

# Nahuel Moreno

## Revolutions of the XX Century



# Nahuel Moreno

## Revolutions of the XX Century

**First Spanish Edition:** Cuaderno de Formación No.3, Editorial Antídoto, Buenos Aires, 1986

**First English Internet Edition:** Ediciones El Socialista, Buenos Aires, 2014

**English Translation:** Daniel Iglesias

**Cover Design:** Daniel Iglesias

**Interior Design:** Daniel Iglesias

**Cover photos,** clockwise from top left:

February 1917 Russian revolution;

Peasants and workers militias, Bolivia 1952;

Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, Mexico 1916;

Woman with Uzi machine gun, Teheran, 1979.

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

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

Ediciones  *El Socialista*

# Index

<b>Presentation.....</b>	<b>1</b>
--------------------------	----------

## **Revolutions of the XX Century**

### **Chapter 1**

<b>State, Regime and Government .....</b>	<b>2</b>
---	----------

The birth of the state .....	2
The different states .....	3
The workers or transitional state .....	4
The political regimes.....	4
The governments.....	5
The Argentinian example.....	5

### **Chapter 2**

<b>Reform and Revolution .....</b>	<b>6</b>
------------------------------------	----------

Changes in the State and in society.....	7
The changes in the regime.....	8
Counter-revolution and reaction.....	10

### **Chapter 3**

<b>The epochs and stages of the class struggle .....</b>	<b>11</b>
--	-----------

The great revolutionary epochs .....	12
The stages of the socialist revolution .....	13
Stages and global and national situations.....	14

### **Chapter 4**

<b>The great bourgeois-democratic revolutions .....</b>	<b>15</b>
---	-----------

The revolution against the feudal state.....	15
The anti-feudal and of national independence revolution .....	15
Bismarkism .....	16

### **Chapter 5**

<b>The epoch of reforms and reactions .....</b>	<b>17</b>
---	-----------

### **Chapter 6**

<b>The epoch of the international socialist revolution .....</b>	<b>18</b>
--	-----------

The Russian revolution .....	18
The other aborted revolutions .....	21
The Spanish Revolution.....	21
Summary .....	21

### **Chapter 7**

<b>The Leninist regime.....</b>	<b>22</b>
---------------------------------	-----------

Four fundamental characteristics.....	22
---------------------------------------	----

### **Chapter 8**

<b>The counter-revolution: the new regimes .....</b>	<b>24</b>
--	-----------

The struggle against imperialist bourgeois counter-revolution.....	24
The Stalinist counter-revolution and the political revolution against it .....	25

**Chapter 9**

**The socialist revolutions frozen at the expropriation of the bourgeoisie .....27**

The revolutionary wars ..... 27  
Revolutionary War before taking power..... 28  
The army-party takes power ..... 29

**Chapter 10**

**The aborted revolutions .....32**

Workers and peasant guerrilla regimes which rebuilt the bourgeois state ..... 32  
The guerrilla triumphs that reconstructed the bourgeois state: the bourgeois Stalinist regimes..... 33  
Revolutions similar to February ..... 33

**Chapter 11**

**The Stalinist regimes and the political revolution.....35**

The contemporary workers regimes..... 35  
The counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism..... 37  
The political revolution against the bureaucratic regime ..... 37

**Chapter 12**

**The different situations.....38**

The non-revolutionary situation ..... 38  
The October revolutionary situation ..... 38  
The new counter-revolutionary situations ..... 39  
The new revolutionary situations of the post-war..... 40

**Has the Brazilian revolution begun?**

**Letter from Nahuel Moreno to the leadership of Alicerce .....42**

Has a revolutionary crisis opened since the mobilization of Rio? ..... 42  
The different situations ..... 43  
Revolutionary situation and revolutionary crisis ..... 44  
The revolution began in Rio de Janeiro ..... 44  
A scheme instead of reality ..... 45  
The fetishism of the general strike ..... 46  
The defeat of government and the triumph of the masses in parliament..... 46  
Let us not put dates for the revolutions for now ..... 47  
The immediate perspectives ..... 47  
The slogans and the program ..... 48  
The masses level of consciousness..... 50

**Appendix**

**Lenin (1915) .....51**

**Lenin (1920) .....52**

**Trotsky (1931) .....52**

**Trotsky (1940) .....54**

# Presentation

The paper we are publishing under the title *Revolutions of the XX Century* was a quick summary prepared on the run by Nahuel Moreno in January 1984, for the study and discussion of the party's cadre schools. Many of the issues raised there are still under research and discussion, and hence we want to highlight the nature of summary and draft this paper.

To advance in the study and discussion of the process of the Brazilian revolution we are publishing a letter from Nahuel Moreno to the leadership of Alicerce, written shortly after the mass demonstrations of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro which caused the fall of the military dictatorship.

About the revolutionary situation, we want to help the discussion by publishing some key quotes by Lenin and Trotsky.

**The Editors, Buenos Aires, 1986**

# Revolutions of the XX Century

## Chapter 1

### State, Regime and Government

The precise definitions of state, political regimes and governments are critical to the revolutionary Marxist party, because this is the terrain of political action. The party wants to achieve a world society without classes or exploitation, so that humanity progresses, with abundance for all, without wars and the achievement of full freedom. To achieve this, the party fights to expropriate imperialism and the multinationals, to end with national boundaries and to conquer a planned world economy at the service of the needs and the development of the human species.

But the party does not act directly on the productive forces; nor does it develop new tools, techniques and branches of production. Neither can it act directly on the social structure; it does not expropriate the capitalist class on its own. The party acts in politics, in the superstructure. It strives to take the government and from there to destroy the capitalist state. That is, the party wants to destroy the institutions of bourgeois government. It wants the working class to assume political power and implement its democratic institutions. It wants to build in each country where the revolution triumphs a strong workers state, to help the revolution succeed in other countries. From the government of the workers state it wants to plan the economy, federating with other workers states to advance the productive forces. From this workers state the party wants to revolutionize the social system, eliminating the bourgeois ownership of the means of production at national level, and put it at the service of this task at global level. And only after having liquidated the resistance of the capitalist class in the world, these workers states or federations of workers states will begin to disappear, and with them, so will the state and the party. Until then, the problems of the state, the regimes and governments are key policy issues of international and national revolutionary Marxist parties, because it is in this arena where the political action of the revolutionary party is concentrated, and that of its enemies, the bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and bureaucratic parties.

#### The birth of the state

Up until the Russian Revolution, the state had been the instrument of political domination by the exploiters over the exploited. It is not, as we are taught in school, neutral, impartial, protector of the whole society. The state defends the class or sector which exploits the rest of society. Therefore, the most important element, the fundamental one, of any state is the armed forces. Without them, no exploiting class, which is always a minority, could impose its will on the exploited classes or castes, who are always the majority.

When society was not divided into exploiters and exploited, there was no state. In hunter-gatherer society and in barbarism there was a division of labour for functions or needs not directly productive. Shamans managed the beliefs. The caciques or chieftains directed the wars. There were also specific organizations, for example those of youth or adolescents. In hunter-gatherer society these functions and this division of labour were more fluid, while in barbarism, after overcoming the nomadic stage and

settling in villages, they became more solid and permanent. But in no case did they form institutions of a state. Neither was it a division of labour within the tribe to bring economic privileges, nor was it permanent. It didn't happen that some were devoted exclusively and forever to work and others to lead. They all worked and all could lead. It was a natural division of labour, determined by individual ability. The best warrior was the chief, but he didn't stop working due to this. And this chief was appointed by a meeting of the tribe, which in turn could replace him at any time. The chief had no monopoly of weapons; all the men of the tribe carried their spears to the assemblies.

In this society *there was no exploitation*, that is, the tribe was not divided into a majority who worked and a minority who did not, and yet it got along best. *Yes, there was oppression*. Adults oppressed young and children, who did work the hardest. But these, growing up, worked much less and oppressed the new youth and children. It is oppression and not exploitation precisely for this reason: when they group up they get released. Also, in many cases, men oppressed women and a natural division of labour occurred: women raised children and men warred and hunted. So women never had arms. But there were no castes, much less classes. *That is, there was no tribe sector that would not work and a sector that did. For this reason, there was no state.*

The state appeared six or eight thousand years ago, in Asian society. In any society whose fundamental mode of production is irrigation, water administrators and their armed minions appear. If it is too small, there will be an administrator assisted by two warriors. If it is very large, we will see an enormous apparatus of thousands and thousands of specialized officers or bureaucrats. But in all cases, they have a defining feature: the weapons are not in the hands of the whole society, but of the state. And the decisions are not made by any assembly of the population, but the state.

This is, first and foremost, *the organization adopted by a caste that emerged for the first time in the Asian regime, specializing in the management, control and direction of social life: the bureaucracy*. Groups of men emerge who monopolize the tasks previously handled democratically by the tribe. In tribal life justice was administered, there was teaching and warring by all. The weapons were of all. From the emergence of the state and Asian society, castes do these tasks. *These organized castes are the bureaucracies with their organizations, institutions.*

In general terms, these institutions and bureaucracies have remained nearly the same throughout history. The bureaucracy that controls and manages the faith of the people is made up of priests organized in the Church. Administering education are the teachers and professors; its institutions are schools, colleges and universities. Bureaucrats who defend the State from foreign attacks are the military organized in armies. Those who manage internal repression are the agents and officers, whose institution is the police. Those administering justice are the judges and their clerks. Finally, there are those who administer the State itself, collecting taxes and doing all the tasks necessary to run the government apparatus.

In *slaveholding* society, at the appearance of social classes, the state takes its present character, as defined by Marx: *the instrument for the exploiting class to impose its dictatorship to the exploited classes*. It is still an apparatus consisting of institutions which organize different bureaucracies according to the role they fulfil. But this is already a class state, the tool of a social class to preserve the property relations and production, i.e. the structure of classes given.

## The different states

The state cannot be defined by the development of the productive forces. If we talk about these, we may refer to the "Mediterranean world" (slavery), to the "subsistence economy" (feudalism), the "mechanization and large-scale industry" (capitalism). But these terms are useless to define the state.

Neither can it be defined by the existing or predominant relations of production, although they express it much more directly than the development of the productive forces. Capitalism has been the dominant form of production for 400 years, but for centuries the states remained feudal, with more or fewer adaptations, because the power was in the hands of the nobility, who defended their property and privileges threatened by the bourgeoisie.

*The state is defined, then, by the caste or the class that uses it to exploit and oppress other classes and sectors.* To date there have been five types of state:

1) The Asian state, which defended the bureaucratic caste with its pharaohs, and oppressed the farmers.

2) The slaveholding state, which defended the slave owners and oppressed the slaves.

- 3) The feudal state, which defended the feudal lords and the Church property, and oppressed the serfs.
- 4) The bourgeois state, which defends the capitalists and oppresses the workers.
- 5) The workers state, non-capitalist or transitional.

## **The workers or transitional state**

This last state, which is born from the Russian Revolution of October 1917, is the first state that does not serve the dominant exploiting class in today's world, the bourgeoisie. It is temporary, transitional; it either moves towards world socialism and achieves the disappearance of the state, or once again regresses back to capitalism.

The workers state will continue existing as long as bourgeoisie exists somewhere on the planet. But once socialism triumphs in the world, once social classes are disappearing and with them, exploitation, then armed forces, police, judges, and government are not going to be needed. This is to say, it will not be necessary for the state to survive, because it will be the people as a whole that will fulfil all the tasks of administration, management, and conduct of the society, as for millions of years the primitive tribes did.

The different types of state

In the same society, there are sectors of the dominant classes or castes that monopolize the state for a time, and then are displaced by other sectors. The most significant example of this phenomenon is the current dominance of the big capitalist monopolies, which displaced the non-monopoly bourgeoisie of the last century. Both the state of the XIX century and the XX century are capitalist states, but at the same time they express different sectors of the bourgeoisie.

That is to say, we classify the types of state by the class sectors which dominate at a certain time. This classification has to do with social sectors, not the governing institutions. For example, in a bourgeois monarchy, during a stage, the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie of free competition can dominate the state, and in another stage, the monopoly bourgeoisie. Or other different combinations can occur.

Unfortunately, the same thing has started to happen with the workers states: there are different types according to the sectors that control them. If it is the majority of the working class through its democratic organizations, it is a workers state. But if it is controlled by the bureaucracy, imposing a totalitarian state, it is a bureaucratized workers state.

## **The political regimes**

The definition of the character of the state only serves to start studying the phenomenon. It only answers the question: What class or class sectors have political power? The political regime is another category which answers another question: *Through what institutions does that particular class rule in a given period or stage?*

This is because the state is a complex of institutions, but the ruling class does not always use them the same way to govern. *The political regime is the different combination or articulation of state institutions used by the ruling class (or a section of it) to rule.* Specifically, to define a political system we must answer the questions: Which is the fundamental institution of government? How are the other state institutions articulated within it?

The five types of state that we have listed have gone, in turn, through different political regimes.

The slaveholding state, in Rome, changed three times its workings. First it is a monarchy, with its kings. Afterwards it is a republic, and finally an empire. But it always remains a slaveholding state. The King and the Emperor defend the social structure; the owners of the slaves remain slaveholders. The republic as well, although there is no unipersonal authority, this role is played by the Senate because only the slave owners vote on it, never the slaves.

The bourgeois state has given rise to many political regimes: absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, federal and unitary republics, republics with a single chamber or two (one of deputies and one very reactionary of senators), Bonapartist dictatorships, fascist dictatorships, etc. In some cases they are regimes with extensive bourgeois democracy, which allow workers to have their legal parties with parliamentary representation. In other cases they are the opposite; there is no freedom of any kind, not

even for the bourgeois parties. But through all these regimes, the state remains bourgeois, because the bourgeoisie remains in power, using the state to continue to exploit the workers.

### The governments

Governments, however, are flesh and blood men who, at some point, are at the head of the state and political regime. This category answers the question: *Who rules?*

It's not the same as regime, because many governments can change without changing the regime, if institutions remain the same.

In the United States, for example, for two centuries there has been a bourgeois democratic regime, with its president and parliament elected by voting, and its Judiciary. The Republican and the Democratic Parties alternate in government. In recent years we had the Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan governments. We can call them that because, in the complex of institutions that constitute the Yankee bourgeois democracy, the strongest is the presidency. Through all these governments, the regime did not change; it remained a presidential bourgeois democracy.

