



# Nahuel Moreno

**Two lines for the  
Bolivian masses:  
the revolutionary  
and the  
opportunistic**

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1953

*Revolucion Permanente* magazine, published by the Argentinian POR and reproduced in *Estrategia* magazine, No XX, April 1966, section "Documents for history"

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

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

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Buenos Aires, 2022

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# Contents

Foreword to the 2022 edition.....	1
Introduction by <i>Estrategia</i> magazine .....	3
Two lines for the Bolivian masses: the opportunist and the revolutionary.....	4
Our forecast on GCI.....	4
Trotsky's teaching for a revolutionary period.....	5
The POR [Argentina] program .....	5
The GCI program.....	6
GCI policy judged by GCI.....	7
The position of POR [Argentina] was the Bolshevik one .....	9
The mistakes of the Argentine POR.....	10
Some conclusions .....	12

# Foreword to the 2022 edition

In 1952, the workers' revolution in Bolivia shook the Southern Cone of Latin America and sharpened the differences and crises that divided the Trotskyist movement. Nahuel Moreno harshly criticised at that time the leadership of the so-called "International Secretariat" headed by the Greek Michel Raptis (Pablo) and the Belgian Ernest Mandel. Trotskyism had an important influence among the mining workers since the 1940s. The Bolivian POR responded to the orientations of this opportunist and capitulatory sector. In the preface of his 1973 book, *The Party and the Revolution* (available at [www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org)), Moreno located the Pabloite current and its actions in Bolivia as follows:

## Pabloism

In 1951, when the Third World Congress was called, it was during the Cold War and all major international journalism commentators argued that it was inevitable the armed conflict between the United States and the USSR. [...]

Pablo and Mandel, following bourgeois journalism, drew a conclusion that was fatal to the history of the Fourth International: in the third world war, which was inevitable and would soon begin, communist parties and leftist currents of nationalist bourgeois movements or social democratic parties were to launch guerrillas, revolutionary struggles that would lead them to take power. Mainly this was to happen with the communist parties that, in their eagerness to defend Russia, would come to guerrilla warfare or violent, physical, revolutionary methods to oppose imperialism.

Based on this analysis, they proposed an orientation that was named *entryism sui generis*. [...] It consisted of entering Stalinist, social democratic or nationalist petty-bourgeois organisations and remain there for all the time it would take them to seize power and consolidate it. Entryism was to be done mainly in the communist parties. And only after we had accompanied them to make the revolution, we should begin to differentiate ourselves from them. [...]

According to the analysis by Pablo and Mandel, the Stalinist, social democratic and bourgeois nationalist currents stopped being counter-revolutionary. We, like most of the International, thought this was revising one of the essential points of the Trotskyist program, which starts from the definition that humanity is in crisis because of the crisis of leadership of the mass movement. Or, put another way, the main obstacle to the progress of humankind towards socialism is that the masses are led by leaderships who are against the revolution, like Stalinism, social democracy and bourgeois nationalism. And our task is to build a new revolutionary international leadership to overcome this historical impasse. [...]

This entryism *sui generis* lasted almost 18 years and turned European Trotskyism into small grouplets increasingly weak. [...]

## The betrayal of the Bolivian revolution of 1952

The most pernicious consequence of this surrender to the counter-revolutionary leaderships took place in Bolivia. [...] The response of the masses took place in 1952: it was a popular insurrection led by the working class in the city of La Paz. The insurrection destroyed the army, all existing weapons went over to the workers' and peasants' militias and although Paz Estenssoro assumed the presidency, the masses had his government in check. It was time to fight with all possible strength to take the power into the hands of the workers' and peasants' militias led by the Central Obrera Boliviana [Bolivian Workers Centre, COB]. Bolivian Trotskyism, which had become a mass movement, could decisively influence in this regard. Pablo and Mandel instead concluded that we had to critically support the government of Paz Estenssoro.

In Bolivia, absolutely every weapon was in the hands of the workers and peasants and the International Secretariat and its Bolivian section never told the masses: *turn these weapons against the bourgeois government and seize power.*

This was one of the most spectacular betrayals of the century. It turned out tragic for the mass movement that, because of the lack of a revolutionary orientation, was gradually demobilised and disarmed. And, finally, it suffered a serious defeat.

Also, as a consequence of Pablo and Mandel's policy in the face of the 1952 revolution, a deterioration of Bolivian Trotskyism began, which was divided, transforming itself, from a massive current, into a small group of sects.

In this work from 1953 that we present, Moreno argued against the followers of Pablo and Mandel in Argentina (Posadas and his group, GCI) for their policy of supporting the bourgeois government of Paz Esstensoro. And he raised the slogan "All Power to the COB".

It is interesting to appreciate Moreno's method when he considered it necessary to make corrections or changes in his policies and slogans. He stated it clearly and frankly, often even self-critically. And in this case, he did it publicly in the magazine article.

At [www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org) there are several other works by Moreno referring to the different moments of the workers' revolution in Bolivia over several decades.

