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Foreword

Because of the genocidal coup of 1976, Nahuel Moreno spent six years in exile in Bogota. He returned to the country after the mobilisation that led to the revolutionary fall of the dictatorship in June 1982.

During the first months, Moreno kept his presence clandestine in Buenos Aires, living on the top floor of the party headquarters on 222 Peru Street. For this reason, this supposed “letter” was presented with the signature of the Colombian leader Kemel George, and as if it had been sent from Bogota to Madrid.

The letter was presented at the meeting of the PST Central Committee in November 1982. In it, for the first time and succinctly, Moreno explained his definitions of the change of stage in the country after the resignation of the dictator Galtieri, the assumption of Bignone, the characteristics of the “molecular” but massive rise and the rearrangement of the slogans in the face of the new situation.

These themes and political and theoretical elaborations were developed in other later works, in particular, *1982: The revolution begins* and *Argentina: A Triumphant Democratic Revolution*, in 1983, both of them available in www.nahuelmoreno.org.

The Editors

March 2021

Introduction by *Estrategia Socialista* No 4, December 1982

The Argentine political situation is awakening a growing interest both in Latin America and in the rest of the world. About it, a Colombian socialist leader, Comrade Kemel George, has sent us the following letter to Madrid, exposing his points of view. The publication of this letter does not imply that we necessarily agree on all its details. We make it known as one more contribution to a transcendental debate for the future of socialism in that part of America.

Letter from Afar

Bogota [Buenos Aires], 15 November 1982

Dear friend and comrade,

I write to you with some ideas about the situation you are living in Argentina. I want to refer to the analyses you have sent me and try to contribute to them. Take all this as a modest attempt to collaborate, from afar and guided exclusively by the data that I can handle here through the press.

My observations have a double meaning. First of all, congratulations on the great successes you have had. Second, some opinions about somewhat ambiguous formulations which may lead to wrong and even dangerous conclusions.

I think you have contributed three great and fundamental theoretical-political concepts:

1) The situation in Argentina is heading towards the elections. An ever-wider legal opening is imposed because imperialism and the bourgeoisie want it that way. For this reason, a fascist or semi-fascist counterrevolutionary coup is almost impossible.

2) Because of the lack of leadership that centralises the struggle of the workers' movement, that is, because of the crisis of Peronism and the union bureaucracy as well as its counterrevolutionary policy and because of the inexistence of an alternative political leadership recognised by the masses, there are no possibilities in the coming months of great struggles in the streets that raise the problem of power. This does not mean that we are not experiencing a stage of a continuous rise of the mobilisations.

3) From the previous analysis it can be deduced that the policy to be applied in Argentina is the in-depth participation in this legal and electoral stage, to contest the leadership of the workers' and mass movement to the bourgeois parties — mainly to Peronism — and to the CP.

All the rest, right or wrong, are only secondary issues of analysis or tactics that emerge from the general political course. I repeat that I fully agree with the essentials of these political analyses and conclusions and I believe they can open a new stage for the development of our current in Argentina.

I now come to pose to you my observations. In your analyses, there is a certain ambiguity and confusion regarding the national situation, more specifically in what refers to the characterisation of the workers' and popular rise. If, on the one hand, you correctly point out that there is a generalised and continuous rise, on the other, there are formulations that raise more than doubts about whether or not there is a rise in the workers' movement.

For example, you emphasise that the revolutionary situation your country is going through is characterised by a combination of the deepest bourgeois crisis in history and the lowest point of workers' mobilisation in the last 40 years.

These statements are correct within the framework of the discussion posed with the comrades who, mistakenly, have the sole tactic of shouting: "For the workers' struggle!" They serve to underline that the current stage will not be one of revolutionary struggles in the streets and for power but of popular and workers' mobilisations and essentially of a great electoral battle against all the traditional, bourgeois and workers' parties that, without exception, defend the agreement with the military government.

But if these formulas are taken at face value, out of the context of the discussion raised with those comrades, a very dangerous interpretation can be made of them: there is no rise of the working-class and popular grassroots; all there is, for the moment, is a crisis that comes down from the heights, from the bourgeoisie, its institutions and parties and which has already penetrated the top union and popular leadership... and nothing else. From there it could be deduced that the correct policy, or, at least, the only viable one is an exclusively propagandistic, superstructural exploitation of the colossal crisis of the bourgeoisie and the treacherous leaderships of the workers' and mass movement. I think it's not like this.

I believe there is a fabulous rise of the masses, popular and workers', which began with the mobilisation for Malvinas and continues today. I think this revolutionary rise, combined with the colossal crisis of the bourgeoisie, has started, months ago, the socialist revolution in your country. And I think you have to draw all the political consequences of this analysis. I will try to explain myself in an orderly fashion.

The revolutionary rise

To see what happens with the workers' and mass movement, you will have to make an effort to move away from the unionism that has always influenced analysis and policies in Argentina. This unionism was a consequence of the pressure from the level of consciousness of the Argentine workers' movement and the great union struggles that it carried out. It was a healthy deviation because it allowed maintaining ties with the masses while the stage was unionist, as it happened throughout the Peronist era. Now it has become a blindfold that must be torn off the eyes in order to understand the new reality.