We must not confuse the different regimes with the different types of state. The state is defined, as we have seen, by the classes or class sectors that dominate it; the regimes, by the institutions.

Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union had very similar regimes: one-party government, without the slightest democratic freedom and a fierce repression. But their state types are diametrically opposed: the Nazi is the state of the most reactionary and warmongering monopolies; the USSR is a bureaucratized, non-capitalist workers state.

The same applies to monarchies: there are Asian, slave, feudal and capitalist. As things stand, there are familiar governments also in the workers states: the Castros in Cuba, the Maos in China, the Titos in Yugoslavia, the Ceausescus in Romania, the father with his daughter in Bulgaria... Will we see workers monarchies?

This does not deny that sometimes there is some coincidence, more or less generalized, between a type of state and the regime. Every bureaucratized workers state tends to be totalitarian. The states of the big monopolies also tend towards totalitarianism, which can only be imposed when they defeat the working class with methods of civil war.

### The Argentinian example

In Argentina, the Process<sup>1</sup> had three governments. We could call them Videla, Viola and Galtieri, but it would be more correct to say they were the governments of Videla–Massera–Agosti, Viola–Lambruschini–Graffigna and Galtieri–Anaya–Lami Dozo-. Because the fundamental institution of the regime, i.e. the Process, was not the president but the Junta of commanders in-chief. But it was always the same regime with the same government institutions (Legislative Advisory Committee, President), articulated around the central institution, which was the Junta.

In short, *state is who rules, which social class has power. The regime is how that class rules in a given regime, through which institutions, articulated in what way. The government is who exercises power in a given system; which persons, groups of persons or parties are the head, the decision makers in the institutions of the regime and the state.*

---

<sup>1</sup> The **National Reorganization Process** (Spanish: *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*, often simply *el Proceso*, “the Process”) was the name used by its leaders for the military dictatorship that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983. **[Translators Note]**

## Chapter 2

# Reform and Revolution

We have been asserting that in Argentina, as in Bolivia and Peru, there has been a revolution. We have had objections that this is not so, with different arguments. Some argue that there is only a revolution when the mass movement destroys the armed forces of the state or of a regime, as it happened in Nicaragua. Others define that there is revolution when the character of the state changes, i.e., when power passes to another class, as it happened in Russia in October 1917. Finally, there are those who say revolution occurs when there is expropriation of the ruling class, as happened, for example, in Cuba, more than one year after Castro's triumph.

These are three different conceptions of what a revolution is. Logically, we agree that these three phenomena must be called revolution. Of course, we also accept that none of these three events occurred in Argentina, Bolivia or Peru: the armed forces of the bourgeoisie were not destroyed, nor did the character of the state change—which remains bourgeois—, nor the bourgeoisie and imperialism were expropriated.

But the changes that have taken place in Argentina, Bolivia and Peru have been so spectacular that the theory should explain and define them. Without making a discussion about words, it is essential to define theoretically what happened in these countries. To do this, we will begin by defining what is meant by “revolution”; we will point out how the changes occurred and what types of changes exist.

Reform and revolution are phenomena that occur in everything existing, at least in all living things. Reform, as its name implies, is to improve, adapt something so that it continues to exist. Revolution, however, is the end of the old and the emergence of something entirely new, different.

If we take as an example the development of aviation, we can see that it has gone through three revolutions. The first, when man begins to fly, with lighter than air artefacts: blimps. The second is when heavier than air machines planes with combustion engines were invented. The third revolution is the jet engine.

Why do we call “revolutions” to these three major developments? Because each one is substantially different from the previous one and it ends with it. The internal combustion engine aircraft ended with the blimp. Jet airplanes ended with combustion engine aircraft. A plane has nothing to do with a blimp and jet engine has nothing to do with an internal combustion engine.

However, between each of these revolutions, advances, improvements, i.e. reforms, take place. The blimp full of hot air which flew where the wind would take it and it would carry only three or four people, is improved up to reaching the large German “Zeppelins”. Full of lighter than air gases, with engines that allow them to fly wherever they want and capable of carrying hundreds of passengers. This was a reform. The single-engine biplane aircraft used in WWI could only carry one or two people and could fly a few hundred metres high and had little autonomy of flight; the last combustion engine aircraft were the huge four-engine bombers of World War II, flying thousands of metres in height, carrying tons of bombs and having great autonomy, or the “Super Constellation” carrying more than 100 passengers across the oceans. They were also a reform. Another reform is from the first German jet aircraft or the

Gloster Meteor used by the Yankees in the Korean War, small and at subsonic speeds, up to the present supersonic fighters, or the “Concorde”. These are all reforms because a Zeppelin was still a blimp, a Super Constellation a combustion engine plane and a Concorde a jet, although they were far superior to the first blimp, the single engine aircraft of WWI or Germany’s Messerschmitt jet planes in WWII.

Like any Marxist or scientific definition, revolution and reform are relative to the segment of reality under study, i.e. the object in relation to which we apply these categories. If instead of studying aeronautics we were studying transportation in general, everything changes. There are several revolutions. First of all the man walks, later he rides, i.e. uses the feet or legs; afterwards he invents the wheel, which is the biggest revolution made to date in transportation. Thanks to the wheel many terrestrial transports are developed: horse-drawn carts, trains, automobiles. Moreover, man navigates with different means: the boat, the ship, the transatlantic, driven by different energy sources. Finally, he flies.

If we consider the means by which man manages to transport, there are only four revolutions: land, sea, air and space. All other changes in relation to this classification are reforms: the wheel to the ground, canoes or ships for water, blimps and airplanes for air; rockets for space. But if we take, for example, ground transportation itself, all of these changes already mentioned are revolutions.

These categories of reform and revolution are also found in the historical social field. In order to use them correctly, we must never forget their relative character. ¿Revolution in relation to what? Reform in relation to what?

If we refer to the structure of society, to the social classes, the only revolution is the expropriation of the old ruling class by the revolutionary class. This expropriation totally changes society, because it makes the class that until yesterday dominated the production and distribution disappear, and this role is assumed by another class. Any other phenomenon is a reform.

If we are referring to the state, the only possible revolution is that a class destroys the state of another class, expels it from the same and take it in their hands building a different state. In our time that is the socialist or social revolution. Whatever happens with the regimes and governments are just reforms, while the class character of the state is not changed.

But we argue that the same law applies in relation to political regimes. Political regimes may have reforms and revolutions. That is, within the same state (e.g. the bourgeois state) there are changes in the political regime, which can occur in two ways: reformist or revolutionary. In relation to the state, it is still the same: they are all reforms, because the state is still bourgeois. But in relation to the regime it is not the same.

This problem is very important for the action, the policy and program of the revolutionary party. Because the party does not fight in the abstract against the bourgeois state. It fights against the state as it is at each time; i.e. it fights against the political regime, against the institutions of government that in each circumstance assume this state, and against the government headed by them.

## Changes in the State and in society

In general, we the revolutionary Marxists assert that the change in the character of the state and society, in this era of transition from capitalism to socialism, is only possible through revolutionary means.

This issue has split the Marxist movement, indeed, between reformists and revolutionaries.

The reformists argued that socialism could be reached gradually, without revolutions, conquering eight hours of work today, tomorrow universal suffrage, the day after tomorrow the legality of the workers parties and, finally, with the majority of these workers parties in parliament.

The revolutionaries, however, argued that to build socialism we had to defeat the bourgeoisie doing a revolution, i.e., taking away their power and getting the working class to assume it. They did not deny the existence of reforms. But they contended that all the gains achieved by the working class without defeating the bourgeoisie politically and socially, i.e. without taking power and expropriating it, would never lead us to socialism. This would not be achieved by this gradual, slow process, the sum of gains that reformists advocated. Moreover, if the social revolution was not done, it would relapse, the conquests gained would be lost.

Indeed, nationalizing a bank or a railway, imposing eight hours, bringing workers representatives to parliament, are reforms to the capitalist system. They serve to prepare the revolution, but do not change the regime, because the bourgeoisie continues to dominate the state and the economy. And if ever a revolutionary workers party overwhelmingly wins the elections, the armed forces of the bourgeois state

would prevent it from taking office or they would oust it in a few days, unless there is a workers socialist revolution that defeated them.

The first triumphant workers revolution, the Russian, showed us revolutionaries to be right. It was a revolution because it liquidated the capitalist state in the political arena and the bourgeoisie in the economic arena, expropriating and eliminating it as a social class. The reformists, however, never achieved socialism, although there were countries that for years were governed by these reformist workers parties that won the elections, as the Swedish or German social democracy.

For this reason, they also regressed in the reforms won by the working class, or they are regressing: lower wages, growing unemployment, social laws are lost, and so on.

There is, therefore, also reform in the state and society. The legalization of workers parties and trade unions by the bourgeois state is a reform, since it introduces in the superstructure elements of workers democracy. The same happens in the economic arena. The Bolsheviks, for example, conducted a financial revolution when they expropriated the bourgeoisie and nationalized companies. But in the countryside they accepted the distribution of land in ownership to peasants while preparing a plan to convince them of the benefits of the nationalization of the land. The process of transformation of the peasant from small owner to wage worker in state lands would be revolutionary in relation to the peasants who would go from petty-bourgeois to workers. But it is reformist in relation to the state's economy: before and after this fact the state is not capitalist but a worker, transitional state.

But what is indisputable is that the character of the state and society does not change if there is no social and economic revolution that destroys the bourgeois state, puts the proletariat in power and expropriates the bourgeoisie.

## The changes in the regime

We hold that in political regimes there are also revolutionary changes and reformist changes.

Comparing the Argentine, Bolivian or Peruvian with Brazil or Spain processes, there has been an exciting theoretical discussion.<sup>1</sup> Are they different or not? If they are the same, does this mean there was a revolution in the system of the five countries? Or was there not in any of them?

From a superficial point of view, in all of them something similar took place; the government regime changed, from dictatorial and totalitarian to relatively democratic. Under Franco, Videla, Garrastazu Medici and Garcia Meza there were no democratic freedoms and methods of physical repression were used to crush the workers and mass movement. Under King Juan Carlos, Geisel, Bignone, Siles Suazo and Belaunde Terry there were broad democratic and trade union rights, political parties and elections were run. However, we hold that Argentina, Bolivia and Peru are totally different from Brazil and Spain. In the first group there was a revolution and in the latter not. But in Spain and Brazil there were reforms, and so important that they changed the character of the regime.

Let us recall that this paper was written in January 1984. Shortly thereafter, in April 1984, a democratic revolutionary process defeated the military regime that had ruled in Brazil since 1964. The letter we include in this book briefly illustrates this situation. See pages xx-xx

*Firstly, the most visible difference between these two processes is that in Argentina, Bolivia and Peru there was a revolutionary crisis, and in Brazil and Spain there was not.* We have already noted that in Argentina, between the fall of Galtieri and the assumption of Bignone there was a period with virtually no government, no system, and no nothing. The president and the fundamental institution of the regime, the military junta, were no more. The same happened in Bolivia after the fall of Garcia Meza. Weeks passed before the parliament elected in 1980, self-called, would agree on who should be the government. In fact, until Siles assumed, there was none. It similarly happened in Peru when the Constituent Assembly, convened by the dictatorship itself in total crisis to try a more or less controlled exit, turned its back to the military and for a time no one knew what constitution was on or what new regime would lead the country.

In Brazil and Spain, by contrast, at no time did this revolutionary crisis, this institutional power vacuum, take place. There were, indeed, political crises, but the fundamental institutions of government never disappeared from the scene. *And if there is no revolutionary crisis, there can be no revolution.*

This is the first condition.

---

<sup>1</sup> Let us recall that this paper was written in January 1984. Shortly thereafter, in April 1984, a democratic revolutionary process defeated the military regime that had ruled in Brazil since 1964. The letter we include in this book briefly illustrates this situation. [See pages xx-xx.](#)

*The second condition for the regime to change through the revolutionary path is that the former regime disappears, that it does not control anything, and that afterwards it appears absolutely different. Reform, however, is a gradual process, in which the system undergoes major changes, but planned and dosed from power. Even different regimes arise. Obviously freedoms, the [Spanish] Cortes<sup>2</sup> or parliaments, the direct election of the authorities at provincial level, constitute a different regime to those of Franco or of Medici. The economic and political crisis and the pressure of a rising mass movement forced the regime to adapt, to reform itself to the point of enduring qualitative changes. But always keeping an element of continuity: Bonapartism. In Brazil nobody elects the president; or rather the military continue anointing him. And in Spain nobody chooses the king.*

In Argentina, unlike Brazil or Spain, the new regime is opposite to the previous one.

There is no such process of gradual and planned reforms by the old regime. Everyone knows that democratic openings in Brazil and Spain were thought out and prepared by the old regime, even before the economic and political crisis and the rise of the masses forced them to implement them. The military in Argentina had the same plan, and they still have it in Uruguay. But that plan did not work in our country. Unless someone thinks Videla, Massera and company planned and controlled that they themselves were going to be imprisoned, accused of murder and torture.

In Spain and Brazil, all steps are foreseeable until a revolution eliminates them. Instead, the Argentine bourgeois political parties neither foresaw that Galtieri would fall nor what would happen next. That is why, for several months, under Bignone, nobody knew what Constitution was going to prevail or how the elections were going to be. Nobody planned either that the masses were free to insult or paste posters on the street with impunity of the most important officers of the armed forces. Now let a Brazilian or Spanish revolutionary militant try insulting officers of the armed forces, and we will see what happens!

To further clarify what we are saying, let us look at it from the standpoint of our party program. In Brazil and Spain, the main political axis continues to be the fight against Bonapartism. Every revolutionary program must have as central slogans: Down with the king or military president! For the democratic republic! For the democratic right of the people to choose their government!

It is not so in Argentina. We will not be able to attack Alfonsín, Luder or whoever wins the elections for being a Bonapartist government or regime, not freely chosen by the people. To such an extent has the political, democratic revolution prevailed, that we will attack the regime and the government because they are capitalist and pro-imperialist. And we fight for the political and social revolution, the taking of power by the proletariat, for socialism.