## Introduction by *Estrategia* magazine

In April 1966, we remember another, that of 1952, and we pay our homage to the Bolivian working masses of La Paz who, on that date, together with the miners, liquidated the army of the oligarchy and created the workers' militias. More plainly, these pages are filled with content from the great Bolivian revolution.

This event caused at the time an immense controversy among the different left groups and mainly within the ranks of the Trotskyist movement since it was the first country in which the mass movement was deeply influenced by it.

The official Trotskyism of that time — Latin American and world — whose most influential organ in our continent was *Voz Proletaria* [Proletarian Voice] and whose best-known leader was Posadas, that is, GCI,<sup>1</sup> supported “critical support for Paz Estenssoro” in the first stage of the revolution.

We,<sup>2</sup> from our press, led a relentless struggle against this slogan and the promises of the official Trotskyism of that time. We argued that this political line would lead to a total crisis for the strongest Latin American Trotskyist movement of that time. This criticism took shape months later in the slogan of “all power to the COB”,<sup>3</sup> which replaced the one we outlined in our first documents of “all ministers for the COB”. The document that we publish today appeared in the first quarter of 1953 in *Revolucion Permanente*, our theoretical magazine of the time. This originated very rich controversies that we will make known on another occasion.

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- 1 GCI (Fourth International Group), currently the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (Trotskyist), the POR-T that edits and publishes *Voz Proletaria*. There is a contrast in the “critical support” for Paz Estenssoro of *Voz Proletaria* — that is, support for a bourgeois government — and its current critical virulence of the first workers' government in Latin America, Cuba. (Original note in *Estrategia*.) Posadas and his group unconditionally complied with the directives and politics of the opportunist leadership of Pablo and Mandel, who directed the sector of the Fourth International called the International Secretariat. (Editor)
  - 2 POR (Partido Obrero Revolucionario), which edited the *Frente Proletario* and the theoretical magazine *Revolución Permanente*, later the Trotskyist tendency of the PSRN, a member of the Peronist movement. Afterwards, MAO (Movement of Workers' Groups) and Palabra Obrera (Workers Word), a Trotskyist tendency of the 62 Peronist Organisations. Of its unification with the FRIP. (Popular Indo-Americanist Revolutionary Front) emerged what is now the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT), which publishes this magazine and the weekly *La Verdad* and *Norte Revolucionario*. (Original note in *Estrategia*.)
  - 3 Central Obrera Boliviana, COB (Bolivian Workers Centre) is the chief trade union federation in Bolivia. It was founded in 1952 following the national revolution that brought the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement to power. The most important affiliate of the COB was the Union Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers (FSTMB). From 1952 to 1987, the COB was led by Juan Lechin, who was also head of the FSTMB. (Editor)

## Two lines for the Bolivian masses: the opportunist and the revolutionary

A great revolution is taking place in Latin America. Its breadth surpasses everything known so far on this continent, and it does not lag behind other great revolutions: Bolivia is its site.

Our international movement must give preferential attention to the study of this experience. For two reasons: one, the objective (what was said above); another, the fact that in Bolivia we have a great Trotskyist movement and the official leadership of our movement has guaranteed in the 10th Plenum<sup>1</sup> that it will give there an example of the correct leadership of the masses and a Trotskyist party.

A revolutionary party can only be created, grown and strengthened through extensive criticism and discussion. That is the case of the strengthening of our international. The topic of discussion has to be the most immediate problem. For us, there is, right now, none more important and urgent than that of the Bolivian revolution. And we have no news that a discussion on this topic has yet been opened in another organisation. Our party wants to correct this serious error of Trotskyism by taking the initiative.

The importance of the issue, the character of Permanent Revolution, and the lack of discussion about the problem led us to conclude that this debate had to be raised publicly, even when we run the risk of being accused of publicly attacking recognised Trotskyists organisations. This apparent lack of discipline is because we have a lot to say about Bolivia and, following discipline, we have no way to do it. Thus, we have found ourselves faced with two alternatives: shut up or not. We have opted for the second, as we believe it corresponds to a revolutionary organisation,

We do not intend to exhaust the topic with this article. We know relatively little about the Bolivian revolution and we acknowledge it. We believe, however, that we have mastered the general guidelines of what a correct position should be. On the other hand, our critical position regarding the section that politically and theoretically leads Latin American Trotskyism — GCI — forces us to give our opinion on the best way to help our heroic Bolivian comrades.

### Our forecast on GCI

This article is intended, among other things, to show that our previous analyses and forecasts about GCI have been confirmed.

When the Korean war began, GCI launched its famous slogan: “against the occupation of South Korea”, which practically meant the defence of it since North Korea was occupying it. We did not see in this error a chance fact but a profound one, the essence of GCI as a tendency that capitulates

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<sup>1</sup> The **10th Plenum**: refers to the meeting of the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the Fourth International held at the end of February 1952, which modified the main analysis and policy resolutions of the Third World Congress. See more at [www.nahuelmoreno.org](http://www.nahuelmoreno.org), *The Break with Pabloism*, 1953. (Editor)

to the circumstantial opinion of the masses. The masses are Peronist in Argentina and GCI makes Peronism. We also state that the more a revolution has to do with Peronism, the worse GCI's policy will be since it will inevitably capitulate to its pressure. The Bolivian revolution brought to power a party and government closely linked to Peronism. The time has come to corroborate our forecast.

