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THE LESSONS OF BOLIVIA, by Anibal Lorenzo
(Submitted by the PRT (Verdad) for the internal
discussion preparatory to the next world congress.)

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INTRODUCTION

The writer of these lines was in La Paz two weeks prior to the reactionary coup d'etat that overturned Torres. I was able to talk to the leaders and get copies of the documents of the various workers' organizations, some of which are reprinted here [in *Revista de América* No. 6-7]. I would like at this point to thank the comrades who gave us the information we needed to formulate our position, especially since they were well aware of the critical line we have taken toward them for twenty years.

Whenever we discuss Bolivia we must take into account that history has imposed enormous tasks on the young vanguard in this country in repeated cycles of a brief and dramatic character. Because of this, Bolivia is the key for developing a Latin-American strategy. But for the same reason, all polemics must be fraternal and within the context of proletarian solidarity, especially when directed at organizations that are being hounded and whose ranks have been depleted by martyrdom and imprisonment. This means eliminating scientifically unfounded labels and sticking to the concrete facts.

In the article below, I have made a special effort to adhere to this method. The core of my analysis is as follows: The coup represented a victory for reaction, but if the causes of this defeat are studied and overcome, the workers' movement can recover in a relatively short time. The responsibility for the defeat falls once again on the bourgeois nationalists and the bureaucratic gang that does their bidding, the trade-union wing of the MNR [Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionaria] and the pro-Moscow CP. But the entire revolutionary left, from the ELN [Ejército de Liberación Nacional] to the Trotskyists, was indirectly irresponsible. Because of its sectarian and opportunist errors, it left the field open for the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy. It did not project a program for mobilizing the masses. This was a repeat performance of the old drama of 1952. In that year, the miners, who were armed with courage and dynamite, but lacked a revolutionary political leadership, destroyed the army, handing power over to the MNR, a petty-bourgeois movement. With Paz Estenssoro and Lechín and through three governments, the MNR restored the army and the other bourgeois institutions, permitted an imperialist recolonization of the country, and developed the bureaucracy in the COB [Central Obrera Boliviana—Bolivian Labor Federation] and the unions. Once again it limited democratic rights and staged murderous attacks on working-class and popular mobilizations. The tragedy in 1952 was that all the parties involved capitulated to the MNR government, using the typically Menshevik for-

mula of "critical support," which was later taken over by the Stalinists. Today the tragedy has assumed new forms. In the fall of Torres, the miners en masse did not play a role. The government surrendered the ground to the reactionaries and collapsed because of its own contradictions. If the workers did not act, it was because they lacked confidence in their leaders, and this includes, in particular, the revolutionary left. For various reasons, no organization on the far left was able to project a program that could win the support of the masses, even though the objective conditions for this were exceptionally favorable. The analysis ends by taking a position in the polemics over the reasons for this failure because it is through such discussions that the way will be cleared for facing the tasks both of the defensive period that has opened up in Bolivia and the great revolutionary offensive underway throughout the continent.

A PARTIAL DEFEAT OF THE MASSES

Even those comrades who claim that the oligarchies, the bourgeoisie, and the imperialists constitute a monolithic antipopular bloc would probably not dispute the fact that the fall of Torres was a victory for the Latin-American reaction. For our part, our concern is to determine precisely the gravity and the possible ramifications of the defeat by comparing it, for example, with the other great victory of the "gorillas," the 1964 coup that overthrew Goulart in Brazil.

Goulart's fall—followed by the electoral victories of Frei in Chile and Paz Estenssoro in Bolivia, as well as by the defeat of the CGT [Confederación General del Trabajo] Plan de Lucha [Campaign Plan] in Argentina—ushered in a period of relative bourgeois stability and of a counterrevolutionary offensive, reflecting the international escalation of Yankee imperialism with its massive invasion of Indochina and its landing in Santo Domingo. The present Bolivian defeat, on the other hand, takes place in an entirely different context. The imperialists are retreating and the masses are on the advance in the industrialized capitalist countries, the colonial countries, and the workers' states. The legendary Vietnamese resistance has brought all of the contradictions accumulated by capitalism and the bureaucratic regimes to the exploding point. Under the influence of the Vietnamese struggle, the most impressive upsurge we have ever seen began in 1968. It has been exemplified by the French May and the Czechoslovak spring, by the vast mobilizations of American youth and the workers' uprisings in northern Poland, in the semi-insurrections of Córdoba and Rosario and in the Palestinian guerrilla struggle, in the fight waged by the people in Ceylon and Bengal, as well

as in the struggles of the Basques in Spain and the Catholics in Ireland.

The appearance of governments like the Velazco Alvarado, Torres, and Allende regimes, as well as the abrupt shifts in world diplomacy, whose most recent instance is the entry of China into the UN, are an attempt by the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy to readjust to unprecedented historical pressures.

But the action of the masses bears a contradiction within itself. There is no revolutionary pole to centralize and coordinate this activity on a world scale. Despite its weakness, the Fourth International is the only hope for forging this weapon of revolutionary internationalism, which Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky started to build and the Stalinists liquidated. But it can only be made a reality through a costly practical apprenticeship. In the meantime, the lack of a world revolutionary leadership is causing painful defeats on many fronts. Nonetheless, the breadth of the revolutionary rise and the gravity of the crisis of the exploiters is producing a situation in which defeats are quickly overcome and the general course of the struggle continues unaltered. This general tendency will probably be seen in Bolivia.

Together with this international factor, we must take into consideration that the masses of the mine workers and the peasants of the Altiplano did not go into action in defense of Torres, and therefore did not suffer an indiscriminate slaughter. From a distance and at the risk of misjudging the situation, I get the impression that, in contrast to 1952, the miners failed to take up the struggle because of a general lack of confidence in their leaderships. In a contradictory way, this fact seems to have enabled the workers' movement to preserve its cadres and its lines of defense, which in turn explains Banzer's cautious line toward the masses. For example, he has not occupied the mines, as Barrientos did.

The ones that have suffered the immediate consequences of the reactionary coup seem to be primarily the revolutionary organizations and the student movement under their influence. Specifically, the government is trying to take advantage of the isolation of these forces from the other popular sectors in order to try to behead the movement.

Moreover, the new government, which is based on an unstable political and economic coalition, is already beginning to show internal rifts. The background of this continues to be a galloping economic crisis which places the severest limitations on the ability of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists to maintain an uncontradictory, coherent policy so long as the masses and their vanguard, the mine workers, resist exploitation effectively.

These various international and local elements lead me to expect a relatively rapid revolutionary revival as a result of carrying out the defensive tasks and maintaining resistance. But it would be the worst thing if objective judgment were to be used to cover up the failings of the vanguard and hinder its process of self-criticism. To achieve victory in the next upsurge, the indispensable condition is that the Bolivian revolutionists overcome their chronic failings.

ANOTHER FAILURE OF BOURGEOIS NATIONALISM

Banzer's victory is the latest demonstration of the bank-

ruptcy of bourgeois nationalism, another entry on the list in Latin America and the colonial world (Perón, Arbenz, Vargas, Sukarno).

The social reason for this impotence lies in the class bonds that link the nationalists with the bourgeois structure as a whole. Since the weakness of their social base impels them to seek support in the working class and the popular sectors, they soon find themselves suspended in a void, oscillating between the imperialists and the workers. At the decisive moment, they have no choice but to retire from the scene and hand over power to the reactionaries in order to prevent victory by the masses.