This difference in the program shows the difference in reality. In Spain and in Brazil there was a dramatic reform which qualitatively changed the regime, making very important democratic concessions to the masses. No longer are they fascist or semi-fascist Bonapartism, but they retain their central Bonapartist institution. It is what we call "senile Bismarkism". There was no democratic revolution that destroyed this Bonapartist power. In Argentina, the power has already been revolutionized to the maximum possible extent in a country which has not yet done its socialist revolution, the only way to eliminate from the roots the powerful elements of Bonapartism and totalitarianism of all bourgeois regimes, even of that which is the product of a revolution that remains within the bourgeois margins.

A final discussion of this problem has to do with the fact that in Argentina, as in Peru and Bolivia the mass movement did not destroy the bourgeois armed forces, as it happened, for example, in Nicaragua. We already pointed out that this difference is crucial and that these are two different types of democratic revolutions. But we do not want to argue about words. It may be wrong, indeed, to call "revolution" to a phenomenon like the Argentinian, Peruvian or Bolivian. We may give it another name to differentiate it as long as we also say that is totally different from the reformist, gradual process of controlled bourgeois democratic concessions of Spain and Brazil. The bourgeois-democratic freedoms of present Argentina have been the result of the general crisis of the military regime and the bourgeoisie and the colossal rise of the mass movement. They were not concessions planned and controlled by the bourgeoisie and the military regime, but they were gains won by the action of the working masses, which gave rise to a new regime radically different, for that matter, to the previous one. This, we call democratic revolution. We follow in this Lenin who defined as democratic revolution the February Revolution of 1917 in Russia,

---

<sup>2</sup> The Spanish Cortes (Spanish: *Cortes Españolas*), was the name of the legislative institution during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco. [Translator's Note]

and Trotsky, who likewise characterized the Spanish Revolution of 1931 (which was the result of the crisis and an election and not of a confrontation on the streets of the masses against the government).

## **Counter-revolution and reaction**

*The process opposed to revolution is counter-revolution. The one opposed to reform is reaction.*

Counter-revolution and reaction are also found in the three fields: socio-economic, politico-social and political. Also counter-revolution and reaction are relative terms. There may be a political counter-revolution in the regime, which in relation to society and the state is not a counter-revolution but a reaction. For example, Stalinism did a political counter-revolution: it destroyed the October regime and implanted a counter-revolutionary regime. It even changed the type of state; from workers state to bureaucratized workers state. But with regard to the character of the state it was not a counter-revolution: the capitalist economy was not reinstated nor the bourgeoisie took power; the state remained a workers state. The change of the Soviet state as a product of Stalinist political counter-revolution is not counter-revolutionary but reactionary.

A social reaction in the economic field is, for example, the policy of the Chinese bureaucracy of attempting private property of small industries. In relation to the branches of industry being privatized it will be a counter-revolution, because they will cease to be state property to become private property. But with regard to the overall structure of society and the Chinese state, it is a reaction; it introduces regressive capitalist elements in a non-capitalist society. This does not mean it is a counter-revolution. It would be if it returned to private ownership the key levers of the Chinese economy, because it would abruptly and totally change the character of the society and with it the state: it would be a bourgeois, capitalist state.

Finally, there are also reaction and counter-revolution in relation to the regimes of the bourgeois state. If it changes to a fascist or Bonapartist regime which crushes the labour movement with methods of civil war, there was a counter-revolution. Examples: Pinochet, Videla, Hitler, Franco, etc. (Counter-revolution in relation to the political regime, not the state, which remains bourgeois, and it does not go back to feudalism or other regressive society. Regarding the bourgeois state, it is a reaction).

But if it is a regime that goes from democratic to one more totalitarian, repressive, but which does not crush the workers with methods of civil war, it is a reaction, not a counter-revolution. Example: Onganía ousted Illia and established the state of siege, but under both of them the justice system worked, and the state of siege was applied following the same Constitution.

This difference between counter-revolution and reaction is also evident in the institutional field. Under both Illia and Onganía the fundamental institution upon which the political regime was based was the armed forces. Illia rose by elections conditioned by the military, which outlawed the majority party, the Peronists. Onganía was placed in power by these same armed forces. It was a reactionary regime change.

Not so with Videla or Pinochet coup d'états. The latter annihilated the old bourgeois-democratic regime—with its parliament and its parties, which had decades of operation in Chile—, and established a new regime, opposed by the vertex to the previous: its fundamental institution is the Bonaparte Pinochet, who is supported by the armed forces. It was a counter-revolution.

These definitions allow us to correct a terminology mistake we made many times: talking about democratic counter-revolution. We have named thus the process in which the bourgeoisie tries to divert and curb the revolution deluding the masses with the mechanism of bourgeois democracy. It is true that their objective is counter-revolutionary, but it is not a counter-revolution, precisely because it does not radically change the regime. It attempts to stop the revolution through manoeuvres, using the democratic illusions of the masses, and eventually repressing them, but always within the bourgeois democratic legality. It does not destroy the bourgeois-democratic regime but rather it relies on it. Therefore, it is not a counter-revolution. Henceforth we will call bourgeois-democratic reaction.

## Chapter 3

# The epochs and stages of the class struggle

When do social revolutions take place? Why do these sudden, abrupt and violent, usually bloody, changes occur in the social classes and the state?

As we have seen, the fundamental law that moves the human species is the development of productive forces, i.e. the advancement of the human capacity to exploit nature more and better, through tools and technology, improving steadily the living conditions of mankind. In this progress, revolutions will also take place, based on the discovery or invention of tools and techniques that allow easier exploitation of raw materials provided by nature, and even that natural resources which were not raw material for production become such (e.g., uranium, which before the discoveries of physics and nuclear technology did not have any use to produce anything).

When this development of the productive forces reaches a certain point, it collides with the existing social structure (i.e. with the classes in which society is divided at that time and the relationships they have between them) and also with the superstructure of the society, with the state which is responsible for maintaining the class structure intact, without affecting the dominion of the exploiting class and the oppression of the exploited class. A good example is the development of capitalist production in the independent cities of feudal society. While production was limited, the feudal social structure did not prevent the development of capitalist production. But with the advancement of manufacturing, which made it possible to produce in a relatively large scale, the feudal structure became an obstacle to the further development of production. Those small units which consumed little, in which the feudal lord established a customs office to collect taxes from everyone who went to sell to his fiefdom, collided violently with this productive force. Therefore, national unity (a nation without internal customs, a large unimpeded market) was one of the major goals of capitalism. To achieve this, it had to destroy the feudal class. And for that, it had to destroy the feudal state, essentially the feudal armies, who were defending that class with weapons.

It also had to destroy the old oppressed class: the serfs. Capitalist production requires free workers who produce for a wage and will move to where the capitalists need them: if today they earn a lot of money making hats, workers need to make hats, but if tomorrow they make more money making carts, they need the workers to move to cart factories. A serf, tied to the land, who cannot leave it, is not useful to the production, neither is he useful as a buyer of it, i.e. to expand the market qualitatively. Hence, another major objective of the bourgeoisie has been the abolition of serfdom. But for that it had to liquidate the feudal lords and the state defending them.

That is, to make progress in capitalist production, which meant a tremendous revolutionary leap in the development of the productive forces in relation to the feudal production, the new progressive class (the bourgeoisie) had to destroy the classes and fundamental relations of feudalism and impose as a basis of society the new classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, with their new relationships. If this had not been achieved, the productive forces of humanity would have stopped, stalled, because they never

would have become big industry without a large domestic market and a huge mass of free workers who could be their labour.

When this collision takes place between the development of productive forces and the old social structure *a revolutionary epoch*, i.e., of great convulsions, opens for humanity. The new progressive classes struggle against the old exploiting class, which is no longer good for anything and curbs all development. These revolutionary epochs not always occur in history. There were societies like the ancient world or slavery that slowed the development of the productive forces but were not revolutionized by more advanced classes. In such cases the old social system decays, degenerates and the entire society regresses.

Between every great revolutionary epoch there are others that are not. While the class structure and its state superstructure allows the development of productive forces, although there are still contradictions, society lives *a non-revolutionary epoch*, of reformist balance.

Under the capitalist system, for example, there were tremendous leaps or revolutions in the productive forces. It went from hydraulic power to move machines, or wind to move ships, or horses to move carriages, to steam, electricity, the internal combustion engine. But these advances in the productive forces did not clash with the social structure and the capitalist state. On the contrary, capitalism incorporated them instantly and took them to their full development and implementation. It was the heyday of capitalist society, of harmony between the development of productive forces and the social structure and its state.

When entering a revolutionary epoch, the change begins, as a general law, in the superstructure, in the state. The new progressive class struggles to destroy the apparatus of power and government of the old class, which is already regressive. If it does not take power, it cannot change to the end and completely the previous social structure. If the bourgeoisie did not destroy first the feudal armies and the whole feudal state, it would not have been able to impose a national unity (the market) or release the serfs to serve as its workers.

Only after destroying the feudal state, seizing power and building their own state with its army, its government institutions and laws, could the bourgeoisie free the serfs, abolish internal customs, eliminate feudal landed property and turn it into capitalist landed property, etc. That is, only after conquering the superstructure, the state, the bourgeoisie was able to carry through on its goal of converting the entire society in a capitalist society.

## The great revolutionary epochs

Since the first modern revolutions, which were born in the struggle of capitalism against feudalism, we can distinguish three major periods:

1) *The epoch of the bourgeois revolution*. For about 200 years, the bourgeoisie fought against feudalism, which had already become an absolute obstacle to the development of the productive forces. This epoch, with a key milestone in the revolution of Cromwell in England, culminated in the great American and French revolutions of the late eighteenth century.

2) *The heyday of capitalism*. It became a non-revolutionary period in which the capitalist social structure and its state did not inhibit but rather rapidly developed the productive forces, enriching the whole of society.

From 1880 there took place the most fantastic leap (until then) of the productive forces. The development of production was colossal. In the advanced capitalist countries there was an immense accumulation of capital.

These boom times prepared the decay of the capitalist system. As a result of this tremendous accumulation of capital monopolies and imperialism emerged. Whole branches of industrial production were concentrated in very few owners who began to displace the classical bourgeoisie, with its hundreds of companies by branch competing freely between them. It became dominant the financial capital which is the merging of banking with industrial capital. National borders became too narrow for these huge monopolies, which took to export their capital to backward countries. Imperialism, or decaying capitalism, is precisely that: the domination of finance and monopoly capital, which pervades the entire planet.

3) *The epoch of the socialist workers revolution*. It begins with World War I (1914-1918). This cataclysm, in which millions of people died and huge masses of productive forces were destroyed, was the categorical manifestation that capitalism had begun to slow down the development of the productive forces.

The emergence of monopolies had already demonstrated, in a totally distorted way, that capitalist private property did not work anymore. The productive forces could not continue to grow due to the chaos caused by hundreds or thousands of bourgeois competing with each other on the same branch of production. To advance it was necessary to introduce some planning, at least for each productive branch. The export of capitals, meanwhile, showed that national borders also asphyxiated productive forces, which no longer advanced limited to their nation of origin and needed to be developed covering the entire planet.

The war of 1914-18 was a predatory war between the imperialist monopolies to control the world market. It was the clearest demonstration that humanity could go no farther, could not develop its productive forces, if it did not break the straitjacket of private property and national boundaries and established a planned global economy. But the bourgeoisie cannot do it because it would mean destroying itself, ending with what characterizes it as social class: owning the means of production and based on the existence of nations with well-defined borders and states.

This is the epoch of the socialist workers revolution because the war (which will become a permanent phenomenon) and the misery of the masses (caused by the brake on the development of the productive forces) make the new progressive class enter into revolutionary action: the working class, which carried out its first revolution in Russia in 1917. It comes into action the social class that can fulfil the two essential tasks for the productive forces to keep advancing: ending with private property and the national borders, in order to establish a planned global economy. This is because the working class is international; it is the same in all countries, and it cannot become a new propertied class which exploits others for one simple reason: together with the other exploited sectors is the vast majority of society. In both respects it is totally different to the classes that played once a revolutionary role. The bourgeoisie, for example, was a minority and exploiting class since birth. The socialist revolution is, for the first time in history, the revolution of the majority of the population, led by an international class, against capitalist exploitation and against all forms of exploitation. This is precisely why it can achieve the planned global economy.

We can say that after the French Revolution, at a global level, the capitalist state become dominant (and not the capitalist production, which had been predominant for 300 years).

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, and up to the present, we are, therefore, in the epoch of socialist, worker and international revolution against the capitalist social system and state.

## The stages of the socialist revolution

Every epoch has its stages. These are prolonged periods in which the balance of forces between the classes in struggle remains constant. The fact that we live a revolutionary epoch worldwide since 1917 does not mean that in these 66 years the proletariat has always been in a revolutionary offensive. As in any fight, there are periods when the enemy counterattacks and takes the offensive. In such case, there is a stage of bourgeois counter-revolutionary offensive or counterattack, within the epoch of socialist workers revolution.

Since the Russian Revolution we have gone through three major stages:

1) *The stage of the revolutionary offensive of the working class.* It begins with the Russian Revolution and extends with successive revolutions: the German, the Hungarian, the Chinese, the Turkish, etc. The only one that manages to triumph is the Russian.

2) *The stage of bourgeois counter-revolution.* It is insinuated with the first bourgeois counter-revolutionary triumph: Italian fascism; it is clearly consolidated with Hitler's victory in Germany, who crushes the most organized proletariat in the world, and culminates in the defeat of the Spanish Revolution and the military offensive of Nazism in the World War II, successful until 1943.

The flipside of this counter-revolutionary stage is the victory of the Stalinist bureaucratic counter-revolution in the USSR.

3) *The new revolutionary stage,* which begins with the defeat of the Nazi army in Stalingrad and which opened a period of successful revolutions that extends to the present. The first is the Yugoslav; it goes through its maximum expression with the Chinese revolution, and has had its last victory (in the sense that they expropriated the bourgeoisie and a workers state was built), until now, in Vietnam (1974).

We have called this stage as of the "imminent revolution" because, unlike the stage opened by the Russian Revolution which reduced its effects to some countries in Europe and the East, this revolution erupts, and sometimes succeeds, in any part of the globe: the colonial and semi-colonial countries (China,

Vietnam, Cuba, Iran, Angola, etc.), the imperialist countries themselves (even though only in the weakest, as in Portugal) and in the workers states (Hungary, Poland).