## Trotsky's teaching for a revolutionary period

For a correct policy, the revolutionary party must take into account two basic problems: the location of the stage of the class struggle that the country is experiencing and — once it has adopted a class characterisation of the government — the policy towards it.

Leninism is completely against the anarchist position of not taking anything into account and not putting pressure on the bourgeois organs of government. The POR in Argentina has repeatedly tried to mobilise; it is trying at present to mobilise the working class to pressure the Peronist government to make a series of concessions. This policy — which we consider correct for our country — we believe is totally and absolutely false in Bolivia. Whoever sees a contradiction in this does not notice the differences in the objective situation of both countries and that the contradiction is a product of it.

We have learned this from Trotsky, who said: “But here someone may at first glance raise an objection: Ought a revolutionary party to refuse to ‘exercise pressure’ on the bourgeoisie and its government? Certainly not. The exercise of pressure on a bourgeois government is the road of reform. A revolutionary Marxist party does not reject reforms. But the road of reform serves a useful purpose in subsidiary and not in fundamental questions. State power cannot be obtained by reforms. ‘Pressure’ can never induce the bourgeoisie to change its policy on a question that involves its whole fate. The war created a revolutionary situation precisely by reason of the fact that it left no room for any reformist ‘pressure.’” (Trotsky, Leon: *The Lessons of October*, 1924.)

Trotsky specifies two periods. One, where it is possible to pressure the government and the bourgeoisie since what worries the masses are the reformist demands that do not threaten the capitalist regime. The other is the revolutionary period, in which the aspirations most felt by the masses openly clash against the interests of the bourgeoisie and go against the existence of the bourgeoisie. Therefore, it is a revolutionary situation because those aspirations have become incompatible with the regime. This is what happened in Russia and this is how it is today in Bolivia.

Both GCI and POR have characterised as revolutionary the stage opened last year in Bolivia with the insurrection of the masses. Let's see how the GCI program differs from a truly revolutionary program.

## The POR [Argentina] program

We believe that in the case of Bolivia, Trotsky's advocated policy can be rigorously applied. If we confuse the masses, letting them believe, or making them believe that there is no deep clash between their immediate aspirations — which are revolutionary — and the government, we are betraying the revolution. A revolutionary party must become strong, and remain alone if necessary (like Lenin in April 1917) exploiting and pointing out this contradiction of the masses. We must tell them: “If you want to nationalise the lands and large companies without payment, to get out of misery and hunger, you have only one way to achieve it: by liquidating Paz Estenssoro as soon as possible, not having any trust in him and trusting only the mass organisations.”

This is the synthesis of our program. This is the synthesis of the revolutionary program for an insurrectionary period.



## The GCI program

GCI is officially recognised as Trotskyist and, importantly, it tries to be honest in its Trotskyism. That is its positive side. We should not be surprised, therefore, that GCI wants to apply the entire *Transitional Program* in Bolivia. Let us hear it: “This workers’ Congress, as well as the movementist<sup>2</sup> government, must promote the breaking of any political-military pact with imperialism and also the reestablishment of military agreements with the Soviet Union, the people’s democracies, China and Yugoslavia, with the double purpose of preventing the isolation of the revolution in Bolivia, facilitating its economic development, and deepening the weakening and crisis of imperialism. And to face the cost of living with the application of a minimum living wage guaranteed by the sliding scale. They must carry out the nationalisation without compensation of transportation, imperialist companies, banks and large industries; develop the agrarian revolution and reject all pressure to send troops to the war fronts of imperialism and all other forms of aid. To ensure the favourable development of this program and political course in the process opened in Bolivia, it will be essential to keep the arming of the proletariat and the masses, and to ensure the widest freedom to all working-class and popular tendencies — among them the POR, the Bolivian section of the IV International — and respect for the decisions of the masses, like preventing the printing of *La Razon*, which must pass under the control of the workers (“Political Resolution on the Bolivian Revolution of the Central Committee of GCI”, published in *Voz Proletaria* on 20 April 1952).

Saying all this is the same as saying nothing. The best program in the world is useless if it does not specify what are the immediate tasks and above all, the problem of problems: once the stage is characterised, what is our policy towards the government. In fact, when we say all this is useless, we fall short. To do nothing would be to “do no harm to anyone” but the quote above clearly shows GCI’s Menshevik policy. Otherwise, what else is there other than this confusion that “the MNR’s government... must comply with the entire Trotskyist program”? It is a question of whether the movement government can fulfil that program. On the other hand, in that quote GCI does nothing more than show its revolutionary Philistine ear. In the eighth thesis of the same document, it specifies its policy towards the government, which is not only an important request that our *Transitional Program* be fulfilled but also “a critical support for the MNR in its anti-imperialist struggle”. It does not matter here that, in what follows, it is raised from the theses of Pulacayo<sup>3</sup> to the “need to establish a workers’ and peasants’ government”. Is it possible to establish a workers’ and peasants’ government through critical support for the MNR? Can Pulacayo’s theses be implemented through critical support for the MNR in government? Will this party not reflect in the government the interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism? That being the case, can we give it critical support and ask it to carry out a revolutionary program?

