



**Nahuel Moreno**

**On party  
morality and  
tradition**

# Nahuel Moreno

## On party morality and tradition

1974

A balance sheet of the PST tribute meeting for the death of Rita Moreno.

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# Foreword

This text was written by Moreno and published in the internal bulletin of the PST shortly after the death of Rita Moreno, a lifelong militant, one of the founders of the GOM. Clara Gallub Bressano, “Rita”, was Nahuel Moreno’s partner and mother of his two eldest children, Eleonora and David. She died on 24 August 1974 of lung cancer.

The day after his death, on Sunday 25, an internal meeting of the party was held, with the presence of about 600 comrades. The leadership made a discussion and a balance sheet about the meeting and its repercussions. In this text, *On party morality and tradition*, Moreno transferred his reflections on that discussion and balance sheet to the whole party. For the first time, we make it public on this page.

We reproduce below two texts:

- The article published in 1974 in the newspaper, to remember Rita’s trajectory.
- The brief report of the internal bulletin of 1979 del PST in clandestinity that informed the militancy about the tribute at five years of her death, with the holding of a small meeting in the cemetery and republishing the text of Moreno.

## Avanzada Socialista No. 118 (28 August 1974)

### The example of Rita Moreno – A life dedicated to the building of the party

By Julio Aníbal Tesoro<sup>1</sup>

On Saturday, 24 [August 1974], after an illness that consumed her in seven months, Rita Moreno died. She was only 43 years old but she was a veteran with 29 years of militancy, founder – along with her husband, Nahuel Moreno, and a handful of comrades – of the Grupo Obrero Marxista (Marxist Workers Group, GOM), which was one of the two strands from which the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers Party) was nourished.

Our party paid her the highest honours: held her funeral in the national headquarters, held an internal meeting on Sunday, and massively accompanied the coffin to the cemetery. Between Saturday and Sunday, telegrams also arrived from sister parties from eleven countries, adhering to the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction of the Fourth International. A number of reasons make Rita a

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1 **Julio Anibal Tesoro** (also known as Hernan Felix Cuello) joined Palabra Obrera (Workers Word) in 1958. For years, he was in charge of the publications and the newspaper, of which he was one of its main editors, in particular of *Avanzada Socialista*. After the crisis and division of Morenoism, in 1993 Traveled to Moscow for militant tasks and was killed on the street by a common criminal in August of that year. He was co-author of *Nahuel Moreno:Biographical Outline*, published in January 1988 and available in [www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org) in “Other authors”.

high example for the new party generation, starting with the early age at which she turned to the revolution: she was 14 years old and an apprentice printer when she joined the GOM. In 1944, the GOM linked to a great strike of the meat guild, and sealed the proletarianisation of Argentine Trotskyism. This would be the stamp that marked the class character of our party. From that time come some of the labour leaders won over for our positions, such as “Chueco” [“Bandy Legged”] Britos, who developed an endearing affection for the teenager who helped initiate them into revolutionary politics.

If this had been Rita’s only contribution, she would still have the recognition of the socialist revolutionaries. If she had only contributed to sealing the synthesis between Trotskyism and the workers’ vanguard; if she had taken only that gigantic step of opposing in 1944 the Stalinist bureaucratic degeneration of the working class to reclaim the Leninist party of combat. Rita, at 14 or 15 years of age, would be assured of a place in the pantheon of Argentine revolutionaries. Because in 1944, there were only a handful of people in the world who raised that banner that now the young workers and students who are burying the capitalist system are beginning to take with increasing strength.

But Rita contributed much more in the field of personal militancy, a field that so worries the comrades who suffer the first contradictions between their revolutionary vocation and the social pressures of capitalism. Rita had, logically, ups and downs in her militancy. For several years she was what technically and statutorily is considered a sympathiser of the organisation. However, even in that period, she maintained an exemplary attitude. Her home was the refuge of many sick or persecuted comrades. In the worst years of clandestinity and disorganisation her help and experienced advice, which always aimed to defend class principles, were of great value. And in the worst moments of the party’s crisis when the maximum sacrifices were demanded of the militants, Rita, who was technically a sympathiser, gave everything, even her last personal resources. This was possible because, above the ups and downs, regardless of her position in the party, Rita always preserved a workers’ and Bolshevik structure, that is, she maintained her revolutionary objectives. And this is why, along with the litter of workers who have been in the party for more than a quarter of a century, there is an intermediate generation of cadres and militants of the 1960s who, in the worst moments of regression, largely learned what workers’ and revolutionary solidarity was thanks to Rita.