## **Stages and global and national situations**

As all terms or categories we Marxists use, epoch, stage and situation are relative to what we are defining. We have already seen that there was a counter-revolutionary stage within the revolutionary epoch at the global level. But the revolution is an international phenomenon which is embodied in national revolutions. This implies that there can be and there are contradictions between the stage that exists globally and the stages the different countries go through. For example, in this stage of imminent revolution we live worldwide since 1943, many countries experienced or are experiencing counter-revolutionary stages at the national level (Indonesia, the Southern Cone of Latin America, the USSR, etc.). Other countries remained in stages of little class struggle, of balance in the relationship of forces between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, i.e. non revolutionary stages (almost all imperialist countries and many semi-colonies). And others which we already mentioned are the ones that mark the dynamics, the sign of the stage; they went through revolutionary stages that either led to the triumph of the revolution, to be aborted or frozen, or to be defeated.

Likewise, within a stage different types of situations may take place. A revolutionary stage cannot cease to be so if the bourgeoisie does not inflict a hard defeat, in the struggle, on the streets, to the labour movement. But the bourgeoisie, if they have margins, can manoeuvre and convince the workers movement to stop fighting. Thus, a non-revolutionary situation would open, but it would still be a revolutionary stage because the workers movement was not defeated. Even more, the bourgeoisie can repress the labour movement without reaching the methods of civil war and inflict partial defeats that set it back, opening a reactionary situation, but that would still be within the revolutionary stage. For example, the government of Gil Robles, which took place in the middle of the Spanish revolution started in 1931, was a reactionary government that harshly repressed the proletariat and created a reactionary situation. But as the Spanish labour movement was not defeated as a whole, the stage remained revolutionary. The best proof of this is that a few years later the civil war broke out.

## Chapter 4

# The great bourgeois-democratic revolutions

We will begin with the great bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is the epoch when the bourgeoisie, oppressed by feudal states or by a colonial situation, uses the revolutionary popular mobilization against feudalism to impose their political dominance and adapt the state, its institutions and its laws to their already developed economic dominance. In this epoch we can distinguish two types of revolutions: the bourgeois-democratic revolution against the feudal state, the nobility and the landed church, and the bourgeois-democratic revolution of the colonies for independence from capitalists or semicapitalist empires.

### The revolution against the feudal state

The classical model of the first type of revolution is the French Revolution of 1789. The bourgeoisie relied on the mobilization of the people, overthrew the king, expropriated the nobility and landed clergy, introduced a new political system based in bourgeois democratic institutions— the Convention and the Paris Commune— and modelled the state to its service, eliminating differences in blood and establishing as basic principle of social organization capitalist private property.

The Jacobin Party led all this process, when the revolution reached its climax. It was the party of the radicalized petty bourgeoisie, who could not achieve a state in its image and likeness, that is, petty bourgeois, because who dominated the economy was the bourgeoisie. The working class was too weak to be an economical alternative — imposing nationalized economy under its leadership— or political alternative. Jacobin sectors became bourgeois by selling supplies to the army, thus weakening the petty bourgeois leadership. The latter was revolutionary while it faced the feudal counter-revolution, but it was reactionary as it applied terror to its Plebeian left, far more revolutionary than the Jacobins. These were overthrown by the bourgeoisie, which established a counter-revolutionary, dictatorial capitalist regime.

The bourgeois counter-revolution crushed the revolutionary people to establish a stable regime. This new regime was Bonapartism, a totalitarian regime in which an individual, Napoleon Bonaparte, was placed above the classes and sectors, arbitrating between them, relying on the state apparatus, mainly in the army. This regime is reactionary in relation to the revolution, but was progressive in relation to the epoch, since it faced the feudal counter-revolution, consolidating and trying to extend to the rest of Europe the bourgeois regime.

### The anti-feudal and of national independence revolution

Before the French Revolution, in North America occurred the second type of revolution that we pointed out: bourgeois-democratic and of national independence. In the United States, a great revolution defeated the English, capitalist, colonialist empire, and it won independence and established a bourgeois-

democratic regime, the first to fully happen in the history of mankind, though it carried within the tremendous contradiction of slavery. Put another way, the American Revolution freed the country from colonial rule, established a system of bourgeois-democratic freedoms of unknown extent, but did not free the slaves in the southern states.

Already this revolution, although it is directed and controlled by the American bourgeoisie, has anti-capitalist elements. The enemy that it faces is not a slave or feudal empire, but the most powerful capitalist power of the time: England. But it is not an anti-capitalist revolution, but a bourgeois revolution to throw off the oppression of another bourgeoisie and to be able to fully develop capitalism.

In the nineteenth century there were other European revolutions —such as the German and Italian— similar to the French, whose objective was to achieve national unity. Central and South American colonies went through a process similar to American; they faced a semicapitalist colonial empire—the Spanish— or a decadent empire —the Portuguese.

## Bismarckism

Throughout the nineteenth century bourgeois democratic revolutions continued to happen, as the German of 1848. But the bourgeoisie was increasingly less revolutionary. Fearful of popular mobilization, it tries to change the nature of society and the state in increasingly reformist ways.

It no longer leans on the mobilization of the people, but it pacts this transformation with the feudal classes. Thus in Germany a new regime is born: that of Bismarck. This regime, also with an individual arbitrator, makes agreements between the German bourgeoisie and the feudal princes, the “Junkers”. It grants concessions to either side, but always within a line to achieve a unified, capitalist Germany. It does not seek to physically and politically liquidate the nobility, as the French Revolution did, but rather to turn them into big capitalists. To curb some exaggerated impetus of bourgeois sectors, Bismarckism makes concessions and agreements even with the working class and its parties, which are used as a counterweight to those impulses. This is the fundamental difference with Bonapartism. While this is very totalitarian and makes no concessions to workers, Bismarckism is based precisely on helter skelter concessions to make a reformist transformation of society and the state.

It should be noted, finally, that this Bismarckist or reformist transition of a society and a feudal state to a society and a capitalist state can occur because both the nobles and the bourgeoisie are exploiting classes. A noble can become bourgeois losing some blood privileges, but he can get much wealthier as bourgeois than as a noble. Bismarck was in charge of peacefully convincing them of that. Reformism is not feasible, however, in the transition from capitalist to socialist society because it means the loss of all privileges and all the wealth for the bourgeoisie, which can in no way accept it peacefully.

## Chapter 5

# The epoch of reforms and reactions

Beginning in 1880, an epoch of impressive growth of the capitalist economy is opened. Monopolies, imperialism and finance capital arise. This great development enriches the bourgeoisie and the whole society. Although the bourgeoisie does not give away anything to the proletariat, this, through hard struggles, can fetch gains and substantial improvements: the eight-hour day, higher wages, legality for their parties and trade unions, etc. The proletariat is not faced with the dilemma of socialist revolution to avoid starvation. The bourgeoisie manages to avoid the outbreak of revolutionary struggles, appeasing workers with these improvements or reforms.

The epoch of bourgeois-democratic revolutions against feudalism was left behind. But it has not yet begun the epoch of workers revolutions against capitalism. There was an preview even to the reformist epoch, in 1871, when the first workers revolution took place, the Paris Commune, which began fighting the German invasion and ended up fighting against the bourgeoisie, until it was crushed with counter-revolutionary methods by the French bourgeoisie.

At this time already the point of reference is the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. But the struggle had a reformist character. The proletariat fought for partial gains and achieved reforms. The bourgeoisie gave them but also, in many instances, attacked them with reactionary, repressive methods. These reactions were not counter-revolutions; generally methods of civil war were not used against the labour movement nor were counter-revolutionary regimes based on these methods introduced.

There were revolutions and counter-revolutions. In 1905 a revolution broke out in Russia against the Tsar, which did not prevail. In 1910 the great Mexican revolution, of peasant type, took place imposing land reform. In the early twentieth century the Chinese monarchy fell.

Nevertheless, these revolutions are exceptions within this epoch, in which reform and reaction dominated. These were revolutions that heralded the era of proletarian revolutions, but did not change the reformist and reactionary character of the epoch.

Precisely for this reason, throughout this epoch the bourgeois regimes did not lose its democratic character, which may be broad or curtailed (like in French Bonapartism). The only exception among the great powers was Russia, where there was a totalitarian regime, the Tsar, supported on the landed nobility. Although it combined important elements of capitalist state and regime, the regime of the Tsar remained the feudal counter-revolution.

## Chapter 6

# The epoch of the international socialist revolution

With the inter-imperialistic war from 1914 to 1918 it became clear that the progressive epoch, of development and enrichment of society under capitalism, had finished. Thereafter we enter the current historical epoch: decline and increasing impoverishment of human society, terrible wars that massively destroy people and productive forces, and at the same time, a great development of technology.

It comes to an end the previous, reformist epoch. From here on, the proletariat and all exploited need to make revolutions and civil wars to end the capitalist system in decomposition, i.e. imperialism.

It begins the epoch of anti-capitalist, worker or socialist revolutions, which is also the epoch of bourgeois counter-revolutions. The first victorious workers revolution, which opens this new epoch, is the Russian revolution of 1917. With it the international socialist revolution begins. This means that for the first time in history we are not dealing with a sum of revolutions but with a single confrontation process of revolution and counter-revolution at worldwide scale. National revolutions are important episodes of this global confrontation.

Studying the development of the Russian October, revolutionary Marxism defined what came to be called a “classic” revolution. This forces us to dwell in it to define broadly its different stages and the phenomena that occurred in it, then to take them as benchmarks, comparing them with those of other revolutions that have occurred later and had different characteristics.

## The Russian revolution

The Russian revolution presents different phenomena. Among them, in the events of February critical features are combined.

### a) The February Revolution

Summarizing, the February revolution is characterized by the following:

First, it is an urban working class and popular mobilization, of insurrectional character, without partisan political leadership, although the vanguard workers, especially those educated by the Bolsheviks, play a leadership role.

Second, this urban mobilization does not defeat the armed forces but only causes a profound crisis in their midst.

Third, because of its immediate objective, for the historic task it performs, it is a bourgeois-democratic revolution, which overthrew the Tsar to establish a bourgeois democratic regime.

Fourth, this bourgeois-democratic revolution is part of the international socialist revolution; more specifically, it is an essential part of the struggle of the world proletariat to transform the imperialist war into a civil war.

Fifth, it is also part of the socialist revolution in Russia itself, since the power of the Tsar was not only of the landowners but largely it was the power of the bourgeoisie, which had made a pact with the monarchy.

Sixth, as well it is part of the socialist revolution in Russia because the Tsar was defeated by the working class heading the people, mainly the soldiers.

Seventh, also because the workers and the people could only solve the problems weighing them down if they immediately faced the landlords and capitalists, who after the fall of the Tsar had become the immediate and direct enemies of the proletariat.

Eighth, the foregoing meant that the February revolution put in the agenda as a strategic task, to make a socialist revolution, national and international, insofar as the exploited would continue in the same condition if the revolutionary process would stop at the national borders, i.e. if the bourgeois power continued in existence.

Ninth, the workers are not aware that the revolution they have carried out is socialist in the aspects we have mentioned and therefore it demands from them to move towards the seizure of power. After February they believe they do not need another revolution. Which is why we called the February revolution as unconscious, as did Trotsky.

Tenth, the reformist parties who lead the workers and mass movement, not content with defending the bourgeois regime and forming a government with the bourgeoisie, instil in the mass movement a respect to this regime and are strongly opposed to the struggle to carry out the socialist revolution, claiming that only when Russia is a great capitalist country they would be able to talk of socialism; therefore, for them the first task was to develop capitalism.

### b) Dual power

As a result of the victory of the February Revolution emerges a regime completely different from the tsarist, of widest democratic freedoms, seated in an army in crisis and primarily in the petty bourgeois parties that direct the mass movement. The tsarist monarchy disappears and the workers and popular parties led by the petty bourgeoisie go on to have a central role as government institutions. Due to the revolutionary upsurge, this regime is extremely weak. The III International defined this regime as *Kerenskyst*, because it was Kerensky who symbolized its various stages.

This profound revolution in the political regime was not reflected in the character of the state, which remained a tool of the bourgeoisie and the landlords. There was no change in the classes holding the state power.

Nevertheless, an extremely critical situation regarding the state took place. This had already taken place at other times, but in Russia, after February 1917, it acquired a dramatic character. It opened stage of subsistence of the bourgeois state, in complete crisis. This crisis was the result of the workers and mass movement, through their own institutions, having on many sectors of society as much or more effective power than the bourgeois state. The organs of struggle and power of the mass movement were the soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers, the trade unions, the factory committees. The Soviets were de facto organs of power. In some places, the people did as the Soviet ordered, not what the government ordered. Elsewhere, it was the other way around. This is why it was called dual power. This was dynamic, changing. But overall, the strongest power, almost dominant, was that of the soviets, not of the capitalist government.

The soviet power was based on the crisis of the bourgeois state, essentially the deep crisis in the armed forces, as the soldiers did not abide by the orders and deserted *en masse* the frontlines. Given this half-destroyed state the dominant power was the workers, peasants and soldiers.

We define Kerenskyism and dual power as a regime, because they are a combination, although very unstable, of different institutions; the government, the military leadership and the bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties on the one hand; on the other, the Soviets and other workers and popular organizations.

The power of the bourgeoisie also came from the soviets themselves, but indirectly, through their leadership. The Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks were a majority in the Soviets and convinced the workers, peasants and soldiers they had to support the bourgeois government.

### c) Kornilov's coup

During the Russian revolution, for the first time in history (with the exception of the repression of the Paris Commune), a counter-revolutionary coup d'état of bourgeois, capitalist type takes place. There were those who thought that Kornilov's coup was pro-tsar, at the service of the feudal landlords. Trotsky polemicized against them insisting it was distinctly pro-capitalist and counter-revolutionary, not a pro-feudal coup. This coup, which did not succeed, announced future coups of the bourgeois counter-revolution that later, unfortunately, did triumph: those of Mussolini, Chiang Kai-shek, Hitler and Franco.

With Kornilov arises then, a new type of counter-revolution: a fascist, bourgeois, non-feudal counter-revolution.

Kornilov's coup is defeated by the mobilization of the working class and the parties that claimed to be of the workers, which joined to confront him. The Bolsheviks changed their tactics. Until then

they were focusing all their attacks in Kerensky and proposing that he be overthrown and the Soviets take power. But when Kornilov attacks, they define this coup as the great counter-revolutionary danger and call for unity of all workers and popular parties, in the first place Kerensky himself, to fight arms in hand the counter-revolution of Kornilov. Attacks to Kerensky become secondary, they stop raising his immediate overthrow as they had done before. They go on to denounce Kerensky for being incapable of waging a consistent revolutionary struggle, calling for bold anti-capitalist measures, transitional, to defeat Kornilov.