GCI’s entire Menshevik position has the highest manifestation in its criticism of Argentine Stalinism: “Instead of mobilising the masses in defence of the Bolivian revolution and in recognition of the government, which the masses imposed, it exclusively dedicates itself to a criticism that is not based on the experience of the working masses and that they therefore reject.” And so that there are no doubts about their policy, they clarify in this article that to establish the workers’ and peasants’ government, it is not necessary to unmask the government but rather: “The verification of the opportunistic character of the MNR by the Bolivian masses can only come by not separating ourselves from them but by demanding that the government fulfil the aspirations of the masses and to the extent that it does not fulfil them and does not carry them out, the possibility is opened for the masses to independently achieve their aspirations or to cease their support for the MNR and continue their struggles without stopping towards the formation of a workers’ and peasants’ government. Carrying out a policy of opposition to the MNR and not a revolutionary one favours

2 It refers to the **Revolutionary Nationalist Movement** (MNR), a Bolivian bourgeois political party. Its leader, Víctor Paz Estenssoro (1907–2001) was president at that time. (Editor)

3 The **Theses of Pulacayo** was an important document in the Bolivian and Latin American workers’ movement. It was adopted at the request of the delegation of Llallaguaga in the Congress of the Union Federation of Mining Workers of Bolivia (FSTMB), which met in November 1946 in the city of Pulacayo. The thesis is based on the Trotskyist conception of permanent revolution and on the Transitional Program of the Fourth International.

the MNR influence on the masses and delays their struggle for a workers' and peasants' government, which is the outcome they seek in their movement." (*Voz Proletaria*, No 56.)

Here the "revolutionary and non-opposition policy" serves to hide the handwashing by the CGI, which critically supports the MNR's government and asks it to carry out a revolutionary policy. We must not tell the masses that the government defends the bourgeoisie and imperialism and that therefore we must fight it uncompromisingly. No. We must wait and see if the masses alone cease their support for the MNR or achieve their aspirations. That is the essence of GCI's tail-ending.

## GCI policy judged by GCI

A year before the GCI asked the Argentine masses to recognise Paz Estenssoro and the Bolivian masses for their critical support, it defined the MNR as follows: "[...] it runs a bourgeois anti-imperialist program, whose most advanced slogan is the nationalisation of the mines with compensation to the owners [...] the MNR, limited by its bourgeois program [...] the bourgeois leadership of the MNR". It now turns out that the insurrection suddenly transformed the MNR into a government worthy of "critical" support and recognition by the masses of other countries.

Theoretically, the critical support for a bourgeois government has been criticised by GCI in relation to the *Octubre*<sup>4</sup> magazine. When *Octubre* raised critical support for Peron's government, *Voz Proletaria* criticised: "Without waiting for it to try to destroy (that it permanently does) the revolutionary movement of the proletariat or to reach a new agreement with imperialism, we know in advance that it cannot play a revolutionary role and, according to those perspectives, we draw our political line. Any 'critical' or 'conditional' support, etc., is, to a greater or lesser degree, awakening and bringing to the bosom of the proletariat expectations, hopes and political trust in the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. And it is precisely the opposite: based on developing in the proletariat the deepest and most absolute class antagonism with the nationalist bourgeoisie." We must not forget that it is referring to the government of Peron. In another part of the same article, it says: "We do not need to tell the nationalist bourgeoisie that we are with them 'conditionally' believing that with them we will attract the sympathy of the workers who follow them. This deceives the proletariat and hides its true class perspective. Instead, what must be done is to tell the workers what they should and can do with their program, for their class program. We unconditionally support the Soviet Union but do not give any critical or conditional support to the criminal Stalinist Soviet bureaucracy. The first step in this sense is to clearly limit, 'extensively', the intentions, interests, purposes and general, partial, concrete and overall objectives of the bourgeoisie with the antagonistic interests of the proletariat, not only historical and general but concrete, immediate, and specific ones. 'The class struggle does not stop for a single second.' We do not propose to push the bourgeoisie to take revolutionary measures or to wait to see it take them or to what degree but, at all times, as a dialectically united part of the class struggle, we oppose our program to that of the nationalist bourgeoisie." (*Voz Proletaria*, No 1, June 1947).