This individual workers’ and Bolshevik structure was reflected in aspects of her personality that are a model, especially for the female comrades. Made since she was 14 years old together with Nahuel Moreno, Rita acquired her own profile. Rita was loved and respected for her own personality, for her own views, for her own activity. None of this denies that she was the main support of her partner, who made the following dedication to her in his last published work: “I dedicate my works to Rita, my partner and lifelong love, in recognition that without her constant support I would not have been able to carry them out.”<sup>2</sup>

For these reasons Rita, located in the vanguard or in the rear of the party, was always one of the most zealous custodians of our party tradition. A tradition that, ultimately, is the memory of the party, the history of the struggles waged by its militants trying to impose the socialist program and to impose the party itself on the mass movement. Rita, who wrote some memorable pages of that history, was always the faithful custodian of that memory which is transmitted from generation to generation. So much was her fidelity to this tradition that shortly before her death he confessed to her partner: “If I could live again, I would follow the same path; I would try to be more Leninist and more Trotskyist than ever; I would fight for the party more than ever.”

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2 The article refers to the publication in 1973 by Editorial Pluma of Buenos Aires of Moreno’s 1967 work *The Chinese and Indochinese Revolutions*, in which that dedication was included. It was reissued by Cehus in 2019. Available in [www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org).

## Internal Bulletin of the PST in hiding (August 1979)

### Tribute to Rita Moreno

Recently it was five years since the death of Rita Moreno. The National Directorate decided to make a memorial tribute. Two comrades per region were invited, with the request that one old and one new comrade attend. Under torrential rain (some old comrades did not attend), and after walking six blocks through the water and mud, the twenty-odd attendees heard the brief words of Comrade Ernesto [Gonzalez] and witnessed the placement of a memorial plaque. Ernesto defined the event by saying that “we pay tribute not only to comrade Rita, who a few hours before she died said that, if she had to live again, she would like to be a better Trotskyist, but to all the party morality and tradition.”

Today more than ever, the Party (its old militants and the younger ones) must vindicate this morality and this tradition, which is no longer only the heritage of the PST (A) but of the entire Bolshevik Faction. Tradition and morality that is the indispensable basis for the construction of the World Party of the socialist revolution.

We wanted to transcribe the balance sheet of the meeting for Rita Moreno that was carried out in 1974 so all the comrades know its meaning.

**Mercedes Petit<sup>3</sup>**

February 2022

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<sup>3</sup> Mercedes Petit is a Trotskyist militant, journalist, and researcher. In the 1960s, she joined the current headed by Nahuel Moreno ([www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org)), with whom she collaborated in theoretical elaboration and propaganda tasks. After the 1976 military coup, they shared exile in Colombia. Petit wrote *Elementary Political Concepts and Our Experience with Lambertism* in 1986 together with Nahuel Moreno (both available in [www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org)); *Notes for a History of Trotskyism* (2005) and *Working Women and Marxism* (2009, with Carmen Carrasco). She writes in *El Socialista* ([www.izquierdasocialista.org.ar](http://www.izquierdasocialista.org.ar)) and *International Correspondence* ([www.uit-ci.org](http://www.uit-ci.org)).

## On party morality and tradition

Our characterisation of the meeting is that it was very good overall, very emotional, and with speeches that, in general, correctly portrayed what Rita was and what the Party is. However, not all the comrades who attended understood the meaning of the meeting. There was a clear difference between the litter of old comrades and the majority of the working-class comrades, on the one hand, and the majority of the new youth on the other hand. This last sector, even though it was moved like anyone else in the meeting, generally drew the conclusion that it was not an important meeting, not even a necessary one. Many did not understand the content of the speeches, others wondered if a meeting should really be carried out for a comrade who had not formally been a militant for years. This same confusion was revealed in the fact that, since attendance was not mandatory, not all the militants were present, but about 600.

There may have been some mistakes, both from the National Directorate and from the regional leaderships. For example, not having previously prepared the comrades so they understood the meaning of the meeting, through a talk, as Quilmes very correctly did. Or the somewhat “internal” character, directed at the old litter, who delivered the speeches, which could have been avoided by adding a speaker who was not personally affected by Rita’s death and could make an educational speech, appropriate to the new comrades.