### d) The workers and peasants government

For this phase of the revolution Lenin and Trotsky raised a political possibility and a slogan: for the reformist parties (Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks) to take power, since they were the undisputed leadership of the soviets. It was a question of making a revolution that would change the character of the state, building a new one based on the soviet institutions. If the reformist parties accepted the proposal of Lenin, the revolution would be peaceful. At the same time, if the reformists accepted it, the Bolsheviks agreed not to appeal to violent struggle to defeat them, but to the peaceful struggle within the soviets to try to win a majority, and thus become the ruling party of the new state, the Soviet workers state. This policy of Lenin and Trotsky was rejected by the reformist parties, who refused to take the soviets to power.

This approach has remained a theoretical hypothesis full of prospects for the future of the revolutionary struggles, although we believe it has led to some confusion on the development and character of such a political line and the type of state that would arise if successful.

### e) The October revolution

It was an insurrection directed and organized by the Marxist revolutionary workers party, the Bolsheviks. They won the majority on the soviets and led them to a revolution against Kerensky, i.e. against the February regime and its government and caused the Soviets to take power. Trotsky defined it as a conscious revolution. In this way, they changed the character of the state. Unlike that of February, this revolution not only changed the political regime but the state: it no longer is a state in the service of the bourgeoisie; rather a state of the working class supported by the peasants and soldiers is born. Unlike February, not only is it a political revolution, but a social revolution.

Like any social revolution, October is also a political revolution because it opens a new type of regime; that is, it radically changes the ruling institutions. Until October ruled the bourgeois and petty bourgeois reformist parties, supported by the bourgeois army in crisis. From October, the army and police of the bourgeoisie disappear and the petty bourgeois and reformist parties no longer rule, and it begins to lead the state an ultra-democratic institution which organized the whole of the exploited: the soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers. And at the head of these new organizations or institutions of state places itself the Bolshevik party, which was a revolutionary, internationalist and also deeply democratic party, where everything was discussed through tendencies or individual factions and virtually nothing was voted unanimously.

### f) The socio-economic revolution

Approximately a year after the October Revolution, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie takes place. It was a defensive measure of the Soviet regime against the economic sabotage of the owners of industrial enterprises. Although the expropriation is not the result of any change in the character of the state and the political regime, which continues to be the power of the working class and the people (state) led by Soviets under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party (regime), it is the great revolution, because it abruptly transforms the social relations of production. From the expropriation and nationalization of industries, the bourgeoisie disappears as a social class and the nationalized, planned and workers economy is established. This revolution, the most important of all although it is not present in the political arena but in the economic sphere, is called socio-economic revolution. It is a total change in the character of the economy.

### g) The Civil War

It is the armed confrontation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The latter, in unity with world imperialism, tries to make a counter-revolution to restore the bourgeoisie and landowners to the property and the power of the state and is defeated. For months and months a group of reactionary, counter-revolutionary armies, linked to different imperialisms and the de facto intervention of 21 capitalist countries against the Red Army. The civil war is the expression of the class struggle as confrontation

between territories and enemy armies that reflect different classes. Only after the victory in the Civil War it can be said that a unitary government emerges for the entire USSR.

### The other aborted revolutions

From the Russian Revolution until the 1930s, similar revolutions broke out in different countries: Germany, Hungary, the first two Chinese revolutions and the Spanish revolution. In all of them, except for Spain, soviets arise and internationalist and revolutionary parties of the Third International act and there are elements of civil war, i.e. armed encounters between the parties of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat take place. Despite these armed clashes, which indicated the maturity of the objective conditions for the revolutionary seizure of power by the proletariat, these revolutions aborted. One reason is that in these countries the revolutionaries were very weak or incapable. But the main reason lies in the reformist parties in Germany and Hungary and Stalinism in China, which consciously refuse to deepen the process, refusing to make the socialist revolution at the head of the revolutionary mass movement organizations.

### The Spanish Revolution

Something similar will happen with the Spanish revolution, which begins after the closure of the period from 1917 to 1923, but which has many similar elements to the Russian revolution, but it also has major differences and is much more peaceful. The beginning of the Spanish revolution, its bourgeois democratic revolution, is not the immediate product of great confrontations of the workers and popular movement with the government and the armed forces of the regime. On the contrary, the triumph of the revolution is a consequence of the crisis of the monarchical regime and a large electoral victory of the working class and the people who voted for the republic against the monarchy. This forces the monarch to resign without reaching serious clashes with the armed forces. This will cause a revolution in the political regime: from monarchy, without democratic freedoms, to a parliamentary bourgeois democratic regime with broad democratic freedoms.

Unlike other revolutions, which were socialist, although they had the appearance of democratic in their first phase, or were directly socialist from the beginning as the German, the Spanish revolution leaves the armed forces unscathed, intact, without crisis. This differs qualitatively from the others we have listed.

### Summary

In short, the Russian Revolution of 1917 is the synthesis of four major revolutions:

**1) The political revolution of February.** *Bourgeois democratic* in its form, socialist in content. It is an unconscious revolution by the masses that carried it out.

We call it a political revolution as far as the immediate objective results because it only revolutionized the *political regime*, from tsarist to bourgeois democratic.

**2) The political and social revolution of 1917.** The Bolshevik party consciously directing the soviets defeats the bourgeois government, changing the character of the state, from bourgeois to proletarian. The economy is not changed and remains bourgeois.

**3) The economic and social revolution of the 1918.** The bourgeoisie is expropriated changing the economic system from bourgeois to transitional, worker.

**4) The military-social revolution.** The armed forces of the bourgeoisie and imperialism are complete and utterly defeated, new armed forces are built with a new class character.

## Chapter 7

# The Leninist regime

This whole course insists on defining the regimes, for a fundamental reason; schematically, we can say that our entire program is synthesized in the goal of imposing a Leninist regime. This means we are sworn enemies of the current workers regimes, which we define by the negative as anti-Leninist. What characterizes our program with respect to all workers organizations, including current workers states that call themselves socialist, is that we want to carry out a political revolution to change their current regime for one Leninist. It is therefore important to clarify the essential features of the regime of Lenin and Trotsky in its early years. Some were abolished by the same regime in exceptional circumstances, such as civil war or famine. But these exceptions do not nullify the rule, as both Lenin and Trotsky always insisted that its abolition was momentary and that the regime should be like in its early years.

### Four fundamental characteristics

#### I. Socially, the working class with its organizations dominates the state apparatus

Under the Soviet system the basic structure of the state are the soviets of workers and peasants. Given the overwhelming numerical weight of the peasants, a type of representation that guarantees the workers majority and control of the state apparatus is imposed.

#### II. The political regime is of unrestricted workers democracy

*a) No one can restrict the absolute freedom for all workers who are part of the soviet.* All workers have the right to be part of their organizations (trade unions, factory committees and soviets). No worker may be expelled or denied the use of the word or of any individual liberties, even if he is politically conservative.

*b) Multi-party system.* Within the Soviets not only are legal the revolutionary parties that are in government (Bolsheviks and Left Social Revolutionaries) but all reformist parties (Mensheviks and Right Socialist Revolutionaries) and even the bourgeois parties (provided there are workers or peasants who support them and constitute factions).

*c) Much greater freedoms than under the bourgeois-democratic regime.* The stage of greater cultural, artistic, scientific, political, of assembly, press and information freedoms ever known to mankind opens. All parties have paper and facilities to publish their views. Artists and scientists enjoy absolute freedom of expression and research. The government makes available to all the people free rooms when they want to meet or hold assemblies. There is no censorship of any kind. The regime has no official art or science as it does not interfere at all with them, only it protects the expression of all currents.

*d) Independence of trade unions from the state.* After the civil war was won, the USSR of Lenin legislated that the trade unions were absolutely independent of the state, so they could express the will of

the workers; if they wanted to strike they had every right to hold them, as well as to meet in assemblies to vote on them.

### **III. A revolutionary regime for the permanent struggle**

It is a regime voted democratically by the majority of workers in the Soviets. This vote has a special meaning: the workers organizations vote for leadership and the revolutionary policies of the Bolshevik Party. This is the reason why the Soviet regime permanently drove forward the revolutionary mobilization of the working class and peasantry to increasingly advance in the domestic and international revolution. It is a regime for the permanent struggle of Russian and world workers. The Soviets are organs of struggle and governmental organizations. Under Lenin and Trotsky they never lost their character as organs of struggle to become mere administrative organs of the state.

### **IV. A workers, democratic, revolutionary and internationalist party**

The party leading the Soviet regime, the Bolshevik Party, has all these characteristics concentrated and much higher, more conscious.

*a) Worker.* The Bolshevik Party was always workers for its ideology, its activity (including that of its leaders), its militants and its cadres. It won elections, for example, only in the most concentrated working-class neighbourhoods.

*b) Democratic.* In the Bolshevik Party everything was resolved by discussion and voting. Virtually no important resolution has been adopted unanimously. After it took power, this absolute democracy and freedom for militants is much more comprehensive. The larger discussions were conducted publicly in the pages of the official party newspapers. No leader was ever expelled for their opinions or discussions with the leadership.

*c) Revolutionary.* The party constantly encouraged the revolutionary mobilization of the masses. It began to raise at national and international level a transitional program, of permanent mobilization of the masses. It believed that the taking of power was a key reason to accelerate the revolutionary mobilization, not only nationally but internationally as well. The focus of all its policies was to achieve the development of the mobilization of the world proletariat and the oppressed masses to win the international socialist revolution. Without this there was no possibility of ultimate triumph in the USSR itself.

*d) Its most important achievement was the III International.* Its internationalism resulted in the founding of the III International to lead the socialist revolution. The Bolshevik Party itself decided to be subject to the International as the Russian Revolution was only a crucial part of the world revolution, but a part nonetheless. It ceased to be a Russian party to become a section of the III International. Party leaders trumpeted from the rooftops that its internationalism came to advocate that, if necessary, they were willing to sink the Russian revolution for the triumph of the German, much more important for the world revolution.

The Third International was like the Bolshevik Party, essentially worker, democratic, revolutionary. It was the world party of the socialist revolution, of the permanent struggle until the victory of socialism in the world.

## Chapter 8

# The counter-revolution: the new regimes

After the first revolutionary wave, inaugurated by the Russian Revolution and which lasted until about 1923, the bourgeoisie and imperialism launched their political counteroffensive. Unable to stop the revolution in various countries through bourgeois democracy by peaceful means, the bourgeoisie calls on methods of civil war to defeat the working class. Where it manages to capture government, a new type of political regime appears, preciously non-existent: fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany.

Fascism or counter-revolutionary bourgeois imperialist regime is characterized by using methods of civil war against the working class, the masses and its vanguard. To do this, they form a broad counter-revolutionary popular movement, based on the middle class and the underclass, which they mobilize and arm against the proletariat. When it comes to power it eliminates political freedoms and the institutions of bourgeois democracy. Its main objective is to destroy workers democracy and its organizations: trade unions, mass workers parties. But this can only be achieved by also ending with all the bourgeois democratic rights and institutions: parliament, political parties, free press, etc.

In a sense, it resembles the old monarchies. It is absolutely totalitarian and ruthlessly suppresses all opposition and all freedom. But it is not the same. Those old regimes expressed the *feudal past*. Fascism has nothing of feudal. It expresses the *capitalist-imperialist present*. It is a barbaric dictatorship, but not of the nobles or the king, but of the most modern and concentrated capitalism: the imperialist monopolies. It is not seeking to reinstate feudalism, but to defend imperialist capitalism crushing with methods of civil war the workers revolution. It is the first and monstrous expression of capitalism's inexorable march toward barbarism if socialism does not prevail.

This is the fundamental content of the fascist regimes that succeed: Mussolini in Italy, Chiang Kai-shek in China, Hitler in Germany, Salazar in Portugal, Franco in Spain.

Colonial regimes like that of France in Indochina and Algeria have the same character: a terrible repression of the masses to defend the French capitalist empire. And the same can be said of the brutal pro-imperialist dictatorships supported by Yankee imperialism in its semi-colonies, as were those of Batista, Trujillo, Somoza and company in Latin America, or more recently those of Pinochet and the Brazilian, Uruguayan and Argentine military.

These semi-fascist dictatorships are not defending old feudal structures, as Stalinism has insisted so much, but the modern semi-colonial relations, absolutely capitalist, between the backward nations and the imperialist powers.

## The struggle against imperialist bourgeois counter-revolution

The emergence of fascism, first as party or movement and later, when it triumphs as a counter-revolutionary political regime, poses two serious political problems to Marxism which can be summarized

in one: How to confront fascism as a party as it struggles to come to power, and as a regime when it is already in power?

Trotskyism was formed as an actual current of the world proletariat, among other fundamental reasons, because it was necessary to achieve a front of the workers parties to prevent, by physical methods, the triumph of fascism in any country. Faced with the danger of fascist victory there had to be a similar policy — by and large identical — to what the Bolsheviks applied against Kornilov. Instead of fighting as immediate objective to seize power and defeat the bourgeoisie, they did not have the strength to do it, it was necessary to fight immediately to prevent fascism from taking power, making any kind of workers and popular agreement to go to the physical fight, on the streets, against fascism, and defeat it on its arena.

The Spanish Civil War was the ultimate expression of this struggle to prevent Franco's victory, although the leaderships of the masses did not face it with a revolutionary Marxist criterion. Those leaderships (the bourgeois Republicans, with the Socialist Party and the Stalinists) wanted to limit the fight to the confrontation between bourgeois-democratic and the fascist regimes. And this within the canons of the bourgeoisie, i.e., respecting private property and relying on the police and the bourgeois army. The revolutionary Marxists, instead, we proposed that it was essential to defeat fascism through the unity of all who were willing to fight it. But at the same time, through the mobilization of workers and mass movement, to wipe out the landowners and the bourgeoisie, putting the productive apparatus under control of the workers, changing the class character of the state. This would be the only way to achieve an ever-increasing commitment of the workers and peasants to fight against Franco. We said, in short, that we had to transform the struggle of defence of the democratic bourgeois regime into a permanent struggle for socialism.