This GCI criticism of *Octubre* is indirectly a criticism of the current GCI policy in Bolivia. And GCI also proves that GCI was right in 1947 but not in 1952. Just a month after requesting the recognition of Paz Estenssoro and two months after having resolved to support him critically, the march of the revolution in Bolivia forces *Voz Proletaria* to say "[...] the wing of Paz Estenssoro and sectors of the army that seek conciliation with imperialism and the maintenance of the feudal-capitalist structure of the country." Only then did GCI discover and denounce that Paz Estenssoro, whom it critically supported, is not going to promote the revolution because he serves the bourgeoisie and imperialism. And on the 28th of the same month, together with a violent criticism by the Bolivian POR of the government's plans, GCI harshly criticised the formation of the civilian army as a manoeuvre in favour of the bourgeoisie and against the arming of the proletariat. Two months have been enough for the opportunism of the GCI formula to be shown up.

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<sup>4</sup> *Octubre*: Theoretical magazine that claimed to be of Marxism and Trotskyism, published at the beginning of the Peronist government, one of whose best-known representatives is Jorge Abelardo Ramos. It was the first Argentine "Marxist" tendency to propose critical support for Peron. (Original note in *Estrategia*.)

Theoretically and practically, GCI has judged itself. It asked for critical support and recognition from the masses to a petty-bourgeois or bourgeois government (depending on when it defined it) that it had considered the best agent of the reaction. Theoretically, it assured by attacking *Octubre* that critical or conditional support could never be given to a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois government or party. It was right and, despite this, GCI fell into the same capitulation as *Octubre*.

The historical experience: Russia and Spain

Every more or less serious militant knows the different revolutionary experiences and the politics of the opportunist and Leninist wings of the workers' movement. The GCI militants also know it, as we have seen, but they have forgotten them as a result of a terrible pressure: that of Peronism.

The February revolution in Russia produced great confusion in the ranks of the Bolshevik Party. The leading wing of the Party, before the arrival of Lenin, Kamenev-Stalin, adopted positions described by Trotsky as Menshevik and capitulating. Those positions were the same as those of GCI in Bolivia.

Previously, we must recall that "The February revolution raised Kerensky and Tseretelli to power, not because they were 'cleverer' or 'more astute' than the ruling tsarist clique, but because they represented, at least temporarily, the revolutionary masses of the people in their revolt against the old regime." (Trotsky, Leon: *The Revolution Betrayed*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1972, p. 87.) That is, the first government of the Russian revolution had the majority support of the masses.

Faced with this government imposed by the masses, the leadership of Kamenev-Stalin proclaimed that "In the program announcement of the new editorship, it was declared that the Bolsheviks would decisively support the Provisional Government 'in so far as it struggles against reaction or counter-revolution.'" (Trotsky, Leon: *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol 1, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1937, p. 290.) Stalin at the end of March 1917, at the Bolshevik conference, dictated the following attitude towards the government: "*In so far as the Provisional Government fortifies the steps of the revolution, in so far we must support it, but in so far as it is counter-revolutionary, support to the Provisional Government is not permissible.*" (Quoted by Trotsky, *ibid.*, p. 303.)

GCI calls this "critical support". Trotsky called the Kamenev-Stalin positions that we quote "conditional support to the provisional government" and "formula of support". (*Ibid.* p. 303.)

Lenin, for his part, raised from Switzerland his program to confront the government: "Our tactics: no trust in and no support of the new government; Kerensky (the Paz Estenssoro of the Russian revolution) is especially suspect" (Lenin, V.I.: "Telegram to the Bolsheviks leaving for Russia", *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 292). Clearer is impossible. In the Bolshevik Party, there were two policies during the Russian revolution: the opportunist, which supported the government critically or conditionally and Lenin's revolutionary line based on a class analysis of the government and the revolutionary aspirations of the masses: "no support to the government" despite that it was supported by the vast majority of the masses.

It may be objected to us that the Leninist policy was correct because it was the government of an imperialist country like Russia and, therefore, the main enemy was in the country itself, as opposed to Bolivia, where the main enemy is imperialism. Other experiences will show us how this assumption is false. Regarding the tsar and the landlords, Kerensky's government was progressive, the lesser evil.

On the other hand, an ultra-reactionary general rose against the Russian Revolution and Kerensky himself: Kornilov. Some Bolsheviks then argued that Kerensky had to be supported, albeit critically or conditionally, against Kornilov. Lenin in his letter to the central committee of the Bolshevik party said: "Even now we must not support Kerensky's government. This is unprincipled. We may be asked: aren't we going to fight against Kornilov? Of course, we must! But this is not the same thing; there is a dividing line here, which is being stepped over by some Bolsheviks who fall into compromise and allow themselves to be carried away by the course of events." (Lenin, V.I.:

“Letter to the Central Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 289–290.)