I hold that in your country, the workers' and mass movement is in a revolutionary, massive, generalised rise, which assumes unprecedented forms. Precisely because it is unprecedented, it gives the impression it does not exist. It does not resemble any of the great rises that have taken place in the last 40 years in your country, which took the form of heroic general and practically unanimous strike actions, centralised organisationally by mass unions and a labour central and politically by a recognised political and union leadership, the Peronist.

The current rise does not match the previous ones at a single point. There are no union organisations or union leaderships or popular and recognised policies. As a result of this, there is not and cannot be in the short term, super-organised and centralised mass actions, with a recognised leadership that confronts the regime in a revolutionary way. It is a rise not framed within recognised organisations and that does not recognise any leadership but it does not cease to be a rise.

This rise is expressed in the working-class and popular grassroots in millions of ways. I insist on the word *millions*. From the homeowners of the poor neighbourhoods to the great commercial artists, from the democratic movement for the disappeared to the housewives, from the intellectuals to the working class that, in its own way, is facing its reorganisation. All of them have come out to fight, in a thousand different ways. There are so many and so many small revolutionary events that they can go unnoticed if what we are expecting to see are only great general strikes like those of the last 40 years. But these events will cause great events in the short term: general strikes, demonstrations and mass gatherings. This is why I hold that over there you are experiencing a *tremendous and widespread general rise* but still in their molecular stage. It is molecular because it is not organically or politically centralised. It is general and widespread because it encompasses all the exploited or impoverished

social sectors of the country, 80 or 90 per cent of the population, and those who are fighting are not a small vanguard but millions of people, the working-class and popular grassroots.

But, also, I hold that this rise is revolutionary, unconsciously revolutionary, but objectively the most revolutionary your country has known, for several reasons. First, because each and every one of those millions of actions clashes with the military regime (and I have my serious doubts as to the extent to which they are not partially or totally aware of it). Second, because all these actions aim at finding solutions to the terrifying crisis that is sinking your country ... and the only objectively possible solutions are the socialist ones. Third, because it is a movement that has raised the creation of new organisations and new leaderships, as a consequence of the generalised crisis of Peronism, its union bureaucracy and all the other leaderships that potentially were postulated as alternatives: The Communist Party and Montoneros.¹

These characteristics of the rise place one of your correct statements in the right place. There will not be any great generalised actions of the masses that pose the problem of power in the immediate future. *But there will be more and more actions of the masses, large and small, partial and general.*

Finally, I want to refer to your statement about the role that the working class as such is playing.

It is true what you say that the working class is part of the rise but not its backbone or its vanguard. Indeed, it is not the proletariat, with its organisations and methods of struggle leading the mass movement. But it would be dangerous to think that, because of the crisis in its organisation and its traditional leadership, this situation could be perpetuated indefinitely. Neither its social, structural and numerical weakening, caused by the economic crisis and unemployment, can feed such a perspective. At any time, the Argentine working class will be able to resume the role it has traditionally had in the class struggle in your country; it will become the vanguard and the axis around which the remaining revolutionary mobilised social sectors will nucleate.

At this time, the workers participate in the revolutionary rise with everything, as residents of neighbourhoods that are mobilising or in a thousand other ways. But, moreover, the rise also has its expression in the working class as such. Not yet as before, with large strikes and struggles in the streets, but as a reorganisation from below, through the election of delegates that, according to what they tell me, takes place mainly in the state unions but also, although more slowly and with difficulty, in the industrial proletariat.

In short, I think you have to correct any statement that can be interpreted as that there is no rise or that your country is experiencing the lowest point in history in terms of mobilisations of the workers' movement. There is a new, unprecedented rise, with characteristics that have never been seen in Argentina, but not the lowest (or, even worse, non-existent). Taken in its dynamic, you are already living the most colossal of rises you have ever seen.

The Argentine revolution has begun

My second statement is that the revolution has begun in your country. The thousands and thousands of revolutionary events that take place every day may seem of little importance to us if we wait for the great events that, according to what we believe we have read, have triggered the great revolutions.

I say "we believe we have read" because the books say something else. All the great revolutions, before the great events that posed the problem of political power, went through a first stage similar to the one you are going through. That first stage was the true beginning of the revolution, as it happened in 1912 in Russia or with the electoral fall of the King of Spain in 1931.

¹ Montoneros was the main Peronist guerrilla organisation in Argentina. It was born encouraged by Peron himself. In 1973 it supported the brief government of Hector Jose Campora, who was quickly overthrown by Peron. On 1 May 1974, Peron drove them out from the massive rally of the day. It pursued guerrilla warfare between 1970 and 1979. It was primarily composed of young men and women of the middle class. [Editor]

The great revolutionary event that Argentina is experiencing is the fall of the military regime. That this fall appears in slow motion and by pieces does not mean it is not a fall. A scientific socialist can never assert that a political process is inevitable; neither is it inevitable that the military regime of your country ends up falling. But it is almost certain. And the day the people vote and the military leaves the power to a bourgeois-democratic regime, that colossal revolutionary event will have culminated: the fall of the military regime.