This cycle runs like a white thread through all the various governments. Only one scenario differed in details. In 1954, Vargas chose to commit suicide; but his personal solution changed nothing in the political and social process. Perón preferred to go into exile rather than give any signal for mobilizing a defensive movement. Torres waited until the last minute and covered his retreat with stirring phrases. A few hours before, he had announced that he would resist until death. But in fact he was unable to give the order to dynamite the road linking El Alto with La Paz, the road that served as the triumphal highway for the few tanks that took the Palacio Quemado.

Regimes like the one headed by Torres are condemned by their base and social dynamic to a political impotence that takes on suicidal characteristics. Even as they are being overthrown by the defenders of the endangered social order, the armed forces, such regimes show their bourgeois stripe, their conception of society and the army. They fall, praising the "loyal" armed forces, who are supposed to have been "confused" by "bribed" officers.

The Latin-American revolutionary movement has to settle accounts in theory and practice with bourgeois nationalism and its methodology. This is needed now because the mass upsurge brought on by the crisis provoked by imperialist colonization is once again bringing these movements to the fore.

In dealing with bourgeois nationalist movements, there are two symmetrical dangers—capitulation in the style of the "national left" and the pro-Moscow Communist parties; and sectarianism of the kind whipped up by some sectors of the revolutionary left, which is based on various mechanistic concepts.

Charting a course between these two pitfalls, we must project a correct line that can exploit the real contradictions that exist between the national bourgeoisies and imperialism in order to outflank them both. When a bourgeois government is forced to take anti-imperialist and popular measures such as the Torres regime did, it deserves our concrete technical assistance in carrying out these steps, to the extent that this fits in with our fundamental objective of organizing and mobilizing the masses independently behind escalating demands. At the same time, we have to remain alert to the possibility of nationalist capitulation and a reactionary coup d'etat and be ready to take over the defense against the bourgeois offensive.

The current ultraleft sectarianism of the Latin-American vanguard tends to deny the contradictions between imperialism and the local bourgeoisies, thereby unconsciously increasing the margin of maneuver of the national bourgeoisie. For the national bourgeoisie does,

in fact, grant some real concessions to the masses, or customarily adopts progressive measures which serve as a basis for its demagogy, its political mythology, and possibly even leadership of the people.

On the other hand, the ideological and political agents of bourgeois nationalism, the Stalinists and the "national left," as well as various bureaucratic variants are direct accomplices of the national bourgeoisie and real traitors to the masses. By their activity in Bolivia as the bureaucratic or petty-bourgeois agents of Torres, they gave the best possible assist to the Banzer coup.

Agents of Bourgeois Nationalism

In its July 24, 1971, issue, *Unidad*, the national organ of the Communist Party, published an interview with Chancellor H. Taborga. A few days later *Tribuna Popular*, the paper of the PCV [Partido Comunista Venezolano—Venezuelan Communist party] gave it a whole page. It is worth studying a few questions and answers:

"Chancellor, what role is the army playing in this process?" . . .

"Well, I should point out that in reality, my country's army has a popular origin and character, and this is the basic difference between the Bolivian army and the armies of other Latin-American countries which have an almost hereditary structure. In our case, this is not true. The officers come from the middle and popular classes. So, they have sufficient motivations to join in the revolutionary process. In view of the clarification of our problems, of their magnitude, of the social contradictions, I think that the army has developed great maturity. Thus, at this moment, the army and the people are marching arm in arm in the same revolutionary process."

"But are there reactionary elements within the army?"

"Of course there have been some officers who have not been in accord with this revolutionary process. There have been attempts to stage a coup. But, naturally, the government is removing these elements from the armed forces."

"Chancellor, there was talk recently about an early morning coup. Where could such a coup come from, from a sector of the army or external forces?"

"Fundamentally from external forces. There might be someone involved in the army. But at no time has there been a movement of the armed forces as such in support of it."

It is obvious that the Communist Party was playing the role of agent of bourgeois nationalism. By giving over one of the eight pages of its paper to this interview with Taborga, it helped to encourage confidence in the armed forces, in Torres, and in his ministers. Instead of raising the alarm that a coup was imminent, that it was necessary to get ready to resist it, and that Torres and his government were playing along with the coup by failing to expose the counterrevolutionary preparations, the Communist Party was the most obsequious agent of the "plebeian" army and the "progressive bourgeoisie."

In a similar situation in Argentina, the Communist Party was a camp follower of the counterrevolutionaries. But its customary role was played at the time by the group directed by Abelardo Ramos. In the June 27, 1955, issue of the progovernment daily *Democracia*, Ramos wrote the following under the pen name of Victor Almagro:

"The working class responded immediately. Fanning out around the line of fire, its vanguard plunged into the battle, despite the superior technical resources of the enemy. The army founded by San Martín, tempered in the Gaucho wars, and organized by Roca and Ricchieri, did its duty until the end, upholding the fundamental gains of the revolutionary process."

Everybody knows the history of what happened in Argentina. Four months later, Abelardo Ramos's "army of San Martín" overthrew General Perón. But Ramos continued imperturbably playing his role parallel to that of the Communist Party, and he is still in the same camp.

In its September 1-15, 1971, issue, *Lucha Obrera*, published in Buenos Aires as the organ of the Partido Socialista de la Izquierda Nacional (Socialist Party of the Nationalist Left), carried a "Report from La Paz" with the following title: "The Ultraleft Strangled the Government of General Torres." In this article, Ramos's correspondent said that the left groups, which he claimed had a "treacherous" attitude and were working with the CIA, were responsible for the fall of "the poor people's president." He noted, moreover, that on October 4, 1970, Lechín did not call for armed resistance against the coup, maintaining that "the workers will be mobilized only if the fascists repress the labor movement." But we would search in vain in this violent article for any mention of the fact that it was Torres himself whose systematic refusal to arm the miners led directly to the victory of the coup. So, putting all the blame on the left groups, as *Lucha Obrera* does, means capitulating purely and simply to the "progressive" sectors of the bourgeoisie or the army. It is in the purest Stalinist style, even though it invokes the name of Trotsky and speaks of creating a party of the workers. Repeated capitulation to Paz Estenssoro, Barrientos, Ovando, and finally Torres is the trademark of Ramos's "Trotskyism." Although Ramos is not very important, he is representative of the petty-bourgeois tendencies that call themselves revolutionary "realists" and follow the Menshevik policy—branded forever by Lenin and Trotsky—of leaving the achievement of the bourgeois-democratic tasks to the bourgeoisie. That the national bourgeoisie is not the same thing as imperialism, that there are conflicts between the two and concessions customarily made by the local capitalists to the masses—which a good part of the Latin-American left, suffering from its infantile disorder, does not recognize—does not mean that we should convert ourselves into agents of the national bourgeoisie, or give unconditional or critical support to their concessions, or still less take as our main enemy the revolutionists waging a head-on fight against the regime.

Only in an indirect sense do we agree with *Octubre* and the defenders of the "national left": Neither Torres, nor Arbenz, nor Vargas, nor Perón betrayed. The fact is that they struggle consistently in the interests of their class, and their impotence or capitulation at critical moments is the best way of defending the interests of capitalism. To the contrary, the traitors are those who, in the name of the working class and the people, help in political and practical ways to disarm the workers and the popular strata in the face of whatever nationalist movement comes along. This includes the Bolivian Stalinists and *Octubre*. It also includes the stratospheric Posadista sect, which, living completely separated from re-

ality, shamelessly carried its capitulation and confidence in Torres to the ultimate conclusions. The guerrillas, it said, were being directed by the CIA:

"For in the context of the uneven and combined development of the revolution, the tradition, maturity, and growing political awareness of the Bolivian masses are preparing the country for a rapid transition from the *revolutionary state* that exists today to a workers' state. All their attempts have failed. The scheme of 'guerrillas' directed by the CIA failed; the attacks on Velazco Alvarado and Allende failed; urban guerrilla warfare and terrorism failed." (*Lucha Obrera*, supplement No. 258, La Paz, January 19, 1971.)