Without dwelling on the experience of the Chinese revolution, we are going to take a more immediate and conclusive example, the Spanish revolution. Trotsky had written to Shachtman “If we would have a member in the Cortes he would vote against the military budget of Negrin.” On 18 September 1937, Shachtman answered Trotsky in horror: “Unless this is a typographical error it seems to us to be a *non-sequitur*. If, as we all contend, the element of an imperialist war is not dominant at the present time in the Spanish struggle, and if instead, the decisive element is still the struggle between the decaying bourgeois democracy, with all that it involves, on the one side, and Fascism on the other, and further if we are obliged to give military assistance to the struggle against Fascism, we don’t see how it would be possible to vote in the Cortes against the military budget. (...) If a Bolshevik-Leninist on the Huesca front were asked by a Socialist comrade why his representative in the Cortes voted against the proposal by Negrin to devote a million pesetas to the purchase of rifles for the front, what would this Bolshevik-Leninist reply? It doesn’t seem to us that he would have an effective answer.” (Trotsky, Leon: *In defense of Marxism*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 128.) This problem posed by Shachtman is typical: it is a civil war of a bourgeois-democratic government supported by the masses against the worst evil, fascism. We are entirely on the bourgeois-democratic side. Do we, therefore, support the bourgeois-democratic government supported by the masses?

Trotsky replied to Shachtman: “To vote the military budget of the Negrin government signifies to vote him political confidence. (...) To do it would be a crime. How we explain our vote to the anarchist workers? Very simply: We have not the slightest confidence in the capacity of this government to conduct the war and assure victory. We accuse this government of protecting the rich and starving the poor. This government must be smashed. So long as we are not strong enough to replace it, we are fighting under its command. But on every occasion, we express openly our non-confidence in it: it is the only possibility to mobilise the masses politically against this government and to prepare its overthrow. Any other politics would be a betrayal of the revolution.” (Ibid.)

The opinion of GCI was just the opposite of the one of Trotsky and Lenin and the same as Kamenev-Stalin. Like the latter, GCI believed that not to separate from the masses we had to base our policy towards the government the masses supported, on a characterisation to be modified day by day, according to what the government did and we had to critically support the government and ask it to fulfil the revolutionary program. The policy of Trotsky and Lenin was truly scientific and revolutionary: the government, supported by the masses, because of its petty-bourgeois or bourgeois character will not satisfy the needs of the masses and this must be said if we want the revolution to move on.

## The position of POR [Argentina] was the Bolshevik one

When we criticised GCI, we said: it is not a coincidence that the POR has been in full agreement with North Korea and has protested vigorously against the beef shipments to South Korea. The facts will show how our Bolshevik, classist track record was the one that determined our correct position about Korea. Bolivia will corroborate this assertion.

On 15 May, a few days after the Bolivian revolution, conciliating the position of the International (approved by us for a lack of knowledge of the Bolivian reality) of support for the left-wing of the MNR and our appreciation of the Paz Estenssoro government, we characterised the latter: “The peculiar character of the Bolivian revolution, a popular movement, momentarily headed, used and that has brought the reactionary wing of the MNR to power will set the tone for the events that take place in that country.” “The two existing wings within the MNR currently express the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.”. Crystal clear: for the Argentine POR the government of Paz Estenssoro is not the government of the masses that must be supported, “critically supported” or “recognised” but the government of the bourgeoisie and the reaction.

This is not all. Instead of the *Transitional Program*, together with critical support for the government and the aspiration of a workers' and peasants' government, we put forward in a concrete way the fight against Paz Estenssoro and the way to establish the workers' and peasants' government. "Demand the integration of the Paz Estenssoro government with labour ministers elected and controlled by the miners' federation and the new labour union. Demand from your labour ministers the faithful and prompt fulfilment of the resolutions approved by the Trade Union Federation of Mining Workers." (*Frente Proletario*, 29 May 1952.)

In the same month that *Voz Proletaria* demanded the recognition of Paz Estenssoro's government, the Argentine POR dedicated a special article to "Paz Estenssoro wants to disarm the revolution". On 3 July, the POR again insisted on another article: "In Bolivia, the people and the government begin to clash". In August and September of 1952, confirming the POR line, there was a semi-cabinet crisis. The COB, seeing that the workers' program was not being fulfilled, decided to remove their ministers from the government or, failing that, expand the number of portfolios. On 3 September, *Frente Proletario* once again insisted that the main enemy of the Bolivian revolution is the government of Paz Estenssoro.

All our positions during the first stage of the Bolivian revolution can be briefly summarised:

- 1) From the beginning an attack, and absolute distrust in the government of Paz Estenssoro and the MNR;
- 2) The need for the COB to fully control the government as a concrete way of applying the workers' and peasants' government of the *Transitional Program*;
- 3) Compliance with the Pulacayo program of the Miners' Trade Union Federation (nationalisation without payment of land and mines, etc.).

## The mistakes of the Argentine POR

Both GCI and POR have had a wavering position with the Lechin wing of the MNR. The two organisations have characterised him as representative of a progressive, proletarian left-wing within the MNR. This mistake was linked to another perhaps more serious: ignoring the existence of dual power in Bolivia; the power of the bourgeoisie, MNR and Paz Estenssoro, on the one hand, and the power of the proletariat with the power of the COB, on the other.