Anyhow, the Spanish civil war demonstrated to what extent the bourgeois democratic regime was antagonistic to fascism, not just the working class and its organizations.

World War II presented, at a minimum, similar elements. Without developing the subject, we believe that we must seriously study whether it was not an attempt to extend the fascist imperialist counter-revolution worldwide, mainly defeating the Soviet Union, but also the European and American bourgeois-democratic regimes. This is not to say that World War II has not also had a profound content of inter-imperialist struggle. What we say is that we need to specify well, as in the Spanish civil war, which was the determining factor. Was the struggle of the fascist regime essentially against the USSR but also against bourgeois democracy? Or was it the economic factor, the fight between imperialism for control of the world market?

The Spanish Civil War was nothing more than the most spectacular expression of a generalized phenomenon: the armed resistance, the civil war against the fascist regimes. In China, in 1928, after the Stalinist betrayal which allowed Chiang Kai-shek to give his counter-revolutionary coup, it opened a guerrilla process of armed struggle of the Chinese PC— and even at certain times of other currents of the nationalist army— against Chiang Kai-shek's fascist regime, and later against the Japanese invasion. This civil or national war, which was expressed as guerrilla warfare, developed with ups and downs until the defeat of Chiang Kai-shek at the hands of the guerrillas of Mao Tse Tung.

Something similar happened after the military victory of Germany and Japan. Armed resistance and guerrilla movements broke out in Eastern and Western Europe, particularly in France and Italy. This anti-Nazi movement in occupied nations was supported by revolutionary Marxists, or should have been, as there were some comrades who, because of their extreme youth, did not see the magnitude of the problem. For the same reason we consider as one of the great deeds of the world proletariat the struggle of the Warsaw Ghetto against the Nazis.

Of all these processes, the one which acquired a more worker and peasant character was the guerrilla resistance in the Balkan countries, Yugoslavia and Greece.

The Chinese guerrilla and later the Spanish civil war begin, therefore, a process of civil war, of armed resistance to the fascist regimes. It was a new phenomenon in which the guerrillas generally played a fundamental role.

## The Stalinist counter-revolution and the political revolution against it

The 20-year advance of the counter-revolution in the world, from 1923 to 1943, will also have its expression in the workers state itself, the Soviet Union. Just as fascism represented a counter-revolutionary

regime change in bourgeois countries, something similar happened in the USSR. The regime of Lenin and Trotsky, of workers and party democracy, was wiped out by Stalinism, which managed to impose as of 1928, a very similar regime to fascism which culminated in the great purges of 1936. Stalinism employed reactionary methods first and finally methods of civil war. It takes hundreds of thousands of communist militants or vanguard sectors of the population to concentration camps; it murders them almost completely and suppresses any hint of freedom, not only in politics but in the artistic, cultural and scientific arenas. Traditional institutions of the bourgeois state, its centralized army, its police and secret services become an anchor for the Stalinist regime, which relies on these bourgeois institutions to rule. The system acquires a totalitarian character, without freedom, with a relentless persecution of political opponents with a single party system and total control by the government of the unions and popular organizations. As we already mentioned, a political regime very similar to Nazism.

But just as fascism changes the regime but not the character of the state, which remains bourgeois, Stalinism changes the regime from workers democratic to bureaucratic, totalitarian and counter-revolutionary, but it does not change the character of the state, which remains workers, non-capitalist. That is the fundamental difference between Nazism and Stalinism: the character of the country. Germany remains a country dominated by capitalist monopolies and the Soviet Union remains a non-capitalist country.

In the same manner that the regime change from bourgeois-democratic to fascist demanded, in some capitalist countries, a new policy, the regime change in the Soviet Union also raised the need for a new policy to move forward with the revolution within the workers state.

It was necessary to fight against Stalinism as expression of the counter-revolution in the workers state. Revolutionary Marxism fought to defend the regime of workers democracy. And when Stalinism triumphed, it put forth to recover it by the action of the mass movement and the confrontation with the ruling bureaucracy.

Trotsky, in the early 1930s, came to the conclusion that workers democracy could not be achieved without a revolution against the Stalinist government apparatus, i.e. the state apparatus of the bureaucracy. It was necessary to sweep the officials of the army and the police, which were the armed wing of the bureaucracy. He called this a political revolution, because it was regime change and not a change in the relations of production and social relations, i.e. in the character of the country and the state. For us it is fundamental that there is still a state under which there is no bourgeoisie. It is not a question of making a socio-economic revolution, but only a revolution in the political regime: from totalitarian bureaucratic to workers democratic.

What Trotsky did not raise, even though he made the parallel between Stalinism and fascism, was that also in the capitalist countries was necessary to make a revolution in the political regime: to destroy fascism to regain the freedoms of bourgeois democracy, even if in the arena of the political regimes of the bourgeoisie, the bourgeois state. Specifically, he did not raise a democratic revolution to wipe out the fascist totalitarian regime, as part or first step in the process towards the socialist revolution, and left open this serious theoretical problem.

## Chapter 9

# The socialist revolutions frozen at the expropriation of the bourgeoisie

Since the end of World War II we live the most revolutionary stage in the last few centuries. For the first time revolutions broke out in all the continents and at any time. This is what we call *generalized imminent revolution*. Against the guerrilla theoreticians who argue that the only revolutions that have taken place in this post-war were only the product of guerrilla warfare, we believe that there have also been various types of urban, insurrectionary, revolutions.

We can divide the revolutions of this century into two types: *urban and carried out through guerrilla warfare*. Already in the first decades of the century, two great revolutions that heralded these two types took place: the Russian Revolution (urban) and the Mexican (guerrilla warfare).

As of 1917, through the influence of the Russian Revolution and due to the leading role of the world proletariat, the most important revolutions were urban, including the Chinese revolution until 1927 which had a peasant component of the first order, but whose revolutionary centre passed through its large cities and the working class.

In 1928 a new political phenomenon appeared: the peasant guerrilla warfare to face a fascist capitalist regime, that of Chiang Kai-shek. This guerrilla war was transformed from civil to national war when the Japanese invaded China in 1935. Once the Japanese were defeated, it returned to civil war.

In Spain something similar happened with the civil war, although it was not guerrilla warfare. The social base of the civil war, on the republican side, was the proletariat, and its armed defence against the fascist putsch started from an armed insurrection that actually destroyed the bourgeois state and in the large cities the fascist army.

World War II was, as we have said, a revolutionary war of the Red Army against the counter-revolutionary army of Hitler. We will have to study whether the allied armies, in spite of themselves, did not also played a progressive role, since Hitler's defeat was the most colossal revolutionary triumph in the history of mankind.

During World War II guerrilla warfare became popular to confront the fascists and Nazi occupation armies. In the immediate post-war period reappeared, playing a role of preponderant importance, the urban struggles and the proletariat. Thus, again began the urban revolutions, although none came to expropriate the bourgeoisie. Conversely, many revolutions caused by civil or national wars did so. We can classify the revolutions subsequent to World War II in those where the bourgeoisie was expropriated and those where it was not expropriated. We clarify that we believe that reality will give us other revolutions and our classification is summary, schematic, to facilitate an initial understanding of the topic.

## The revolutionary wars

In World War II, and in the post-war era, the most outstanding and novel development was the outbreak of revolutionary wars. The revolutionary Marxists had defined the era as of wars and revolutions,

without closely linking both concepts. (This does not mean that in this stage we have not seen other types of revolutions). Among these revolutionary wars we must distinguish two types clearly differentiated:

The first type is the war of a national army against another. The most massive of these wars, perhaps the most important, was World War II itself, specifically the Red Army against the Nazi Army. The victory of the Red Army is the most important revolutionary triumph of the stage, the triumph that opens the *imminent and widespread revolution*. A similar war is that conducted by the guerrilla army of Mao against the Japanese occupiers, culminating in the civil war against Chiang Kai-shek.

The second type is guerrilla warfare. The most important revolution of this stage was the Chinese, a civil war in which the guerrilla tactic was employed. The Yugoslav revolution was perhaps the most heroic, very much like the Chinese, although its centre of gravity was not the civil war waged against the “Ustashe” but the resistance to the Nazi-Fascist occupiers. These triumphant guerrillas took place in rural countries. It was the kind of revolutionary war which, in many cases, came to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

## Revolutionary War before taking power

The types of revolutions to which we refer all have in common that they have been the result of a war, tightly directed by an army. This army was guerrilla (China, Cuba), or national professional (Red Army against the Nazi occupation army), or national guerrilla (wars against colonial rule, such as that of Algeria). Although combined in different ways, all these wars have, before the triumph and the seizure of power, the following common features:

### 1. They begin as defensive wars either against colonial or fascist totalitarian states, or against occupying armies

In all the known wars they had to face a difficult, tragic situation, of triumph of fascism or of the occupants. Colonial wars are somewhat different, since the guerrilla warfare begins against an established power and not against a new phenomenon as fascism or the occupation of a country. But anyway they fight to overcome a historic defeat, the colonization of the country itself, while in other cases the fight is against an immediate phenomenon. This should not confuse us about the defensive nature of the beginning of the armed struggle.

### 2. An ironclad centralized leadership, with a powerful false revolutionary ideology

Contrary to the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, these revolutionary wars have a strong, centralized leadership. The group or guerrilla army cannot grow if it does not have an iron discipline and unity of command. The same applies to their ideology. The guerrilla war against the occupiers or war against totalitarian regimes or of the USSR against the Nazis is carried out consciously, with full vigour. In that sense it is a consciously revolutionary war by the leadership. This is what has led many Marxists to confusion. The war carried out by the masses and their leadership is just; this brings up, therefore, that the leadership is revolutionary, or empirically revolutionary. This is relatively correct if we add that the overall policy of the leadership for the war itself and for to the future of the revolution underway is counter-revolutionary.

The fact that Galtieri or Vargas, at certain times, can defend their countries from imperialist invasion does not make them empirical revolutionaries, although they are forced by circumstances to historically meet that goal. The guerrilla leadership is light years ahead of Galtieri or Vargas: they are great fighters, democratic or anticolonial revolutionaries, they are permanent fighters for a just cause, while Vargas or Galtieri are so for a single moment or in certain circumstances and are also willing to betray at any time. The guerrillas have generally fought for years to achieve their goal of defeating the revolutionary or counter-revolutionary army regime. Hence they have a clear ideology and a revolutionary program, but false. They always argue that once defeated the counter-revolutionary regime there is a need to collaborate with the bourgeoisie to pursue the construction of a bourgeois state or of “indefinite sex”, of popular democracy or another such variant, which means the same. On the other hand, they see their revolution as a national revolution and not as an integral part of the world revolution, which requires an international. Hence the falsity of their ideology and their program, which is stageist and not permanent at national or international level.

### 3. Authoritarian political regime of a party-army

It is normal for the party-army to have a strict discipline and centralization, as without them it is impossible to win a modern war. But all the guerrillas— not to mention the Red Army— transform this military discipline into political discipline. Within these armies there is not the least democracy to discuss policy. The political orientations come from the leadership, and no one has the right to discuss them. Quite the contrary, a discussion of them is considered a breach of military discipline.

### 4. Social background of the armies, the leadership and the rank and file

To date, the social background of the leaderships of these armies has been bureaucratic or petty bourgeois. Never workers. In the war of the USSR and the guerrillas led by the Stalinist parties the background was bureaucratic. For the Algerian FLN, the colonial guerrillas and Fidel Castro, it was urban petty bourgeois.

The rank and file of these armies is peasant, petty bourgeois, from the shanty towns of colonial cities and, exceptionally, workers popular, as in the Red Army. In general, with certain exceptions, the dominant sector is not the working class, much less the industrial one. But an analysis of this type would be mechanical: any army greatly changes the class character of its soldiers, to transform them into soldiers; a new social phenomenon appears: the fighters. This applies to both, to a labourer and also a well off petty bourgeois; on entering the guerrilla they become essentially guerrillas, i.e. fighters subordinated to a political leadership that is not consistently revolutionary. Therefore, when there is a protracted war the soldier largely loses his class character prior to his incorporation, to become part of the people. The petty bourgeois or bureaucratic leadership that directs these armies has a conscious policy in this regard, to transform them into fighters (Guevara's theory of the new man) and uproot them from the working class, to facilitate the authoritarian party-army, of its leadership, and to justify the theory of a national, popular and not a socialist revolution.

We have stopped in the characteristics prior to the seizure of power by the armies through a war to highlight the profound differences with the process prior to the Russian revolution of 1905 and of February. In this country all the precedents of the revolution revolve around the normal struggles of the working class and the peasantry, and the political struggles between the parties claiming to be of the working class and the people (Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, Bolsheviks) and with the bourgeois parties of the Russian and other nationalities. That is to say, it is diametrically opposed to the war-revolution: the revolution is prepared through mass working-class institutions, trade unions, the Soviets or parties, by means of the widest democracy. The revolution has no centralized leadership; therefore it is insurrectional and "spontaneous".

## The army-party takes power

Once triumphant, these wars-revolutions have the following common features that characterize them:

### 1. Destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus

One of the ideologies of guerrilla warfare is that what it tries to destroy is the state apparatus of the totalitarian regime and not that of the bourgeois state. But the result is the opposite of what they wanted to arrive at; when destroying the totalitarian state, mainly the police and the army, the bourgeois state apparatus falls in ruins, it disappears. The triumph of guerrilla warfare or the Red Army means the direct fall of the bourgeois state. In this sense, it resembles the October Revolution, which also destroyed the bourgeois state apparatus, mainly the army and police. But the results are different.

### 2. Strong Bonapartist regime with the sum of power to the party-army

The government falls into the hands of a -guerrilla party-army (or Red Army in Eastern Europe). Since there is no longer a police or army of the bourgeoisie there is no dual power, but only one, that of the party-army. Contrary to the Russian revolution, the power will not go to democratic institutions of the workers movement, but to the party-army and only to it, dominating the political scene as it wants, arbitrating between classes as a strong, powerful Bonapartism.

### **3. The unbearable contradictions of the government and the petty bourgeoisie**

The popular petty bourgeois or bureaucratic nature of party-armies taking power causes insurmountable contradictions, inevitably leading to a strong government, of Bonapartist type. These contradictions are twofold: first, the impossibility for these party-armies to build a petty bourgeois state apparatus, as it would be its intention. In this they resemble the Jacobins, who tried to do the same and failed. The petty bourgeoisie cannot make a country or a state in its image and likeness, because in no country in the world can the small production of smallholders be dominant. In the French Revolution, with a non-existent proletariat, the alternative to which the Jacobins succumbed was that there could only be a capitalist state. So they were thrown out of power by the bourgeoisie itself to impose the first Bonapartist regime.