The Posadista line on the Popular Assembly, the weak and still bureaucratic organ of the masses, was that it was a swindle serving the interests of the imperialists:

"The old swindlers and betrayers of the Bolivian revolution, the Paz Estenssoros, the Lechíns, the Siles Suazos, the Nuflo Chavezes and their agents planted in the COB and the unions, who have learned the tricks and acquired the senses of the ruling class well enough, who have learned how to exploit the immense power and heroism of the miners and the Bolivian masses for the benefit of capitalism, have cooked up a swindle called the Popular Assembly. They intend to use it to exploit the power of the masses, the weakness and instability of the government, to blackmail the anti-imperialist tendency headed by compañero Torres, to undermine it, to isolate it, and to overthrow it." (*Op. cit.*)

Rounding out this analysis by a devious use of the anti-imperialist united front, *Lucha Obrera* called for liquidating the independent organizations and supporting the nationalist process unconditionally:

"This Frente Unico Antimperialista [Anti-Imperialist United Front] must include the leaders and the ranks of the popular organizations, the unions, the army, and the people's parties that unconditionally support this nationalist and anti-imperialist process." (*Op. Cit.*)

THE ROLE OF THE BUREAUCRACY

The sinister figure of Lechín has been showing up on the working class and general political scene for years, embodying the contradictory aspects of the revolution. The main one responsible for the failure of the heroic events of 1952, the ally of Paz Estenssoro in his policy of counterrevolutionary restoration, and a signer of the Código Davenport that turned over the country's oil to the imperialists, Lechín was swallowed by the reaction that entered through the door that he himself and his camarilla opened. Taking advantage of Ovando's new course, he managed to reestablish himself in the leadership of the COB. Later with Torres in power he got himself elected to the Presidium of the Popular Assembly. His "maneuvers" and "slickness" are not sufficient to explain his new position. His rise showed that the bureaucratic apparatus and his network of friends remained powerful, that they had not yet been broken down by the process going on among the ranks, and that there was no new revolutionary class leadership that was recognized as an alternative. Thus, the Lechín grouping (with the support of the trade-union wing of the MNR and the Communist Party) was able to keep control of the workers' movement in the Torres phase and play a de-

cisive role in creating favorable conditions for the reactionary coup.

This role, however, must be clarified by the revolutionary left in order to avoid confusion and errors.

The "national left" that played stooge for Torres accused Lechín of direct responsibility for the coup. Its leaders reported that he was involved in the Pacto de Lima (the conspiratorial alliance of the army, the Falange Socialista, and Paz Estenssoro).

We have not traced the moves of this old bureaucrat. This would be impossible above all because the main characteristic of bureaucrats is to try to negotiate with the most disparate elements, with anyone who can guarantee them a cut of the take.

Lechín's complicity in the reactionary coup does not involve any direct links with the reactionaries but comes from his policy of vacillating, of holding back the masses, of failing to prepare them to face a betrayal by the army. This was what Torres required of him. His policy helped Torres in keeping the workers quiet. When the final crisis came, this line rebounded against the "poor people's president" and helped to promote the coup. At that time the only way out was to mobilize and arm the miners, and Torres and Lechín were the most anxious of all to avoid this.

In our analysis, Lechín's role in promoting the coup was the same in essence as that of his accusers among the "national left" and the Bolivian Stalinists. All served as tools of the reactionaries by calling on the masses to put their confidence in Torres; all failed to help build the only power that could have repulsed the reactionary coup—the armed force of the people.

In this connection, the bureaucracy can claim that it "talked" about arming. The problem was that it did nothing about it. In Argentina after June 16, when the reactionaries were stepping up their attacks, the CGT bureaucracy also "talked" about arming, and did so in a way celebrated in the rather neglected annals of the relations between the national bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy. The CGT formally offered the services of the workers to the minister of war as reservists. He replied that in accordance with the law the reservists would be called up when needed. Then the bureaucracy settled down to wait.

The Lechín bureaucracy did something rather like this. No. 51 of *Cuadernos de Marcha* reprinted parts of a transcript of a meeting called by Torres on August 21. It was attended by his cabinet and the political parties. While we cannot be sure that these dialogues took place in this way, they should have:

"*Lechín*. 'Hello, general. How does the situation stand?'
Torres. 'The situation is grave.' Then the president addressed all of those present, reproaching them for failing to support him before. During all this time, Lechín was the one who did the least talking. He limited himself to saying: 'Give us guns and we will defend you. The revolution belongs to the workers more than anybody, and it is the workers who must defend it.' Following this, the rector of the University of La Paz, Oscar Prudencio, said that he accepted General Torres's criticisms, adding: 'General, we were wrong, but, as you said, now is not the time for reproaches. We have no arms to defend you. I have people in the university who are ready to die to defend the revolutionary process. You must give

us arms.'

"Torres: 'You know that we do not have any weapons. We are a poor country; none of our units has extra weapons and I cannot take guns away from soldiers and turn them over to students.'"

This Chaplinesque scene blends the ridiculous and the tragic, giving the best picture of the Torres regime and the attitude of the bureaucracy, which never went beyond these "demands."

The COB and the Popular Assembly repeatedly passed resolutions proclaiming the need for organizing militarily. In Chapter 5, article 5 of the resolutions of the May 9, 1971, Congress of the COB, the following is said:

"The methods and forms of workers' struggle must be in consonance with its ultimate objectives. There should be no contradiction between means and ends. Our accumulated experience of the cruel methods of repression used by our class enemies teaches us the need for being prepared to act in any area of struggle, including revolutionary violence. In every concrete historical situation we must determine whether our fundamental concern is educating and organizing the workers, mobilizing the masses, or preparing ourselves militarily. The working class aspires to power and must be ready to use force if its position in the relationship of classes requires it."

For its part, the Popular Assembly, accepting that it was essential to prepare militarily, came to accept the formation of a Comando Militar [Military Command] for defense. The idea of forming workers' militias was verbally accepted by all the leaderships. All this meant very little, since the concrete steps to be taken remained in the hands of the COB and the "relevant commissions."

This shows that what was lacking was a leadership capable of taking on the job of preparing and arming the workers. The bureaucracy could not accomplish this task by its pitiful appeals to the government. These petitions served only to unmask Torres, just as their unfulfilled declarations served to expose the bureaucrats themselves. In Bolivia the conditions were exceptionally favorable for arming the people. This could have been done through work among the soldiers and noncommissioned officers, by calling on them to organize and join the Popular Assembly, and if necessary to desert and rally around the Comando Militar of the working-class and popular forces. The entire tradition of the Altiplano favored such a development because of the precedent in 1952 when the miners destroyed the regular army in the space of a few hours.

The bureaucracy's failure to accomplish the task of arming the workers is explained by its nature as a parasitic caste interested in maintaining the status quo. So, it went no further than the timid measures the pro-Torres national bourgeoisie felt brave enough to take. Together with the ideological agents of these capitalist elements—the "national left" and the Posadistas—the bureaucrats betrayed the workers' movement, delivering it over, bound hand and foot, to the reactionary putschists.