In the POR conception, the two mistakes are closely linked, not so in the conception of GCI. The POR did not realise that after the revolution the power of the bourgeoisie was less solid than in the revolution of 1946 because sectors of the army and the gendarmerie supported or started the movement. We did not know about the destruction of the seven regiments and the disappearance of the Bolivian army, as well as the colossal workers' armament. This is why we wrongly characterised the balance of power between the government and the proletariat. GCI, closely linked to the Bolivian revolution with direct reports and not, like the POR, journalistic ones, could specify that relationship of forces much better. All this makes GCI's Menshevism cruder because despite their direct reports and therefore the precise characterisation of the proletariat-government relationship, they "critically supported" the MNR in power and did not define dual power and the great task: the workers' revolution, the overthrow of Paz Estenssoro and the bourgeoisie, as the only way to carry out the aspirations of the masses.

Precisely because the POR did not initially realise the existence of all these factors, it raised the possibility — albeit extremely cautiously, without decidedly embracing it — of developing, supporting, and strengthening a left-wing in the MNR. This was a serious mistake caused by the false characterisation of the relationship of forces. But precisely this error demonstrates tangibly the intransigent, class criterion of the POR, which from the beginning attacked the Paz Estenssoro government and proposed "COB ministers across the government to apply the COB program".

The mistake Lechin and his wing was modified in January of this year, in an article by *Frente Proletario* “Lechin serves la Rosca”,<sup>5</sup> as well as the characterisation of the relationship of forces between the government and the workers’ movement. “Some hasty Marxist would conclude that within the MNR there is a left-wing and a right-wing. Lechin would represent the first and Paz Estenssoro and Siles Suazo the second. The problem becomes serious because the same hasty Marxist will have explained to us the last attempt against the government as a product of the right-wing of the MNR against Paz Estenssoro and Lechin.

“There is no doubt that within the MNR, as a party of the petty bourgeoisie, there is an enormity of nuances. In this sense, one can speak of sectors of the right, the extreme right, etc., since these wings are not solidly constituted. THE FUNDAMENTAL CONTRADICTION IN BOLIVIA IS NOT BETWEEN THE RIGHT AND LEFT WINGS OF THE MNR BUT BETWEEN THE MNR AND THE BOLIVIAN WORKERS’ CENTRE. This fundamental contradiction is the key to the Bolivian problem. Since most of the leaders of the COB belong to the MNR, it may give the impression there is a revolutionary wing within it.

Nothing could be more wrong. Within the MNR some leaders respond and are linked to the workers’ movement and those who are not. The tone and postures of each other have to be different but they respond to the same directive. Paz Estenssoro is the one who reflects the combination of the MNR and the COB that is the current government. The essential basis for the victory of the MNR government has been the Bolivian workers’ movement. This is the reason why the workers’ movement has given itself an extraordinary program in every sense, as our paper commented. The government, if it loses the support of the workers’ movement, inevitably falls. On the other hand, both the MNR and its chief Paz Estenssoro are not willing under any circumstances to allow capitalism and imperialism in Bolivia to be wiped out. Any counter-revolutionary policy that the government wants to apply, has to do so with great caution and taking care not to lose the support of the proletariat. To keep this support, which we insist is more important than any other, the government, while it is fortifying itself, has workers’ leaders who know how to deceive the masses and, at the same time, serve the interests of the bourgeoisie. (...) Lechin is a typical centrist. He is the one who fulfils the role of appeasing the workers while swearing revolutionary slogans. It is he who gives the Paz Estenssoro government air so that it can breathe since without him the Bolivian masses would enforce their revolutionary program. Lechin is a characteristic character of every revolutionary process.”

We must point out one of the most important factors in our confusion about Lechin’s role, the ultra-revolutionary statements of the COB leadership and the role of our Bolivian comrades. It is not a secret for anyone (*The Economist*, the great magazine of British imperialism, has commented on this), that the Trotskyists have written many of the best pages of the COB and even inspired some of the best speeches of Lechin & Co. This, which may seem a sign of strength — everyone talks about Trotskyism in Bolivia — is nevertheless a great weakness. We lend the program and it is stolen from us by the MNR leaders to better discard it.

This is the situation of the workers’ movement in Bolivia: we launch or write our slogans, the labour leaders let us write them, they even defend them, to end up not complying with them and causing the masses not to apply them. We must cut this red rope placed at the throat of the Bolivian revolution. Our transitional program cannot be the maximum program of reformism on holidays, to better serve the bourgeoisie and deceive the proletariat. Our program is a program for the class action. This contradiction of the Bolivian revolution has deep roots in the Bolivian situation. The first is the colossal revolutionary situation that to deceive the masses prevents yellow demagoguery and forces it to be ultra-revolutionary. The second is the lack of precise delimitation of the petty-bourgeois and worker tendencies within the workers’ movement itself. The third, and linked to the previous one, is the lack of a true Bolshevik and proletarian structuring of our heroic sister section,

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5 *La Rosca* was the mining cartel of Bolivian tin magnates, led by Simon Patiño, then the fifth richest man in the world. The other was Carlos Víctor Aramayo. Many officials who answered to *La Rosca* held mining directorships and traditionally the foreign minister received a monthly salary from Patiño Mines. (Editor)

which would lead it to apply an intransigent policy against the treacherous and demagogic leadership of the workers' movement.