But these possible mistakes are secondary. The number of comrades who did not attend and the conclusions drawn by the majority of the youth have served to detect an important problem with the party: there are large sectors of it that do not have a party tradition. They are the sectors of new comrades who have joined the Party since legality.

Within these sectors, we believe we see a difference between the working-class sector and the sector that comes from the middle class. The working-class comrades, accustomed to living sacrificially, to achieving everything through effort, grasp more quickly what the party tradition means. The young comrades, who come from the petty-bourgeoisie, on the other hand, are used to a relatively easy life, with few sacrifices. If we add to this that they have only got to know the Party at this stage, with its legality and its headquarters, with its finances and its apparatuses, with its paid cadres and its superstructural importance, they cannot understand the Party as something that was being built, that has a tradition.

### What is party tradition?

These comrades, for whom membership is relatively easy, are not in a position to understand what it took to get to this party that we have today. They do not see that there were moments when the Party was only a handful of militants, who lived and were active in much worse conditions; they do not know the effort that older comrades have had to make in difficult hours. They do not

understand that, ultimately, its morality and method allowed the Party to reach what it is now; they are the true axis of the Party's history, what we call the party tradition.

Most of the young comrades believe that the Party is a political line or a program, or the orthodox Trotskyist theory, or a name known throughout the world, or a sum of leaders organising a certain number of headquarters, or the control of some internal commissions,<sup>4</sup> etc., or the sum of all these things. But the party is not that. Before the founding group began to be active, the Party did not exist. And when they began, and in many other stages, the Party changed its political lines, finetuned its program, it went through periods of development and theoretical stagnation, it was left almost without cadres, it opened headquarters and lost them during long periods of clandestinity, it formed and saw leaders and leadership teams go into crisis, it gained influence in the workers' movement and was left without any internal commission, it had great newspapers and miserable mimeographed newsletters, it changed its name several times and most of those names were not known other than by an ultra-vanguard sector. The Party also split and saw partially destroyed what had been built with so much effort.

How did the party withstand these vicissitudes? How were the years of regression, of persecutions, the clandestine years endured? How did the old cadres withstand the tremendous pressure of Peronism or Stalinism, at times when the workers' movement supported these two degenerations in a massive and enthusiastic way? How could they continue to be active when they saw their comrades and personal friends giving in to despair and taking the path of the guerrillas, dazzled by the tremendous impact of the only socialist revolution on the continent, led by Castroism? The answer is always the same: not because of the program, not because of the political line of the moment, not because of the theory but because of the morality and the method of our Party. This is why we say that this morality and this method are the axis of its history, they are what the party has the same in all its stages and what we want to remain the same; it is its tradition.

This tradition encompasses innumerable aspects. It is the respect and blind trust in our class, feeling a part of it, wanting to direct it and, at the same time, being willing, modestly, to learn from it. It is striving to be concrete as the working class is, to judge men and movements objectively, on the basis of the facts, to hate pub discussions. It is the strictest discipline, giving the best one can for the Party, trying to do anything if it serves to build it. It is the most absolute loyalty and the most complete respect for all comrades, it is to try to help by all means any comrades who need it, not only in the area of militancy but in all areas. It is the morality that defines good and bad based on whether it is for or against our class and our Party. It is hatred for the class enemy and the most endearing affection for the comrades and our class. It is knowing that, although we may have some good years, we are the outcasts of this society, those destined for periodic dismissal, to be systematically defamed, persecuted, imprisoned, sometimes killed. It is knowing that we are going to have to swim against the current until we change this society.

It is to be for clear relationships and frankness and to despise diplomacy and hypocrisy. It is also the trust in our future as a Party, the pride of being in it, and the joy of living and of the militancy. Our tradition is the highest expression of proletarian morality and method; it is the tradition of a Bolshevik Party.

## The Party must be united around its tradition

Hence, tradition is so important to us. We can make mistakes in any area of Party activity and rectify that mistake. But if we lose our tradition, we destroy the Party.