But we still must take a look at the reasons why the anticapitalist and antibureaucratic revolutionary left also was unable to win the masses, arm the proletariat, or block the counterrevolution.

THE ERRORS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

The errors that prevented the revolutionary left from developing an independent mobilization of the masses, were of two types. I am interested fundamentally in taking up one of these—the ultraleftist deviation that marked the majority. But before doing this, I will deal with the Lora group, which reflected the other kind of deviation, capitulation to Torres and the COB bureaucracy.

The Lora POR and Sectarian-Opportunist Propagandism

Like the other revolutionary forces, the Lora POR [Partido Obrero Revolucionario] was a tiny group. Because of its numbers, it could not exercise much influence. But we should analyze its line and its dynamic. It is characteristic that while the Lora POR insisted more than any other grouping that the Popular Assembly was an organ of dual power, it did less than the others to get the body to make its authority effective by organizing mass actions. While no group proposed a clear and concrete program to the assembly for mobilizing the masses, this failure was particularly grave in the case of the Loristas, who were proceeding in accordance with a concept calling for a general insurrection, in opposition to rural guerrilla warfare.

The Lorista program consisted of generalities that were correct but that did not transcend the level of propaganda and were not linked to the concrete means for putting them into practice. Their posing the need for a Bolshevik party and a working-class insurrection remained purely verbal because this propaganda was not linked with developing a revolutionary united front and working in the army as intermediary forms of building an insurrectionary organization. This sectarian propagandism led to grave opportunist capitulations. In refusing to build a revolutionary united front, the Lora POR reached the depth of voting along with the CP against admitting the González POR to the Popular Assembly. The same thing happened with regard to the problem of arming the workers. The Loristas' abstract defense of the concept of insurrection led them in practice to lining up with the bureaucracy, which also refused to work among the ranks of the armed forces and get them to elect delegates to the Popular Assembly.

This same sectarian, propagandistic—and therefore opportunistic—character can be perceived in the calls to action raised by the Loristas. Their main slogans were working-class participation in the management of enterprises and a homogeneous university system. They were silent on the two central issues decisive for mobilizing the masses in Bolivia—raising wages and fighting unemployment.

In all, this political line enabled the Loristas to function as a propagandistic left wing of the Popular Assembly, a wing perfectly acceptable to the bureaucracy because it did not represent any practical threat. The Lora POR's alliance with the CP in putting up Víctor López (general secretary of the Federación de Mineros [Miners' Federation]) as a candidate against Lechín represented nothing more than a superstructural clash between different bureaucracies.

This sectarian propagandism and opportunist practice, similar to the line of *Política Obrera* in Argentina, was

in the tradition of the Lora group. This tendency has gained the greatest publicity, and in the past it gained a certain weight in the workers' movement. But despite this, because of its petty-bourgeois professorial leadership it has never been able to build a large revolutionary party. This deficiency emerged more clearly after the murder of César Lora. That blow increased the group's tendency toward propagandism and reduced it to a small circle in the University of La Paz, which had some old working-class contacts, like Filemón Escobar, who were out of touch with the new stage in Bolivia. Because of its social character and its tradition, this group could not overcome its propagandism and collapsed in the face of the counterrevolution.

Questions for the ELN

As I was rewriting this chapter, a dispatch from Bolivia reported that the government had just restored the death penalty for acts of guerrilla warfare and subversion. This news compels us to reiterate our full, principled support of the Bolivian revolutionists and to condemn the probourgeois rabble—and still worse those who dress themselves up in "Marxist" or "national left" clothing—who concentrate their attacks on the guerrillas and the revolutionary left.

Our profound and serious tactical differences are within the framework of the revolution and the revolutionary camp. Although we may be mistaken for "charlatans disguised as serious analysts, who praise our martyrs with self-seeking ulterior motives, stressing their human valor in giving up their lives but deceitfully criticizing the revolutionary postulates that led them to engage in guerrilla warfare" (January 1971 statement of the ELN), I can see no other way to begin the discussion on the Bolivian experience so that we can draw some conclusions valid on a continental scale. In fact, we are not the only ones concerned. The entire Latin-American vanguard is asking what happened in Bolivia and how could the reactionaries wipe out virtually all armed resistance within two days. We know that the bourgeois nationalists and the trade-union bureaucracy could not have organized any armed opposition. But what role did the ELN and the other guerrilla groups play? Why didn't they take advantage of the crisis in the army? Why didn't they make preparations to block the "gorilla" coup? Why didn't the masses participate as they did in 1952?

In my opinion, we should not look for errors only in the recent events; we should trace them further back to the theoretical and practical conceptions and the action flowing from these conceptions. To this end, the self-criticism the ELN made in January 1971 is useful. In their statement, the comrades pointed with singular honesty to the factors that they considered led to the Teoponte defeat. In my judgment, this criticism did not go to the root of the question and it's the gaps in its analysis that explain the latest defeat that brought Banzer to power.

No Correct Analysis of Bolivian Reality

Among their principal errors, the *compañeros* recognize that they did not "carry out sufficient political work among the people, although the events showed that there

were magnificent possibilities for this." Moreover, they note "extensive work to inform, educate, and organize the best elements in the area should have been done for the purposes of guerrilla warfare; and that "we did not do as good a job as we thought in selecting out the best fighters for our ranks." This sorting-out process should have been carried out through a more extensive clandestine struggle hardening and tempering the future guerrillas. Another error was made, they go on, in trying to make up for their isolation from an urban network by relying on intercom radios, when human contact was needed. Finally, the natural inexperience of the fighters and the command was compounded by the lack of political and military preparation of the guerrilla force as a whole, which showed up in a lack of ideological firmness and homogeneity.

In my opinion, all of these organizational and technical problems, which can be noted in any failure, conceal the fundamental political factor. The ELN did not make a proper assessment of the Bolivian situation. They thought that the death of Barrientos and the subsequent coup by Ovando had no particular significance. Guerrilla warfare continued to be their sole prescription for every situation. When they issued their manifesto "We Will Return to the Mountains," after the deaths of Che and Inti, they based themselves on the following analysis, which appears also in their self-criticism:

"At this moment, Yankee imperialism had one of its most servile and rabid agents in power—Barrientos. He was the 'gorilla' who massacred the workers, stirred up clashes among the peasants, and turned over to the imperialists the last resources that previous governments didn't have the time to sell off. He enriched himself without any restraint, and in our country he established one of the most lugubrious regimes on the continent. In view of this situation, there was no other alternative but armed struggle."

The rise of Ovando, who legalized the workers' movement, withdrew the army from the mines, and took a mildly nationalist line changed nothing in the analysis and proposals of the ELN. They devoted only a few paragraphs like the following to the shift:

"The most modern form of demagogy is Ovando's revolutionary nationalism. He is the intellectual offspring of opportunists or imbeciles with their heads crammed with undigested literature on 'the revolutionary role of the national bourgeoisie' and he has shown the enormous limitations of this class. He nationalized Gulf, only to pay compensation immediately afterwards and turn over the sale of petroleum to imperialist hands. The same impotence, the same end without fuss or glory, will distinguish this latest version of the old scenario. The likelihood is that the government will be brought down before long by a right-wing coup which it will have neither the will nor the ability to resist."

