadership, which should be the axis of the party, that the comrades in leadership had to belong to a rank and file team and promote exemplary work, that all the activity and organisation of the militants' lives had to be reoriented, and so on. What they were telling us on the phone was nothing more than the corrected and augmented edition of what we had said in January. We were very happy: if there

were comrades in the leadership who resisted everything agreed in January, it was very positive that the rank and file confronted them. When a very worried Pestaña informed me about the rebellion of the rank and file against the leadership, we replied, That's great, that's magnificent! It gave us the impression of a storm in a tea cup. Or of a very serious storm but with predictable and very healthy results. What shocked us was the serious concern of all the comrades who phoned or wrote to me.

"Eduardo's arrival made our smiles fade somewhat. What was serious was not the situation but the dynamic of action and reaction that had been set in motion. The party was in a deliberative state, by a note or resolution, Eduardo and Pedro had taken over the leadership of the party and called a plenary or political commission of delegates from cadre plenaries. Eduardo himself called this a *coup d'état*. He told us some anecdotes that made our hair stand on end: that some comrades said that they were not verticalist, that Eduardo himself had proposed that the rank and file in the plenaries should ratify or rectify the leadership of the party. These anecdotes were amidst many others, almost all of them, which were extremely positive. For example, almost all the proposals that Eduardo had made were correct, except for the ratification of the leaders in plenary. Almost everything or everything that the rank-and-file comrades said in the plenaries was fair and very positive but the non-verticalist stance was very dangerous. It was a conjunctural problem and we had to be very careful not to touch it in the middle of this important conjunctural battle, but nothing more than that, conjunctural, matters of principle: the ultra-centralist and disciplined character of our party at this stage and in general terms always (we are verticalist in our own way and not in the Peronist way since we are based on prior discussion at the grassroots of all our policies through party congresses); the sacred character of the party's leadership bodies between congresses as the only guarantee of discipline and centralisation; the opposition, on principle, to plenary meetings appointing or removing national party leaders, as this would leave it to zonal plenary meetings to change leaders, a change that can only be carried out by a congress or conference, the only valid representation of the party as a whole. The party is not the sum of plenaries but a living reality that can only be represented at a congress, with all the richness of its debates, its possibilities for change, for contact and discussion between delegates from the most advanced sectors and the most backward ones, with the possibility that delegates from the most backward sectors can be convinced by the most advanced ones, and so on. The same goes for the leadership: this is not the sum of the most representative leaders from the different zones and regions, but a leadership team.

"As concerns don't come alone, to this one about principles another one was added: we saw Eduardo and many grassroots leaders very much at odds with the old leadership.<sup>15</sup> Instead of seeing it as a political and historical phenomenon, an inexperienced, weak, politically inept, timid leadership, they began to see it as a semi-diabolic, subjective phenomenon, a 'bureaucratic clique', 'outrageous', etc. Mimi's letter, so interesting and good, was a symbol in itself. If they saw the leadership in this way, it was very likely that the comrades in the leadership would feel resentful. As a critical method, it was very dangerous to attribute everything or almost everything to psychological traits. Traits that were almost certainly there. Weakness, not going down to the conflicts and to the rank-and-file teams, living from meeting to meeting with other leaders, only worrying about organisational or financial problems, must lead to certain psychological traits. It is not because we are leaders that we can escape the Marxist law that it is being, life, what conditions consciousness. But this law is inexorably fulfilled in large sectors and over a long time. Otherwise, they are only temporary deviations, momentary traits. For a bureaucratic clique to emerge, there must first be a party bureaucracy. Here too there can be elements, traits, being party professionals and not deeply engaging in the rank-and-file activities and workers' mobilisations have to provoke bureaucratic elements. But here too, only elements because for it to be directly bureaucratic there would have to be a directly privileged economic and social situation for that party sector, which is often the one that sacrifices the most. No matter how much I think about it, I don't see even the slightest hint of the emergence of a privileged bureaucracy in our party."

"Leaving aside these sociological disquisitions and coming down to earth, the problem becomes much simpler and more tangible, human. No one will be able to convince me for the moment that

15 In this case, the term "old" does not refer to the party leadership at the time of the coup and the first months of the dictatorship, as mentioned at the beginning of the letter, but rather to the leadership formed by Martin Hernandez, Miguel Sorans, Ruben Saboular, and others.

Rubencito, Miguel, Martin or Tisico are bureaucrats or anything like that. A good example was what Eduardo told us about how the “*coup d’état*” happened. He and Pedro arrived where the “clique” was gathered and waiting for them, and when they were presented with the resolution, it was greeted... with a sigh of relief and joy! What a strange clique that does not defend its booty and does not defend itself! I remain, I will remain convinced that they are some of our best leaders, with enormous party merits. Circumstances, which they did not seek, led them to form a very weak leadership team that had to face a very difficult situation. Almost certainly their weakness, the difficulty of the situation, led them to bureaucratic, screwed-up attitudes. It is quite possible that some or all of the anecdotes I have been told are true, including that Miguel adopted terrorist attitudes in some political meetings, that he was distant. Almost certainly almost all the leadership was more or less “caught”, starting with Martin (the other day he himself told us, “We were much fewer than we thought”). All this may be true but it is anecdotal, secondary; they are tertiary and not primary features for the definition of the two fundamental phenomena: one, that the leadership was weak, full stop; another, that the comrades who formed the leadership, mainly the secretary, are, were, will almost certainly be, some of our best leaders. Some of them are among the best hopes for great national leaders that we currently have, like Ruben. Others are already a reality like Gardel, Tisico, Miguel or Martin. These definitions do not mean to dissolve the criticism of the tertiary and momentary traits of these comrades but rather to place them in their true measure. They lend themselves not only to a harsh criticism of certain procedures, but also to a good dose of irony, of the kind that the rank and file of our party so humorously dish out in abundance. While criticising Miguel for his speeches in some plenary sessions, I would like to rename him: Miguel the Ripper. Ruben: Ruben the Sweet. Said in a nutshell: from a conjunctural point of view, it warrants a strong critique of concrete procedures and an irony. It does not lend itself to social or subjective characterisations of a negative nature. If we insist on taking the controversy to this terrain, we will be forced to carry out an unwavering defence of those comrades as selfless and very capable leaders, even if they have not been competent as a team to solve the tasks they faced.