This is not our invention, it is part of the tradition of the workers' movement, the Bolshevik party and Trotskyism. Orthodox Trotskyism always considered the worst attack that could be made against the Party was an attack on its tradition. One could disagree with the policy or the leadership or the organisation of the Party at any moment, and stay in it. But if someone attacked tradition, he must be mercilessly excluded from the ranks of the Party. This is how the SWP leadership acted

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<sup>4</sup> In Argentinian labour legislation since the 1940s enterprise or workplace committees are called **internal commissions**.



when, for factional reasons, a sector of the Party did not attend a tribute to the old founders of Yankee Trotskyism. The SWP leadership had democratically tolerated all kinds of disagreements with the Pabloist sector. But when they boycotted that tribute, which was a reaffirmation of the party tradition, they were immediately and unappealable expelled, even those Pabloists who held leadership positions. Furthermore, because of this fact, the SWP broke with Pabloism completely and the Fourth International was divided.

We are not in that situation because what happened at Rita's tribute does not reflect a process of degeneration, as Pabloism was, but rather an uneven development of the Party, with a new and numerous litter of young people from the petty-bourgeoisie who still do not understand, know, or feel the party tradition. For this reason, we believe it was a success not to make attendance at the event mandatory, among other things, because it allowed us to discover this phenomenon.

But the problem exists and presents, in perspective, a serious danger for the Party. Let's imagine that because of a sudden turn of the situation we go underground, or they begin to persecute our militants. Only the comrades who have made the party's tradition their own are going to resist it, those who have not, for the most part, are going to give up. We can say the same about the opposite situation: if we enjoy a prolonged period of legality and we come to have parliamentary strength, the comrades not assimilated to the party tradition will be easy prey to legalistic tendencies and parliamentarism.

Already, today, the lack of roots of our tradition has been expressed in an event infinitely more serious than Rita's tribute: the case of comrade Jenny. Having been practically absent as a Party when the comrade died, not having turned her burial into an act of vindication of the comrade as our militant is the denial of the party tradition. Just as Rita symbolises the entire party tradition from its origins, because always, since the Party was founded, she made it the axis of her life, as a front-line militant at first, in the rear of the Party later, Jenny symbolises, in a more modest scale, part of this tradition, the tradition of a new generation, of our headquarters in Callao Avenue, of a Party front. Being absent when she died, the Party reneged on that tradition. And it did it twice because it did not say what it should have said with its presence — we are here because we love and respect Jenny, and we love and respect her because she, despite all the pressures of this rotten society, rose to be a militant of the revolution and gave her life to the Party.

We will not overcome this real deficit in the formation of our militants by decree. To do so quickly, we must launch a campaign right now to affirm the party tradition, explaining its meaning to new comrades, doing courses and talks about our history, about our old figures, etc. This memo aims to start this campaign. If we succeed in it, we will have achieved our goal: to unify the Party around its tradition.

## ADDENDUM

# The Party Is Everything

Fragment of "On the Founding of the Fourth International", 18 October 1938, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1938-39)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1974, p. 87.

Dear friends, we are not a party as other parties. Our ambition is not only to have more members, more papers, more money in the treasury, more deputies. All that is necessary, but only as a means. Our aim is the full material and spiritual liberation of the toilers and exploited through the socialist revolution. Nobody will prepare it and nobody will guide it but ourselves. The old Internationals — the Second, the Third, that of Amsterdam, we will add to them also the London Bureau — are rotten through and through.

The great events which rush upon mankind will not leave of these outlived organisations one stone upon another. Only the Fourth International looks with confidence at the future. It is the world party of the Socialist Revolution! There never was a greater task on the earth. Upon every one of us rests a tremendous historical responsibility.

Our party demands each of us, totally and completely. Let the philistines hunt their own individuality in empty space. For a revolutionary to give himself entirely to the party signifies finding himself.

Yes, our party takes each one of us wholly. But in return, it gives to every one of us the highest happiness: the consciousness that one participates in the building of a better future, that one carries on his shoulders a particle of the fate of mankind, and that one's life will not have been lived in vain.

The fidelity to the cause of the toilers requires from us the highest devotion to our international party. The party, of course, can also be mistaken. By common effort, we will correct its mistakes. In its ranks can penetrate unworthy elements. By common effort, we will eliminate them. New thousands who will enter its ranks tomorrow will probably be deprived of necessary education. By common effort, we will elevate their revolutionary level. But we will never forget that our party is now the greatest lever of history. Separated from this lever, every one of us is nothing. With this lever in hand, we are all.