This was the source of the ELN's errors. Its scant interest in a concrete analysis of the Bolivian situation led it to schematism, to equating Barrientos, Ovando, and Torres. It was unconcerned about the possibility of a coup against Torres, apparently thinking that it would affect only him.

When Marx analyzed the various class sectors in his *Eighteenth Brumaire* and in his *Class Struggle in France*, he did not do this as a mere intellectual exercise but in

order to orient the revolutionary vanguard in its day-to-day work. Clearly defining what Barrientos, Ovando, and Torres represented would have given the ELN leadership the ideological and political armament it needed to intervene in the real process of mass action that began to take form and assume a completely different dynamic from the time of Ovando's rise to power.

Barrientos used semifascist methods to repress the workers' movement. His successor, on the other hand, was forced by conflicts arising from the economic situation, superexploitation and the crisis of imperialism, and by the rising militancy of the workers on this continent to inaugurate a "democratic" period with certain legal concessions to the working-class and popular organizations.

Without doing any crystal-ball gazing to try to estimate the possible duration of the new period, the ELN and the other revolutionary groups should have tried to take advantage of the phase that the army and the weak bourgeoisie felt obligated to open up. Unfortunately, they did not do so. Despite the rise of the masses, they remained as isolated from the broad sectors of the population as they were before. It was this isolation that caused the failure in Teoponte. Thus, it was not just the lack of political work in the area where they were operating but their analysis of the entire stage and the general focus of activity that prevented the revolutionary guerrillas, at the decisive moment of the counterrevolution, from finding the means necessary for mobilizing the masses.

The schema held by the ELN is already sufficiently well-known—the bourgeoisie, or its representative, the army, is reactionary. Since it is reactionary, it is monolithically fused with imperialism. Therefore, the struggle against imperialism, is a struggle against the bourgeoisie.

This oversimplification is the mirror image of the reformist schema upheld by the Mensheviks, the "national left," and the Stalinists; as well as, in practice, by the bourgeoisie.

Unfortunately, by refusing to see the conflicts constantly arising between the bourgeoisie and imperialism and by failing to take advantage of them, the ultraleft deviationists left control of the mass movement in the hands of a variety of reformists, who, in turn, held it back, encouraged confidence in the bourgeoisie, and finally delivered it, helpless, to reaction.

While all the reformist groups and the propagandistic sectarians took advantage of the new legal rights established by Ovando, the ELN was slaughtered in Teoponte as the masses looked on passively. When Lechín returned to the country and reestablished his apparatus and his control of the COB and the Popular Assembly; when the Communist Party and the Lora POR pushed their old trade-union leaders like Reyes and Filemón Escobar to the fore again, the ultraleftists gave them free rein by holding to their line of urban and rural guerrilla warfare.

The attitude of the ultraleftists contrasted clearly with the policy and teachings of Lenin. The February revolution in Russia opened up a "democratic" period in which Lenin, the first to distrust this "democracy," exhausted every possibility to return from exile. Finally, he went to the extreme of making an agreement with the Kaiser and risking being attacked as a "traitor," which the Social patriots did do, in order to return to Russia. He did this so that he could wage new battles on new territory,

as the new situation required, against the eternal enemy—the exploiters and their Menshevik and reformist agents.

The ELN and the ultraleftists, on the other hand, remained chained to their immutable schemas. Their attitude facilitated the control of the masses by the nationalist bourgeoisie and its agents, the bureaucracy and the reformists. The ELN and the ultraleftists did not offer the masses any practical alternative, nor even a revolutionary pole of more consistent opposition to the "gorilla" coup.

The González POR Also Failed to Define the Stage

Despite what it suffered in deaths and prisoners in the struggle, the González POR also lost its way in the whirlwind of events and failed to grasp the nature of the stage. Preoccupied with answering the reformism of the Communist Party and the other sects, it maintained correctly that Torres' rise had not brought a social revolution and that the crisis had been settled within the confines of the military command. But it did not ascertain the nature of the new stage or determine the tasks corresponding to it. In an article in its October 1970 issue (which was reprinted in *Cuarta Internacional*, New Series, No. 2, February 1971), *Combate* said:

"The army, the armed party of the bourgeoisie, continues to hold the reins of power. . . . While the differences and conflicts among the army chiefs have not disappeared, they are not sufficiently deep to engender open clashes between sectors and split the command structure."

The González POR stressed correctly that the government of General Torres had taken no social or political measures that could define it as revolutionary. But this characterization was only one aspect of the reality, a half-truth that led to the following falsehood:

"Where, then, are the differences among the generals? Obviously they exist. But be on your guard! The difference is a tactical one and concerns how to defeat communism and stop the masses from taking power."

The result of this method was that the González POR was unprepared for the August events. When they returned to Russia after the fall of the Czar, Lenin and Trotsky issued an immediate call for preparing a working-class insurrection and for no confidence in the Provisional government. But they never equated Kornilov with Kerensky. When the White general, taking advantage of the position Kerensky himself gave him, tried to stage a coup, the Bolsheviks made a united front with the moderate leader and took the lead in mobilizing the masses. And the masses defeated the coup by forcing the putschists' troops to desert. As we know, one month later the Bolsheviks took power. In this whole operation, Lenin and Trotsky did not place any trust in Kerensky or in the corrupt Russian bourgeoisie but they were able to take advantage of the "democratic" stage to prepare the armed insurrection.

Two Years Lost

The entire Bolivian revolutionary left committed the political crime of minimizing the conflicts within the bourgeoisie and ignoring a "democratic" stage of two years—the period of the Ovando and Torres governments. Such times have been very rare in the country's history. In

the repression unleashed by Banzer, the revolutionary left is now paying the price for this crime—letting two years go by without utilizing this time to prepare the basis for armed struggle.

When Lenin was waging a struggle against the ultra-leftists who did not want to take advantage of legality, he had no illusions that legal conditions would last. Neither did he think that a revolutionary party could be built gradually in periods of legality through a progressive accumulation of forces. Lenin maintained that building the party had to be accomplished by a combination of legal and clandestine work. The fundamental thing was to take advantage of the enemy's inevitable contradictions in order to bring about a revolution. No revolutionary current in Bolivia combined this objective with this method. To the contrary, the left's political arsenal consisted of repeating Che Guevara's schema of a "monolithic front of exploiters." This concept inevitably required rural guerrilla warfare, since this was the only way of defeating such a bloc. With minor variations, the same schema appeared in the analyses of all sections of the Bolivian revolutionary left.

By ignoring the contradictions within the bourgeoisie, the well-known Trotskyist leader, Livio Maitan, came to conclusions in his work on Latin America that coincided with this false schema. In *Quatrième Internationale*, he wrote:

"This doesn't exclude possible oscillations, new pseudo-reformist projects, ephemeral political adventures, and other variants within the context of military regimes (in various countries groups of officers are still toying with "Nasserism," but all military coups do not necessarily have the same immediate effect). This statement in no wise alters the general tendency. In a situation of chronic crises and prerevolutionary tensions, the ruling class will inevitably be impelled to adopt brutal repressive measures and to utilize terroristic and despotic political regimes. In view of their social weakness, these bourgeois elements cannot realistically propose solving their problems by means of reactionary regimes with a fascist-style popular base. Therefore, by far the most likely variant is still military governments."

This is the type of analysis that disarmed the Bolivian revolutionary left and kept it from taking advantage of two years' time to increase its strength, take on the bureaucracy, block the reactionary forces, and successfully utilize its enormous opportunities for preparing a socialist insurrection.