However, even if this political crisis, which is the fall of a regime and its replacement by a superior one, is postponed, I continue to argue that the revolution has already begun in your country. This is so because the crisis of the regime, the institutions and the overall structure of bourgeois Argentina has been combined with the revolutionary rise of the masses.

Like every rise and every revolution underway, the one in your country will go through two stages. The first, as is generally the case, is electoralist, of bourgeois legality, almost total national unity, the hopes of the masses in a conciliatory and parliamentary solution to their problems. It is also a stage of learning, of accumulation of forces and experiences of the working class and its vanguard. The second stage is that of the exhaustion of hopes for a bourgeois solution, that of polarization and the test of forces between the classes.²

Argentina has fully entered the first of these stages. Whether it is legal and electoral does not mean it ceases to be a stage, the first, of a revolution already underway. It will be a more or less long stage, I think very mediated, given the “European” character of your country and its solid bourgeois structure of more than a century. But, even from Spain, you are up to your neck in that first stage of the Argentine socialist revolution.

The political conclusions

It is important to recognise the electoral and legal nature of the stage your country is experiencing, but knowing it is a stage on the path already undertaken towards the socialist revolution.

This will give you the obligation to participate in the situation as it is, pushing, accompanying and leading the working class and the people in their current mobilisations. In this way, you will help the masses to go through this electoral and legal stage as quickly and in the best possible way, preparing the victory of the socialist revolution in the next stage that, sooner or later, will follow it.

If these definitions are correct, your political proposal to participate fully in the legality and the elections will not be weakened at all. It will become richer and take on a new magnitude. Only with a fair understanding of reality can you develop the audacity needed to discover the millions of small and big revolutionary events that take place every day and will take place more and more. Consequently, this will allow you to renew yourself every day and propose methods and procedures appropriate to the situation. You will stop watching only the superstructural phenomena and you will give great importance to those that take place at the workers’ and popular grassroots. You will not limit yourself to propaganda, which is still very important, but you will be able to propose courses of action.

In this extraordinary stage that your country is experiencing, everything happens everywhere.

We need to continue discussing these political analyses and proposals. Because now, more than ever, without correct theory there can be no correct actions. Discussing these analyses in-depth becomes a problem of life and death for you and for all those who, like you, want the victory of socialism in Argentina.

With fraternal socialist greetings.

2 Contrary to what is repeated over and over by those who want to find a justification to repress the left, you and I know that the passage from one stage of the revolution to another is independent of the existence or not of revolutionary organisations, professional agitators, etc. It is an objective law that arises from the fact that the bourgeoisie, unable to solve the crisis of decaying capitalism, forces the exploited masses, desperate by hunger and the lack of a future, to take massive revolutionary action. (NM)

Kemel George [Nahuel Moreno]

Postscript about slogans

During the long resistance to the military regime, you had been proposing, very correctly, as central slogans: “Down with the military government!” “Elections now!” “Constituent Assembly!” “General Strike for the military to leave power!”

I think that your old slogans have passed to a new stage, becoming more concrete. I think the current axis should be the slogan: *“For the government to leave now! Immediate elections!”*

These slogans capture a deep popular feeling: the military should no longer rule for another minute. The masses do not want them to remain in power for another year, as all the bourgeois parties and the CP propose. They don’t even want them to stay for 30 days, as the MAS proposes.

These two slogans are immediate, they show courses of action. The other two slogans, General Strike and Constituent Assembly are still essential but, instead, they remain as propaganda.

This combination of slogans is the essence of a true socialist program for your country since they provide answers to the current revolutionary rise, the crisis of the regime and the counterrevolutionary policy of the bourgeois parties and the CP.

Regarding the mass movement, the demand that the military leaves the government now and for immediate elections provides a unifying political axis, centralising the multitude of struggles that exist and will exist and is deeply felt and clearly understandable by all the people.

Regarding the bourgeois parties and the CP, this combination of slogans unmasks the crapulous deception they are mounting in complicity with the Church and the military regime. If they are opponents of the regime — as they want us to believe — why don’t they want the military to leave now but to continue ruling for another year? If they are democrats and they will not agree on anything with the government — as they say — why do they not want immediate elections? If they respect popular sovereignty — as they proclaim — why don’t they fight for a Constituent Assembly where all the people can discuss and resolve the solutions to the terrible crisis that affects Argentina at all levels?

This is how I see the propaganda use of these slogans. But the most important thing is not to lose sight of the fact that the great slogan of the stage is the one that the masses have imposed: “The military dictatorship shall end, it shall end!”

This master line which, in my opinion, should guide any consequent socialist political course in your country, is refracted in specific slogans for each political problem and specific sector that is mobilising or may mobilise. In the trade union movement, it will be: For the military comptrollers of the trade unions to leave now! Against the “normalisers” designated “with a ballpoint pen” by the military! For the immediate democratic election by the workers’ ranks of provisional union leaderships! At the university, it will be: Out with the university authorities imposed by the military regime! The full and immediate democratic organisation of the student movement! The immediate democratic election of the university authorities! And as many etceteras as many specific areas or sectors of Argentine society are or need to enter into the fight against the military regime.