The second contradiction is very serious and characterizes the first period after taking power. The party-army has power in its hands, with a bourgeois state in ruins, not in crisis. It must then restore the state. Its policy is treacherous; so far it has always tended to restore the bourgeois state: it has never called to the workers organizations to take power democratically. It is always a state that is moulded according to the character of the guerrilla army itself without any internal or external democracy. That is, the state apparatus is doomed to be authoritarian and not workers democratic.

But the petty bourgeoisie, in this era, does not only have the prospect of becoming the leader of a bourgeois state. Both from a political and economic point of view, it currently has two perspectives: the worker and the capitalist. All petty bourgeois is doomed, sooner or later, to one of these two alternatives. The same applies to the state that may arise in this transition stage of a strong government in the hands of a party-army and with a state in ruins. Moreover, the country or state in the broadest sense of the word is still bourgeois.

### **4. Front populist government with the bourgeois parties**

The pro-bourgeois ideology and politics of the party-armies are manifested in the combination they self-impose; to rule with the bourgeoisie, even though the sum of political and state power, all the armed forces, are theirs. In all or almost all countries where the Red Army or guerrilla armies triumphed, the opportunistic petty bourgeois or bureaucratic leaderships imposed, at first, to rule with the bourgeois parties or with personalities of the same sign. Let us take nearby examples: Cuba and Nicaragua. In both of them the same phenomenon took place. Fidel Castro anointed as president of the Republic Urrutia, an important political agent of the bourgeoisie and imperialism. So did the Nicaraguan FSLN with Violeta Chamorro and Robelo, initially with the representatives of the bourgeoisie in the current government. Logically, if the current Nicaraguan government is front populist it cannot be workers and peasants nor have expropriated the bourgeoisie.

### **5. The workers and peasants governments**

Lenin and Trotsky put forth that the worker and peasant organizations, the Soviets, led by opportunist parties take power, breaking with the bourgeoisie, on the basis of workers democracy. The workers and peasants (we call them popular when the country is urban) governments that we have seen in this post-war have not been of democratic worker organizations but of party-army. Anyway, they are workers and peasants governments because they have broken with the bourgeoisie. Cuba is a good example (when Fidel dismissed from government Urrutia, agent of the imperialist offensive, like the entire Cuban bourgeoisie).

Although Castro wanted to continue having good relations with imperialism and the bourgeoisie (therefore he anointed Urrutia as president), he was faced with a terrible offensive to get him to backtrack in a series of measures affecting imperialism. All these governments always emerged for the same reason: imperialism declares war on the party-army government that collaborates with the bourgeoisie because of the concessions it is forced to make to the mass movement. As a defensive measure, so far never on their own initiative, they break with the bourgeoisie.

### **6. The socio-economic revolution**

Just as Trotsky had predicted when he defined the workers and peasants government as an stage immediately prior to the dictatorship of the proletariat, these were forced to expropriate the bourgeoisie, unconditional agent of imperialism. There was thus a socio-economic revolution, that is, the expropriation

of the bourgeoisie which in the USSR had taken place after the seizure of power by the Soviets and the Bolsheviks, and in these cases it takes place after the taking of power by authoritarian armies. As soon as the bourgeoisie is expropriated, the workers and peasants governments become dictatorships of the proletariat since the bourgeoisie ceases to exist and the whole country becomes a worker's, non-capitalist country. If there is no bourgeoisie in the country there cannot be a capitalist state, even if there are capitalists or capitalist-like apparatuses as the police or the army— guerrilla or Stalinist army. We find then a workers state, or workers country, which has a kind of bureaucratic state from the beginning, because of the authoritarian regime of the party-army.

## Chapter 10

# The aborted revolutions

All the major revolutions that we studied in the previous chapter went on to become socialists in the economic field, but without the existence a revolutionary workers regime like the one of Lenin and Trotsky, but rather a bureaucratic regime. To the fact that this regime of workers revolutionary democracy, which would be the one imposed if the process continued, did not make its way, we have called frozen revolution; others call it deformed revolution. Both terms, with greater or lesser property, want to point out that the phenomenon that as from the expropriation of the bourgeoisie there was not a qualitative advance of the revolution. For us this is freezing the revolution, for others this revolution triumphed already deformed because the parties that lead it did not practice workers democracy.

In this section we will address the revolutions which aborted, not meeting any socialist achievement and stalling in a political revolution, which only led to a new bourgeois-democratic regime, instead of the previous totalitarian, invader or colonial. Apparently, these are only democratic, national revolutions that triumphed. But it is not so, because, as we have explained at length, underneath this process what is ongoing is a socialist revolution, even if expressed in a first stage as a democratic or colonial revolution. Those who aborted these revolutions, preventing them from reaching their consummation, from completing their journey, to prevent the victory of the socialist revolution, are the leaderships of the mass movement, mainly world Stalinism.

Precisely because this is the most revolutionary stage of history there have been many forms of “democratic” socialist, or “colonial” socialist triumphant revolutions. We say this because the word revolution has been consecrated. Before World War II revolutions were only insurrectionary ones such as the Russian. In this post-war period it has been deified only the revolutions made by the guerrillas who came to expropriate the bourgeoisie. But there are many other forms of revolutions. In broad strokes, we will classify some of these successful revolutions that aborted, but which spite of that still took place.

## Workers and peasant guerrilla regimes which rebuilt the bourgeois state

Not all workers and peasants regimes expropriate the bourgeoisie. The Algerian FLN, for example, from its position as a workers and peasants government, backed down to the reconstruction of the bourgeois state. Algeria was a colony of French imperialism that thanks to guerrilla warfare broke free. The FLN government became workers and peasants against its express wishes, as it was not that it broke with the bourgeoisie and its parties, but the bourgeoisie with it. Almost all of the bourgeoisie, which was French or white, fled Algeria terrorized by the Arab victory and refused to return, leaving the FLN alone, without bourgeois party or class to do a front populist government, as it intended. French (and world) imperialism maneuvered skilfully, making all kinds of concessions to the new worker and peasant regime. This policy gave them a remarkable result since they got the FLN to rebuild a bourgeois semi-colonial state, under French and American imperialism, instead of the previous colonial state.

We believe that something similar has happened in other colonial countries, although we are not sure that the reconstruction of the bourgeois state was made from a workers and peasants regime.

### **The guerrilla triumphs that reconstructed the bourgeois state: the bourgeois Stalinist regimes**

There were triumphs of anti-colonial wars in Africa that did not come to a workers and peasants regime, i.e., the new governments failed to break with the bourgeoisie, or — in those countries where there was not a relatively strong black bourgeoisie — with imperialism. The governments of the victorious guerrillas in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, Angola and Mozambique, although they had serious friction with Yankee imperialism, they continued to have close and semi-colonial relations with the weak Portuguese imperialism and in this way with the whole world imperialism.

And with the passage of time even the deep friction with Yankee imperialism has been declining, to the point that today Rockefeller is a fanatical supporter of Angola. We call them bourgeois Stalinist regimes because these colonies are ruled by Stalinist nationalist parties which, despite the friction, collisions and clashes with Yankee imperialism — even armed with their agent, South Africa — quickly rebuild the semi-colonial bourgeois state.

These single-party governments have occurred because of the impossibility of finding a bourgeois party wanting to collaborate. Although there is no bourgeois party in power, we do not call it workers and peasants, because the nationalist-Stalinist party does not break with imperialism and the bourgeois regime.

We need to study whether this is not the situation of the Sandinista regime, which has not broken with the bourgeoisie and goes towards the reconstruction of the bourgeois state, or towards a workers and peasants government.

### **Revolutions similar to February**

In this post-war we have seen different types of urban socialist revolutions that were expressed as a great democratic triumph. When we say similar to February we are alluding to the fact that they were socialist revolutions that began with a great democratic triumph. Anyway, almost all of them differ from February in that they were not spontaneous, without direction; rather they had strong leaderships, which drove and directed the urban revolutionary struggle. Among these revolutions we have to distinguish the following:

#### **a) Those of France and Italy in the immediate post-war period**

As a consequence of the Allies' war against the Nazis, combined with a popular guerrilla, it was possible to destroy the fascist or semi-fascist regimes of Italy and France and wipe out the Nazi occupier. But these two wars were combined and were overwhelmed by the arrival on stage of the workers movement through their traditional organizations. The bourgeois state is destroyed by the three factors already mentioned. A dual power arises. Stalinism joins the bourgeois right — de Gaulle in France and Badoglio – de Gasperi in Italy — to rebuild the bourgeois state. Thorez's slogan of "one army and one police", calling the masses to surrender their weapons to the bourgeois army under reconstruction, will go down in history as one of the maximum betrayals of Stalinism. Quickly, because this policy of Stalinism, the army and the bourgeois state are reconstructed.

For us, with the defeat of the axis it starts under a democratic form, the socialist revolution in the West, particularly in Italy and France. This revolution was aborted in a mere bourgeois democratic regime, rather than socialist, by Stalinism.

#### **b) Revolution that defeats the armed forces and destroys the bourgeois state**

The classic example of this is the Bolivian revolution of 1952, although the Portuguese in 1974 and the Iranian in 1979 have some elements without reaching its level. In Bolivia a working class and popular insurrection, co-led by Trotskyists, destroys the bourgeois army, and as a result the bourgeois state is shattered. A dual power arises where the bourgeois power is almost non-existing. The dominant power is worker and democratic: the trade unions and their armed militias dominate the country. Their

leaderships give the power to the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. The revolution aborts from workers and socialist to a bourgeois democratic regime. After ten years it is liquidated since the counter-revolution triumphs.

**c) Large mobilizations of unarmed masses causing the social crisis of the armed forces, the soldiers no longer obey the officers**

Typical examples of this type are the Portuguese revolution in 1974 and the Iranian in 1979. The beginning of the Portuguese revolution in 1974 was a result of the defeat of the Portuguese army in Angola and Mozambique, a military putsch and a giant workers and popular mobilization against the fascist regime. There is no confrontation with the armed forces but these are destroyed by the revolutionary upsurge of the mass movement. Workers, soldiers, peasants and tenants committees emerge. All the housing states are occupied. A dual power emerges of the workers and people's committees and the bourgeois government supported by the workers parties and the head of the armed forces. These give a coup against the committees to impose a bourgeois democratic regime, in agreement with the Socialist Party, aborting the revolution.

Iran is a similar case: the mass movement faced for weeks and weeks the Shah' army until it makes it enter into a crisis that forces the Shah to flee. It is a colossal revolutionary victory that opens a stage of dual power very similar to the Russian Revolution of February, i.e., with Soviet form.

**d) Revolutions like the Spanish of 1931, without major mobilizations, which clash with the army, without social crisis of the armed forces and without dual power**

Many revolutions have been like the Spanish one, caused by the crisis of the bourgeois regime and the bourgeoisie as a class and the rise of the mass movement which blows to smithereens the monarchy in Spain, or modern fascist or semi-fascist regimes. In Latin America there have been several revolutions of this type, which do not create a dual power due to the relative strength of the bourgeois state and its armed forces.

The other side of this relative strength of the bourgeoisie is reflected in the weakness or non-existence of organs of power. There is political crisis in the armed forces, the officers enters in crisis, do not know what to do, but there is no social crisis, of confrontation of the soldiers with the officers.

The fact that there are no bloody clashes on the streets or that the army did not enter a social crisis (although it reflects the bourgeois crisis), i.e., that the soldiers become organized separately and break with discipline, has led to many Marxists not considering these revolutions as such. We believe that like other revolutions it produces a democratic stage of bourgeois power vacuum and aborts as a dramatic change of bourgeois political regime. For this reason we believe it is a revolution, although it is the weakest of all those we are describing.

None of these revolutions reached the phase of workers and peasants regime. There have been other revolutions of fundamental importance, political revolutions against the bureaucratic totalitarian regime, which were defeated as the Hungarian and Czechoslovak or which have not yet said their last word, like the Polish. The first two were brutally suppressed by the Red Army. The third has been suppressed by the Polish army but at a significantly lower level, i.e., without having achieved the success of the bureaucratic counter-revolution. These are defeated revolutions but of a fundamental symptomatic character to the development of the world revolution. In the next chapter we will deal with the character of these political revolutions and of the regime they face.

## Chapter 11

# The Stalinist regimes and the political revolution

Although they are product of different processes, almost antagonistic, all the regimes of the workers states are essentially equal. The Stalinist USSR was the result of a political counter-revolution. Thanks to a violent counter-revolution Stalinism was able to wipe out the Leninist regime. To do this it imprisoned, tortured and, above all, it murdered hundreds of thousands of workers, peasants and revolutionaries. The regimes of the workers states of this post-war are the result of a revolutionary war and not a counter-revolutionary war, but the regime is equally Stalinist. This is because the political regime of the party that led the revolutionary war was autocratic, totalitarian, as it was explained previously. Another reason is the class character of the leaderships of these party-armies. The result is the same. In one case, due to the Stalinist counter-revolution, it regressed from a workers democratic revolutionary regime to a totalitarian regime. In the other case there was no need for a counter-revolution to impose the totalitarian regime, since this was the regime of the party-army which led the revolutionary war.

Lest it be said that we exaggerate, we will make a description of all current regimes in the workers states, without distinguishing them by its genesis, and we will see that they are identical.

### The contemporary workers regimes

Comparing them with the one of Lenin (previously analysed), and among them we find the following characteristics, all opposed to Leninism:

#### 1. Absolute power is in the hands of the party-army that made the revolution

The workers organizations are entirely subordinate to it. These party-armies are petty bourgeois and bureaucratic, not workers. The Leninist regime is worker wherever you look at it.

#### 2. The political regime is totalitarian

***a) There is no freedom for the workers affiliated to their unions or to their other organizations.***

They can be persecuted and even imprisoned. If a Cuban worker in any organization, or in any other workers country, says that he is Trotskyist or he believes the United States is more democratic than Cuba, he would be immediately arrested. Under Leninism it would be otherwise.

***b) Single-party state***

Only a party or a false official, ruling, front is allowed to exist. No party has legality. The Leninist regime is multi-party before the civil war.