Guerrilla Warfare as the Only Method

This schematic analysis of the stage, following in Guevara's footsteps, led to maintaining that the only valid method was rural guerrilla warfare. In its self-criticism, the ELN drew two conclusions: (1) battle must be waged in all areas; (2) the army is not as effective as the soldiers would have us think. But these conclusions did not depart from maintaining that rural guerrilla warfare is the fundamental method of armed struggle. Thus, urban work was conceived as supplementary and no practical tasks were discerned from the fissures noted in the army.

We have already seen the syllogism. The ruling classes are forced to resort to continually more despotic regimes. The Barrientos government was a despotic regime and

the ones that followed, although they might try reformist tactics and there might be brief intervals, would be as despotic or worse than he. Therefore, the only proper method of struggle is and will remain rural guerrilla warfare.

The tragic thing is that this time the syllogism was expressed in a more barren way than it was by Che Guevara, without taking into consideration all of the unsuccessful attempts, and at the very moment when another perspective was opening up in Bolivia. The ELN maintained:

"According to our judgment and all experiences up to the present, armed action must be carried out in every possible arena—the cities, the mines, and the peasant areas. . . . What the Teoponte experience has shown us is the need for having a clandestine organization in the urban and rural areas capable of providing a solid base for the small guerrilla army. . . . An impoverished population, two-thirds of which lives in the countryside; and more than a half million square kilometers of territory suitable for waging irregular war provides a solid basis for our intention to wage a guerrilla campaign in Bolivia." (January 1971, statement.)

The revolutionary oversimplification of this analysis is striking. Nowhere does the ELN indicate by what program it intends to link itself to the masses either in the countryside or in the cities. In an article written in 1964, "Dos Métodos Frente a la Revolución Latinoamericana" [Two Methods in Face of the Latin-American Revolution], published in *Estrategia*, Third Series, Volume 1, No. 2, Nahuel Moreno pointed out the consequences of this approach:

"What is unusual then about the failure of the guerrillas in Peru or in our country? What is mysterious about the fact that heroic revolutionary militants have fallen in smuggling arms and organizing guerrilla warfare in Salta? Weren't they faithfully following Guevara's principles? Weren't they isolated from the people, lacking contact with the peasants and the workers, without the support of any party? A revolutionary policy and slogans in harmony with the mass movement, combined in a revolutionary program and with a party carrying them out in close connection with the workers and their organizations—that is the prerequisite for all revolutionary activity and most of all armed struggle. Otherwise, any action, no matter how small, becomes an adventure."

The Expression of Desires Is Not a Transitional Program

What the ELN *compañeros* call lack of political work, we would call lack of a program for mobilizing the masses. Such a program is not a simple placard to be raised from a distance but the product of an intimate dialectical link connecting the party and the masses and their organizations. In failing to recognize this, the *compañeros* forgot the great historical experiences, especially those of the Russian, Chinese, and Cuban revolutions.

The Bolshevik Party was able to draw the majority of the population behind it with the slogan of "Bread, Peace, and Land" and the call for a constituent assembly. The way to win these demands, as Lenin pointed out and the masses quickly understood, was "All Power to the Soviets."

Fidel Castro built his movement on the basis of a minimum democratic demand—"Batista Out and Free Elections." To this he added, when he was in the mountains, the slogan "Land for the Peasants."

These programs, whose central points I have noted, are models of simplicity, concreteness, and profoundly revolutionary content, because in the context in which they were raised they expressed a need urgently felt by the masses which the ruling governments could not satisfy. No current in the revolutionary left advanced a program on these lines in the period I am discussing. The ELN vainly tried to substitute broad generalities and the expression of aspirations: "Build the Revolutionary Army," "Guerrilla Warfare Is Still the Way," "Guerrilla Warfare Is the Only Road for Taking Power."

Political work as understood by the *compañeros* of the ELN could not have met the needs of making the revolution. What was lacking was an overall conception of revolutionary struggle, including an understanding of the need for a program to mobilize the masses and to answer the problems felt by the population.

Three Stages: Ovando, Torres, and Banzer

I have criticized the *compañeros* of the revolutionary left for failing to know the terrain, that is, the stage they were going through, and for failing as a result to pose the correct program and tasks. In this connection, I agree with the evaluation made by the González POR in a lecture given in the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés and reprinted in the December 1970 issue of *Lucha Obrera*:

"The POR *Combatiente* holds a position critical of the way the campuses, the Comando Político, and the leadership of the COB acted during the crisis of the first week in October. Unquestionably the blame is not shared equally. The student leaders had a correct revolutionary political position, confirmed by the events, but they succumbed to the pressures of reformist tendencies.

"The political errors arose from a false characterization of the crisis in the armed forces, a lack of understanding of 'military reformism,' and a capitulationist conception that included no idea of how the workers could take power and in practice they left this historic task to other sectors. . . ."

The only thing I would add to this is that these political errors extended to all groups without exception. This judgment obliges me, therefore, to make my own characterization of the stages and tasks, as, in fact, I have been doing up till now in an indirect way.

The tremendous penetration of Yankee imperialism on the one hand, and the mobilization of the workers and popular strata on the other, give rise to violent changes in the character of bourgeois regimes. These are the two basic elements that explain Ovando's turn in 1969, which caught the revolutionary left by surprise. Under the compulsion of these factors, the accomplice of the murders committed by Barrientos, including the murder of Che, switched from being a reactionary bonapartist with semi-fascist features to being a bonapartist *sui generis*, as Trotsky defined it in 1938 in his *Escritos sobre Latinoamérica* [Writings on Latin America].

"In the industrially backward countries, foreign capital plays a decisive role. This is the source of the relative weakness of the national bourgeoisie vis-à-vis the national proletariat. This gives rise to special conditions in the sphere of the state power. The government oscillates between foreign and domestic capital, between the weak national bourgeoisie and the relatively powerful proletariat.

This gives it a bonapartist character *sui generis*, a distinctive character. It rises, so to speak, above classes. It can rule by becoming an instrument of foreign capital and fastening the chains of a police dictatorship on the proletariat, or by maneuvering with the proletariat, even making concessions to it and thus obtaining the possibility of a certain independence with respect to foreign capital."

This definition retains all its validity and gives us an explanation of Ovando's new course, his expropriating Gulf and his concessions to the workers movement.

From the moment these governments arose, a classical alignment of forces appeared. The nationalists and the reformists based themselves on these concessions in order to keep a better rein on the independent dynamic of the masses. For their part, the ultraleftists saw only the bourgeois character of these governments and dismissed the concessions as new tactical maneuvers for the benefit of imperialism. There are very few examples of correctly exploiting such contradictions in order to widen the breach for the revolutionary process. None of these examples, unfortunately, are to be found in Bolivia. The ELN held that opening up a new guerrilla foco was the only alternative. The idea did not occur to it of intervening in the unions that were legalized by Ovando or of organizing the mines from which the army had been withdrawn and linking itself up with the trade-union and military tradition of the workers of the Altiplano. And this attitude favored the bureaucracy and the ever-present reformists, who regained their control of the workers' organizations without any revolutionary party trying to develop an antibureaucratic proletarian opposition.