We would do the same with Pacho, Federico, Aguilar, tomorrow, if they were questioned as leaders and cadres of fundamental importance for having committed serious specific and concrete errors. We will not allow concrete criticisms of specific stages or events to be confused with the assessment of these comrades as leaders.

‘The first two days that Eduardo was here, we were quite worried that these differences would prevent us from reaching an agreement and, more seriously, that they would prevent us from forming a new leadership team, with very fraternal relations between all the comrades, who we considered great leaders, whether they had been for or against the previous secretary. We were also concerned about the precedent that could have been set in the party, that of *coups d’état*. We believed that it would have been necessary to convene an urgent conference, but convened by the old leadership. Only a highly representative congress or conference could solve the problem in a democratic way, elect a well-representative leadership and impose once again an iron discipline on the party, which is more than ever necessary today. It was a great pleasure for us to listen to the plenary sessions and to read the internal documents. The oral interventions of the most furious critics of the leadership were so serious, so responsible, and so recognisable of the party’s tradition, of democratic centralism, that we could not help but be reassured. There is one that filled us with pride, the one signed by Nestor (Lopez), Comisario (Adolfo Santos) and Astroboy (Gustavo Gimenez). It has a high theoretical level and is even erudite. I asked Camilo (Gonzalez, of the Colombian PST leadership) and the leadership of the BF to read all the critical documents, especially the one by Comisario and others, so that they could see the level of the PST(A).

‘To our great joy, Eduardo, after a sleepless night and a lot of pondering, accepted our proposals in their entirety and made a series of contributions. We are all amazed at the maturity that Eduardo has been acquiring. He did not put a millimetre of self-esteem; he thought and rethought the problem and came to the same conclusions as we did. The accusations against the comrades who were part of the old leadership are over, the jokes are back, the fraternal criticism without psychological elements and without demonic accusations. Ruben went back to being Rubencito, Miguel Miguel, Federico Federico and so everybody. We will make a leadership with the best comrades, with those that the conference considers the best and the most capable. The leadership will be neither of the old nor of the new critics. A conference will be called to discuss all these problems in depth and to choose the new leadership with the best.



Before Eduardo's arrival we had already decided that Martin and Ernesto would go to Argentina to see what was going on and to inform us. Eduardo felt that this was the right thing to do. We believe that Ernesto, at the very least, should stay to form the new secretariat with Pedro and Eduardo. We have to keep almost the same EC with the addition of several of the best comrades in the grassroots activity.

'Seen from a certain historical perspective, what has happened takes on an almost absolute clarity. As the old comrades who were on the outside begin to return and as many other old and new comrades have emerged and matured in the rank and file, the new leadership has been overwhelmed from the rank and file and from abroad, and has been sandwiched. The objective conditions help this process to pose ever more urgent and new demands on a weak leadership. The old leadership is beginning to be rearmed, enriched by the new one in its two aspects, the one that carried the weight of the party leadership and the one that carried the weight of rank-and-file militancy. We are witnessing the birth certificate of this new leadership and the death certificate of a leadership that had much greatness, that fulfilled a necessary stage, that carried clandestinity forward but does not have sufficient capacity to tackle the new problems that we are facing. To new needs, a new leadership. And this new leadership cannot be young and probationary like the previous one, but the whole leadership. This is what today's new needs, which are essentially political, demand. Seen this way, from a distance, Martin's leadership appears justified and much more efficient than the current situation shows it to be. He has two imperishable merits: to have maintained a centralised party in full activity during the three most terrible years of clandestinity that our political history has known; to have been the basis for the creation, development and strengthening of the BF. This alone would be enough, more than enough, for the balance to be positive. Like any truth, like any team, like any human enterprise, its *raison d'être*, 'its truth', has a limit in time and space. Beyond that limit, the truth becomes a lie, reason becomes unreason, the efficient team becomes inefficient. The Martin-Miguel-Ruben-Tisico leadership was beginning to exceed its limits, hence its crisis and hence the justified criticism. We must avoid letting these justified criticisms prevent us from making a comprehensive evaluation of the phenomenon of this leadership. And this evaluation can only be that they played a major and positive role in the development of the party, despite their youth, inexperience and lack of political capacity. This leadership can no longer play this positive role because the new objective reality overwhelms it.'

I believe, with this untidy quotation, I have finished clarifying my position and actions. I also believe that it is a sufficient basis on which to firmly base and warmly support the proposals put forth by Comrade Eduardo, which I do not want to repeat. It is understood that this is the spirit and most of the letter of this proposal. The Conference will make the modifications it deems necessary but in the sense of its spirit. If this were not the case, it would be a grave mistake and a stumbling block for the party.

Comrades, I have no doubt that you will rise to the occasion and that the conference will be historic.

With fraternal orthodox Trotskyist regards

**Hugo**

PS: I repeat again that I had to write this letter on the run, without being able to study the documentation carefully and that it must be full of errors, at least in detail.