The class struggle must be brought to the COB. We need to expose its leaders day after day. Any confusion with them, with their politics, with their demagoguery, is to confuse the class, its objectives, its program. They are the agents of the bourgeoisie in the COB and as long as Lechin leads or has influence in the COB, the proletariat will not achieve its objective. In this way, we will separate with precision the opportunist wing of the workers' movement. Any confusion in this regard is a renunciation of the revolution. The revolution begins precisely there. Rather, it begins with the struggle within our ranks, against the capitulators, the tail-enders, and the opportunists, who "critically support" or "criticise in so far as they betray" the leaders of the masses. We are the intransigent opposition that criticises the bourgeois leaders of the masses or the bourgeois agents in the workers' movement before they betray because based on the class characterisation, we are completely sure that they will betray and we say so to the masses, without capitulating, even if the masses think otherwise.

This delimitation in our ranks should lead us to the following conclusion: our great task is a patient and uncompromising education about Lechin's role in the workers' movement to wrench from him the leadership of the masses. To achieve this, we must not join Lechin in saying, "long live the nationalisation of the mines without payment" or "death to the army of the bourgeoisie" but we must add something more important: "Because we are for the nationalisation without payment of the mines and against the bourgeois army, we are against Lechin's leadership in the COB since we are almost certain he does not intend to comply with any of the slogans already named. As long as the majority of the comrades believe in Lechin, despite our systematic criticism, we will invite him to take power with his friends to carry out the COB program and have no excuse for not complying with it."

## Some conclusions

1. Since the armed insurrection of the masses in April of last year, there is in Bolivia a dual power that is manifested in the following facts: a) arming of the proletariat and destruction of the bourgeois army; b) emergence of a powerful workers' organisation of a trade union nature, the COB, and of peasant nature, the peasant unions; c) the power conquered by the working class through the insurrection was handed over by its leaders, Lechin, Burton, to the hands of the representatives of the bourgeoisie, Paz Estenssoro, and Siles Suazo; d) aware of its terrible weakness, the bourgeois government tries to reinstate the bourgeois army, having failed to date; e) the bourgeois and imperialist regime subsists thanks to the influence and prestige of the MNR's labour leaders who prevent the proletariat, through its class organisations, from ruling Bolivia.

2. The GCI policy of critical support for the Paz Estenssoro government and of fighting for the masses to recognise it as their government IS ONE MORE BETRAYAL TO THE BOLIVIAN PROLETARIAT AND THE DEAREST TEACHINGS OF TROTSKISM. It is and was essential, to tell the truth to the masses: Paz Estenssoro is not our government; it is the government of the bourgeoisie and imperialism; we only want the government of the COB to fulfil the revolutionary program of the masses of ending with exploitation on Bolivian soil. This intransigent policy regarding the MNR's government would not have separated us from the masses but, on the contrary, when the best elements of it verified the correctness of our analysis, they would have gathered around us respecting our movement as the only one that shows the path ahead. It is possible that with this task it would be more difficult to avoid the persecution of the government and its agents in the workers' movement, as well as to remain standing by the mass movement, however, it has the advantage that it is the only fruitful and revolutionary policy. That was POR's policy from the beginning.

3. The POR's mistake about the left wing of the MNR must be overcome according to the guidelines given by *Frente Proletario* in January. No trust in the left wing of the MNR that leads the COB. On the contrary, it must be systematically denounced as a workers' team of the bourgeois

government. Out with the leadership of the COB! This policy of education and revolutionary intransigence must be accompanied by an entire tactic that takes into account the feeling of the masses toward these leaders. The slogan that serves this purpose is: we want a COB government with its leaders so they immediately comply with the COB program. All power to the COB!

4. The influence on the working class of the petty bourgeoisie, and through it the bourgeoisie, must be systematically fought by our sister section, strictly delimiting ourselves by our rallies and slogans for the workers' leaders. Our comrades must not be the ultra-revolutionary journalists of the leaders of the workers' movement. Our influence should not be achieved because we are the scribes and clerks of Lechin, Butron & Co who allow us to write a great program but prevent us from putting it into practice. Let's bring the class struggle to the COB. Let's delimit the camps within the COB. That the Bolivian and Latin American proletariat begin to know that we not only write magnificent programs but that we are totally in opposition to the government and the leaders of the COB because a) Paz Estenssoro is not the government of the COB; for a government of the COB; b) the COB leadership does not take over the government or fulfil the Pulcayo program despite their promises because they are the servants of the government and the bourgeoisie; c) Only if the Trotskyists lead the COB can the program that the masses yearn to be achieved.

These few conclusions applied tirelessly would lead to the victory of the Bolivian revolution. We do not honestly believe that those who only know how to translate are capable of creating a correct policy. Among other things, because the original that they translate, we are almost certain, is not correct either.