The Bolivian situation seems as determined to offer opportunities to revolutionists as the latter are to waste them. The rise of Torres deepened the process that started under Ovando. Contrary to all the guerrillist theories and predictions, the Miranda coup widened the split between the bourgeoisie and imperialism and this was reflected in the army. Moreover, this split produced an event that the revolutionists in the mountains and in the cities had not predicted and did not understand, or else were too late in explaining. A semi-insurrection of the workers and popular strata took place, lifting Torres to power on its back. In a document published in December 1970, the *compañeros* of the González POR correctly noted the existence of this crisis and of a power vacuum, the revolutionists being absent from the process:

"In October, the conflict among the military chiefs split the repressive forces of the army. For two days there was a power vacuum; the Palacio de Gobierno and the ministries were abandoned. That was the moment to join the masses in the streets, to defeat the *Mirandistas* in action and struggle. Even if we had not taken power, the workers' movement and the revolution would have gained considerable ground, and, if the Torres government had still emerged, it would be a prisoner of the masses today."

That is exactly what I maintain, with the addition that I include the POR *Combatiente* itself among the defaulters.

Despite this lost opportunity, the revolutionary process continued to deepen during the Torres regime. Faced with the rise of the masses, this regime adopted a Kerensky-like form and remained suspended in a void between the workers' movement and the reactionary forces. In this revolutionary situation, the reformists and nationalists

hoped vainly that the government would stabilize in a "third position." When all these varieties of Mensheviks accuse the revolutionists of "pressuring" Torres, they are in error. The revolutionists continued on their old path without utilizing the independent organization of the workers to mobilize them behind a program leading toward an insurrection. The Lora group also—which conducted a propaganda campaign presenting the Popular Assembly as an organ of dual power but acted within it as if it were a new forum for theoretical discussion—did not have a policy for mobilizing the masses.

In reality, the Popular Assembly could have been the vehicle for developing dual power and deserved all possible support. But in this the revolutionists would have had to start from a correct definition of the assembly, characterizing it as an embryo of dual power, on the basis of which they should have formulated a plan of activity and projected it to the rank-and-file workers at factory and mine level. This was the way to make the assembly a real organ of dual power. Such a policy could not be expected from the bureaucracy, but the revolutionists did not project one either. Although the ELN shifted the axis of its activity to the cities, considering itself the military arm of the workers, it did not intervene in the mass ferment. Its activity also was essentially propagandistic in nature, sometimes having dubious results, as when it planted a bomb in the antenna mast of the La Paz radio station in July 1971, which cost the life of the policeman who tried to defuse it.

The González POR, which had noted the existence of a power vacuum for two days in October, considered this fact episodic, since it continued to believe that the conflicts in the military were of a secondary nature. Thus, it did not propose a struggle against the reactionary coup as the central point of its transitional program. Its call for a Workers' and People's Revolutionary Army was a belated, hasty, and imprecise rectification of its previous line of rural guerrilla warfare.

The vacillations of Torres and the capitulations of the bureaucracy and the reformists were complemented by the lack of a correct revolutionary policy, resulting in a relative demoralization of the masses and in closing the ranks of the reactionaries. At this juncture, Banzer was able to triumph without touching off a mass mobilization of the workers. Resistance was left in the hands of the vanguard workers and students, who were quickly savagely crushed.

The fact that the bourgeois sectors, the well-off petty-bourgeois, and the imperialists were forced to unite in one reactionary bloc testifies indirectly to the power of the Bolivian workers' movement. This power must not be wasted again. The revolutionists must divest themselves once and for all of their petty-bourgeois illusions. They must dedicate themselves firmly to studying the reality of Bolivia so as to build up a correct strategy. The same thing must be done all over the continent.

RURAL GUERRILLA WARFARE VS. INSURRECTION

The document "The Ovando Government and the Bolivian Situation," published by the POR González in November 1969, serves to illustrate the common error of the supporters of the guerrilla warfare thesis, who believe that there are no possibilities today for insurrection. This is

the same error Che made in his generalizations. From a methodological point of view, it is equivalent to the mistake of the "insurrectionalists" who think that insurrection is the only solution at all times and in all places.

I think that the correct method for approaching the discussion is the Marxist one. Lenin pointed out that guerrilla warfare is one form of struggle among others and that in order to know which one is best for a given moment you have to make a serious study of the reality.

"It [Marxism] recognizes the most varied forms of struggle; and it does not 'concoct' them, but only generalises, organises, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle of the revolutionary classes which arise of themselves in the course of the movement. . . . Marxism, therefore, positively does not reject any form of struggle. Under no circumstances does Marxism confine itself to the forms of struggle possible and in existence at the given moment only, recognising as it does that new forms of struggle, unknown to the participants of the given period, *inevitably* arise as the given social situation changes. In this respect Marxism *learns*, if we may so express it, from mass practice, and makes no claim whatever to *teach* the masses forms of struggle invented by 'systematisers' in the seclusion of their studies." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 11, pp. 213-14.)

Thus, "in principle," no revolutionary party can be opposed to utilizing rural guerrilla warfare. But every party must be against elevating this form of struggle into a universal formula and thus disarming itself in face of changes in the situation. This, for example, is what Livio Maitan does:

". . . civil war will take manifold forms of armed struggle, in which the principal axis for a whole period will be rural guerrilla warfare, the term having primarily a geographical-political meaning and not necessarily implying an exclusively peasant composition of the fighting detachments (or even necessarily preponderantly peasant composition). In this sense, armed struggle in Latin America means fundamentally guerrilla warfare."

Disarmed by this type of non-Marxist schemata, the Bolivian revolutionists were unable to prepare the armed struggle required by the emergency. The guerrillists of the Altiplano committed the same error a union leadership in a factory might commit if it maintained that downing tools was the only form of struggle. Such a leadership would find itself completely disarmed in the face of shifts in the class struggle. Workers, on the other hand, understand the ABCs of class struggle and it would never occur them to "marry" one form of struggle, or decide to adopt certain measures "for a whole period." The workers know that, depending on the government, the strength of the bosses, the climate in the factory, the enthusiasm of the *compañeros*, they may have to resort to slowdowns, one-hour strikes, indefinite strikes by the workers in one factory or union, sit-ins which may or may not include the taking of hostages, or a general strike by the workers' movement as a whole. Wearing guerrillist eye-glasses and denying the possibility of insurrection—on the basis that brutal repression would make the "classical" variant unlikely—the Bolivian revolutionists could not readjust to the changes in the situation, changes that required altering the methods to be applied generally and in the armed struggle.

When the González POR pointed out, very honestly, that there was a power vacuum in October, which the reformist currents left unfilled, it failed to explain why the revolutionary groups could not step forward as an alternative leadership. The answer, as I have tried to show, is that the revolutionists were prevented from filling this vacuum by their guerrillist conception which was completely false and totally divorced from the situation in the country at that stage. Despite the fact that for two years—two years!—there were increasing opportunities for legal work by the proletarian and popular movement, heroic compañeros sacrificed themselves in isolation. They were following methods invented by "systematisers" in the seclusion of their studies, and thus they let slip an opportunity for organizing a mass revolutionary party in Bolivia. These lost years are sufficient, I hope, to dispel the schemas floating around about "growing repression," the "impossibility of using legal methods," or the formula that the Trotskyist theoretician Ernest Mandel, who commits the same error, put forward in the February 1971 issue of *Cuarta Internacional*:

"But we must avoid any illusions about a return to constitutional systems of classical bourgeois parliamentary democracy, about any return to a climate in which the mass movement could organize and broaden, gradually, progressively, and legally. This does not correspond to the intentions or the possibilities of the military reformist regimes, or to the interests of the 'new oligarchy' that supports them."

For two years the revolutionists fell into the opposite error to the one Mandel warns against. The fact is that the events more closely resembled the classical model of Russia than the guerrillist schema, with the decisive difference that there was no Bolshevik party to offer a perspective for insurrection.

Decomposition of the bourgeoisie and the army; a highly concentrated and militant proletariat in the midst of a population composed in its majority of peasants; a general rehearsal for revolution in 1952, a date similar to 1905 on the Soviet calendar; a Kerensky-type government like the Torres regime; and an embryonic soviet, the Popular Assembly—all these factors demonstrate that there is nothing forced about making a historical analogy with the Russian revolution. What was lacking, I stress, was the subjective factor of a party, which even while being a minority—as the Bolsheviks were a minority in February 1917 with respect to the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks—could exploit the tremendous objective conditions for insurrection.

Work in the Army

The Bolivian defeat is a resounding refutation of the proposals of reformists and pacifists of every stripe. As we have seen, it is a painful warning to all revolutionists to cast off their schematic notions and to study the methods that should be applied both generally and in the armed struggle. And finally this defeat was a demonstration of the complete validity for the Latin-American countries of the revolutionary model exemplified in its highest form by the Russian revolution. This leads us to a polemic that took place in Bolivia and proved to be as false and abstract as the counterposition of "guerrilla warfare" and

"insurrection." I am referring to the dispute between the supporters of "prolonged war" and "insurrectionary spontanéism."

The champions of prolonged war did not realize that this war has been going on for a long time, since the beginning of the class struggle. In Bolivia, for example, with dynamite, with their fists, with their strikes, their demonstrations, and by building and defending their organizations, the masses have been waging a prolonged war with distinctive characteristics of its own. And this is not simply a debater's turn of phrase. Only an elitist conception could impel a small group to think that such a war would begin when they established their first "foco" or carried off their first action. This elitist conception blinds them to the great upsurges and battles going on, shaking countries and the whole continent, in which the masses are doing the fighting as in the case of Bolivia in October.

The guerrillist compañeros are right on one point, however, in their rejection of the spontanéist notion of insurrection.

The Lora group, which supports the insurrectionary perspective, has justified its lack of a program and a policy for preparing an insurrection with various arguments. I do not doubt the honesty of the compañeros, but I think that this failure has led them to a spontanéist conception of insurrection, which the guerrillist compañeros are correct to criticize.

Spontaneous insurrections end up by turning over power to the bourgeoisie. The February revolution in Russia, which according to Trotsky was "spontaneous" because the masses went beyond the expectations of the party leadership, led, temporarily, to the Kerensky government. A much more graphic example is the April revolution in Bolivia, which the masses carried through without leadership. It led to the government of Paz Estanssoro, who managed to block the process.

On the other hand, the October insurrection planned and led by Lenin and Trotsky ended by installing the first socialist government. In order to achieve this, the Bolshevik Party did not limit itself to propaganda on the need for an armed insurrection but formulated a program and a policy for carrying out the uprising based on the mass organizations. In this program and policy, work in the army was decisive. Just as they raised slogans and developed activity aimed at the workers and peasants, they carried out the same kind of campaign among the soldiers and noncommissioned officers. The Bolshevik Party was the champion of the struggle against punishments and the death penalty in the army. The Czarists and the bourgeoisie were using this means against deserters and revolutionary activists who were stepping up their propaganda against the war. They supported the right of soldiers to elect their own officers in companies and regiments, and they projected a whole transitional program whose logical conclusion was incorporating the soldiers' delegates into the workers' and peasants' soviets. Without this specific work, the seizure of power would have been much more difficult.

This activity which, strictly speaking, is the conscious preparation for arming the people and for the uprising was completely ignored by the propagandists of insurrection. Unfortunately, it was also neglected by the guerrillists, who saw working in the army only as another stage and another front in their "prolonged war." The

fact is that these *compañeros* do not understand that the "classical" model of revolution has nothing to do with any illusions about a legal, peaceful course culminating spontaneously in a brief and final insurrectionary explosion. In Russia, there was a long campaign of preparatory work, a conscious campaign of preparing for the insurrection, which included disorganizing the ranks of the army and was followed by almost three years of civil war.

During my visit to La Paz, I asked the *compañeros* of the Lora POR why they had not stepped up their work in the army and demanded the inclusion of soldiers and noncommissioned officers in the Popular Assembly. I was given various answers. The slogans had to be tailored to fit each specific moment. Soldiers did not have to join the Popular Assembly as such, because the army was made up of workers, peasants, and students. Members of the armed forces could join through the proper channels. I was told this a few days before the counterrevolutionary coup! This kind of answer sums up the reason why the Loristas could not present themselves as an alternative leadership.

The same criticism applies even more acutely to the ELN and other groups that neither contemplated doing anything nor did anything in the army. Since they did not participate in the organizations and struggles of the masses and did not project any program or activity specifically aimed at soldiers and noncommissioned officers, their calls for creating a guerrilla force first and a revolutionary army later had a purely propagandistic character and were condemned to failure. These appeals could have an impact and win the passive support of the workers, but they could never put the revolutionary groups in the leadership of the masses. Because of this, they could not mobilize the masses against the coup. Because of this, Banzer triumphed.

ONCE AGAIN — THE PARTY

The heart of the Bolivian question is the lack of a revolutionary party. All the heroism of the militants who fell in the jungles and in the streets was not sufficient to create a correct policy. The members of the ELN, the Lora POR, and the POR *Combatiente*, as well as the pro-Chinese group of Zamora participated heroically in the struggle against the reactionary coup. But they did not have a correct policy. A group of *compañeros*

who are prepared to die does not make a party.

In Bolivia, the masses and the worker and student vanguard have shown an abundance of courage. What is lacking is a revolutionary party which, through studying the situation, could find the proper program and form of armed struggle. The need was not to provide more members, better equipment, or better logistical support to a guerrilla force or revolutionary army, but to have a party with iron discipline move into the insurrectional opening that was forming and that was lost.

A defensive phase has now opened with widespread persecution of activists. However, the government has acted very cautiously in its dealings with the workers' movement and the trade-union organizations. Moreover, the instability of the reactionary coalition cannot be covered up. The united front of the mine-owning capitalists and the bourgeoisie in Santa Cruz, whose interests are expressed respectively by the MNR and the Falange Socialista, is a precarious one. Now that the threat of the workers' and popular movement—which was all that united them—has vanished for the moment from the picture, the conflicts between these elements themselves and between them and imperialism are going to steadily increase. Moreover, this defensive phase takes place within the context of an upsurge in the struggle on a continental scale, which will help the Bolivian masses recover from their defeat.

It is the duty of fraternal revolutionary left organizations to prepare for this by assimilating the living experience of the Bolivian events. Let us throw out all schemas divorced from reality! Armed struggle, yes, but rooted in the tradition, the experiences, the organization, and the situation of the workers! Revolutionists must adjust themselves to the needs of this stage and offer leadership in the task of recovering. Concerned over all the ultraleft errors committed in Bolivia and Latin America, errors that are delaying the deepening of the revolutionary process, I would like to end by repeating the appeal Nahuel Moreno made to young revolutionists in his "Two Methods in Face of the Latin-American Revolution":

"Let all revolutionists in each country unite in a single party in order to adopt a revolutionary program that will enable us to work within the workers' organizations. From this position we must organize taking power with the methods of armed struggle appropriate to the level of development and consciousness of the mass movement in the country concerned."