*c) Absolutely no freedom*

No one can write, think, research, create works of art, teach, or publish newspapers if they are not approved by the government. All publications, without exception, belong to the state, the government, from newspapers to books. The same goes for television, theatre and films.

*d) The trade unions are organs of the state.*

There is no freedom or independence of trade unions and all the other labour organizations in relation to the state. All of them are state organizations. Under Lenin, the unions are independent from the state.

### 3. A regime to build socialism in one country

It is a regime that no one voted and that only in very rare, very exceptional occasions, imposes a policy of mobilization, which will be skimped, highly controlled and non-permanent. Its every day policy is directly counter-revolutionary, repressor of all workers and popular mobilization. Much less it is a regime that supports the permanent mobilization of workers around the world. Fidel Castro supported the Red Army in Czechoslovakia and Jaruzelski in Poland. He did not support, therefore, the Polish or Czech workers but their executioners.

Globally they defend the theory and program of revolution by stages or a popular, reactionary type of agrarian socialism.

### 4. A petty bourgeois, bureaucratic, totalitarian and nationalist party

The ruling party has all the characteristics of the regime, as it could not be otherwise.

*a) Petty bourgeois, bureaucratic.* None of its leaderships was made in the struggles of the workers and in their organizations, but in bureaucratic or petty bourgeois organizations. Only the Bolsheviks leaders who became Stalinist break this rule. But the pure Stalinists, who did not come from the Bolshevik party before taking power, became leaders in bureaucratic positions. Malenkov, for example, made a career that took him to the government of the USSR, as typewriting secretary to Molotov. Fidel Castro, as Guevara explained in a letter, was equal to a radical<sup>1</sup> leader of Argentina. His political formation was petty bourgeois.

*b) Bureaucratic, totalitarian.* In none of the parties ruling the workers states there are public discussions, tendencies, transcendent voting or congresses which vote for majority or minority. Everything, absolutely everything is voted unanimously. There is therefore no internal democracy. The ruling bureaucracy imposes its opinion and will on the rank and file of the party as it did before the taking of power.

*c) Reformist, stageist party, which practices peaceful political coexistence with sectors of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.* These ruling parties always teach the masses that there are exploiter sectors, bourgeois or imperialist, in which we must believe and support. Fidel Castro today tells us that we must rely on the ultra-reactionary bourgeoisie of Contadora.<sup>2</sup> He tells us that we must trust the secret democracy of that exploitative scum, the conservative parties of Colombia and Venezuela. Before, he had told us that Carter was progressive. He says the same of the Mexican government, prostituted agent of American imperialism.

The Chinese party calls to support the most reactionary regimes on Earth on the grounds that they are against Russian hegemony. Let us not talk of the Stalinist from birth, the most heinous counter-revolutionaries embedded in the labour movement we have known, who have supported Hitler as progressive at a time in their history.

*d) None of the parties has called to build a new international.* All these parties are fleeing like from the plague the call to build a revolutionary international to confront imperialism and the national exploiters. They refuse to have the policy of building an international because this organization would prevent them from carrying out their closely narrow, nationalist, reformist policy of alliances or trust in the bourgeoisie. The flip side of this refusal to have a policy and an internationalist organization is their refusal to federate

---

1 It refers to a leader of the **Radical Civic Union** (Spanish: *Unión Cívica Radical, UCR*), a social liberal political party in Argentina. The term 'radical' in the party's name referred to its demand for universal male suffrage, which was considered radical at the time in the late 1800s. **[Translators Note]**

2 The **Contadora Group** was an initiative launched in the early 1980s by the foreign ministers of Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela to deal with the military conflicts in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala, which were threatening to destabilize the entire Central American region. **[Translators Note]**

with other workers states. None of the ruling parties has raised this slogan that would accelerate in a colossal way the economic development of the workers countries.

## **The counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism**

There are many reasons for revolutions of this post-war to freeze or abort. Of these reasons, the most important, the objective, decisive factor is the existence of counter-revolutionary Stalinism. The counter-revolutionary character of the Stalinist parties and the Russian government hinder the prospect of the revolutions aiming at, once again, repeating the experience of new successful October revolutions. The petty-bourgeois colonial and semi-colonial parties, which have succeeded with guerrilla warfare without being Stalinists at first, are objectively influenced by the role of the USSR and the Stalinist parties. The same goes with the workers movement; it is convinced that its role is not to make the October socialist revolution, but to make deals with the exploiters to achieve front populist governments. The further they go is to fight for popular guerrilla warfare. Stalinism is the sworn enemy of October revolutions, of the Leninist workers regime and acts accordingly.

Much is discussed about why a revolution such as the Castroist came to have a regime equal to that of the USSR, totalitarian and of single party rule. We believe that this is not because the USSR assimilates their totalitarian regimes, but rather to the totalitarian character of all the party-armies. Even before taking power they are totalitarian. When taking it they remain what they already were, rather they are fortified. This is why after taking power they become Stalinists. The same goes for any government of a party-army that takes power without expropriating the bourgeoisie: if it is one-party totalitarian it will become “Marxist-Leninist”, i.e. Stalinist. These are the bourgeois Stalinist governments that we have already defined.

## **The political revolution against the bureaucratic regime**

Trotskyism is the only current of the workers movement that poses the need to carry out a political, not social, revolution against the totalitarian regime of the bureaucratic workers states. This political revolution is the opposite in its revolutionary meaning to the bourgeois political revolutions that freeze or abort the socialist revolutions in progress towards their triumph. The political revolution in totalitarian workers states is the next step in the revolution if this again gets to be developed.

By contrast, the bourgeois political revolution is the brake that the counter-revolutionary workers parties put on the workers and mass movement to prevent what they fear most: a triumphant October revolution. The Trotskyist analysis has been confirmed by reality. There have already been three political revolutions: the Hungarian of 1956, the Czechoslovakian of 1968 and the current Polish revolution. All of them were urban, workers, led by the working class with its organizations. All of them in their first stage, which they have not yet managed to overcome by succeeding, are democratic, popular, against the totalitarian regime. But this democratic revolution will open the way immediately, as soon as it succeeds, to the need to impose a regime like that of Lenin. As a hypothesis it is quite feasible to also have two political revolutions: one democratic, of defeat of the totalitarian regime and one after the of taking power by the revolutionary workers organizations.

Trotskyism is essentially characterized, among other programmatic points, for taking the program-theory of the permanent revolution to its ultimate consequences: the workers political revolution to the totalitarian Stalinist regime in all contemporary workers countries. The great political revolutions that we have already witnessed clearly demonstrate that they occur and that they will prevail, since they are the only tests of what it is to come. What sharply distinguishes Trotskyism today is that it is the only international party which is for implementing the Leninist regime in all labour organizations.

The Polish revolution opens the prospect of a new kind of political revolution, one in which, as proposed by Lenin, the large democratic workers organizations — such as Solidarity, although its leadership is not revolutionary — take power. It would be a workers democratic dictatorship, but not revolutionary, not a regime of October. Even if this highly progressive variant takes place, we would continue fighting for Lenin’s regime, i.e., for a revolutionary regime.

## Chapter 12

# The different situations

The definitions we have given about revolutions allow us to specify the situations of the class struggle. That is, what conditions need to happen in reality for these revolutions to take place.

### The non-revolutionary situation

As we have already pointed out, until World War I and the outbreak of the Russian Revolution of 1917, the epoch is reformist, non-revolutionary. The bourgeoisie was increasingly wealthy, but also the whole society was wealthier, both in the advanced capitalist countries as in some privileged semi-colonies such as Argentina.

Although the bourgeoisie gave nothing away to the workers, when these came out to fight they could go on achieving what they needed: the 8-hour day, better wages, trade unions and powerful and legal workers parties. There were struggles, and very hard, to achieve these gains. But the fact that they could achieve them, that the bourgeoisie could grant them, took the workers away from the struggle for power. Why fight against a system that, ultimately, allowed workers to live increasingly better?

This reformist, non-revolutionary, situation is the one prevalent in this epoch. Workers did not resort to revolutionary methods nor did they fight against the capitalist state. And the bourgeoisie did not need to crush the working class with methods of civil war: they either restrained its struggles with major concessions before it could endanger the capitalist system and its state, or with reactionary measures.

Non-revolutionary situation is, therefore, when the social classes are not locked in a fight to death. It is a stable situation, of equilibrium. It can only occur long term if there is a good economic situation that allows making concessions to the masses. For this reason, the classic bourgeois regime of these situations is bourgeois democracy, where conflicts are settled peacefully in parliament.

In the current revolutionary epoch and stage there continue to be non-revolutionary situations, but they are only stable in most of the imperialist countries which have not yet been shaken to their foundations by the economic crisis. They were also stable for many years in some privileged semi-colonies, such as Argentina or Uruguay. However, the trend of this era of sharp clashes between revolution and counter-revolution is that non-revolutionary situations disappear and, when they do occur, they are increasingly short.

### The October revolutionary situation

Studying the first triumphant workers revolution, Russia, Trotsky identified four conditions for a revolutionary situation to exist:

1) *The total, economic and political, crisis of the bourgeoisie and its state.* The bourgeoisie in Russia did not know what to do. How to continue the war with an army where soldiers deserted or the generals

were put in prison? What to do with the economy, which was in ruins? What was the government for, if nobody paid it any attention? It was a catastrophe. The bourgeoisie could not rule. This is the first condition, because if there is no crisis, economic, political and of all types in the bourgeoisie, there is no revolutionary situation even when the working class is very combative.

2) *The leftward shift of the petty bourgeoisie or middle class.* It is a factor equally or more important than the previous one and it is linked to it. If there is no economic and political crisis, the middle class lives well and enjoys the 'order' needed to live well: it supports the bourgeois regime. And if the bourgeois regime has mass support it is almost impossible for it to be defeated by the workers revolution. The revolution only succeeds if the proletariat is supported by a massive sector of the petty bourgeoisie, that is, if the majority of the population wants to make a revolution. The Bolshevik Party did not make the revolution alone; it made it joined to the left Socialist Revolutionaries, which split off from those of the right precisely because a broad sector of the peasantry — which was the basis of the SR party — was going towards revolutionary positions.

3) *The revolutionary will of the working class.* In other words, that the workers are already convinced that they have to make a revolution; they want to do it. Sometimes, it is much more than revolutionary will; they have already built their own organizations to seize power: the soviets in Russia, the COB in Bolivia in 1952, etc.

4) *The existence of a revolutionary Marxist party that has influence of masses,* wants to seize power and fight with everything to do it, directing the working class.

From this definition of revolutionary situation or of the conditions for the revolution to succeed, Trotsky defined the pre-revolutionary situation very simply. The revolution was already prepared or being prepared when the first three conditions were met, but the last was still missing, the party. That is, although there were bourgeois crisis, a shift to the left of the middle class and a revolutionary will of the proletariat, and the ground was ready to give birth to a revolution, if the revolutionary party was weak or non-existent, the midwife was missing.

Pre-revolutionary situation was, therefore, a transitional situation. The whole society was walking towards the revolution, but it was a train without an engineer. And if the engineer did not appear, it was going to stop before reaching the terminal station: the triumph of the revolution.

## The new counter-revolutionary situations

As we have already seen, triumphant fascism is the bourgeois counter-revolution. For the counter-revolution to be successful it is also necessary for a number of conditions to take place, a counter-revolutionary situation. They are:

1) That there has previously been a revolutionary upsurge of the working class, caused by the economic and political crisis of the bourgeoisie, which threatens the state and the bourgeois regime.

2) That this upsurge has terrified the bourgeoisie to the extent of turning critical sectors of the same in favour of using methods of civil war to end this danger.

3) That large sectors of the petty bourgeoisie lean towards the bourgeois side and face the proletariat. In general, we can say that this phenomenon occurs because the proletariat is led by reformist parties, who refuse to fight for power and annihilate the fascist or coup danger in the streets and with weapons. As hesitant class, the petty bourgeoisie, sunk by the crisis, if it does not see a strong and clearly directed course of the proletariat, is inclined to find a solution to the crisis through the counter-revolution.

4) That, precisely because of its counter-revolutionary reformist leadership, the proletariat is confused and disoriented.

These counter-revolutionary situations are similar, in their general features, before and after World War II. But they vary primarily on the role played by the petty bourgeoisie in the counter-revolution. Before World War II, in the fascist counter-revolution, the petty bourgeoisie, together with the underclass, was organized, mobilized and armed by monopolies in a great movement that attacked and crushed the proletariat with methods of civil war. After the crushing defeat of fascism and Nazism in World War II, the new counter-revolutions are fundamentally military coups. They are preceded by terrorist attacks on the vanguard of the labour movement, "guerrilla" type, executed by small vigilante and paramilitary gangs. Once the coup succeeds, selective methods of state terrorism are applied, which annihilate the working and popular vanguard, executed directly by the armed and police forces. The petty bourgeoisie

plays a very important role as a social base of these counter-revolutionary coups, but it is a rather passive role: it does not mobilize or massively arms itself to defeat the working class in the streets.

## **The new revolutionary situations of the post-war**

The revolutions that have taken place in this post-war period up to the present have not met the four conditions defined by Trotsky for the revolutionary triumph of October:

Those who managed to expropriate the bourgeoisie and build a workers state, did not have as decisive revolutionary and vanguard class the urban or industrial proletariat. These were revolutions which developed in the countryside, mobilizing the peasantry and/or rural proletariat and which, after a long guerrilla war, conquered the cities.

At its head there was no a revolutionary Marxist workers party, but bureaucratic or petty bourgeois parties.

That is, the last two conditions defined by Trotsky, the revolutionary will of the proletariat and the revolutionary Marxist party, were absent in these successful revolutions.

Instead, the first two conditions were greatly developed: the economic and political crisis of the capitalist regime, and the shift to the left, towards revolutionary action against the regime by the people in general.

This happened because in this epoch the crisis of the bourgeoisie is no longer acute but short-term, as in the past. Now the crisis of the bourgeoisie is acute but also chronic, permanent, unresolvable. This crisis, in the political arena is chronic and without solution for the bourgeois regime and the state. And in the economic arena, it causes a catastrophe that extends for years and years, forcing the exploited to fight desperately if they do not wish to physically starve.

Hence these revolutions succeed and come to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, so far, in the weakest semi-colonial countries, that no longer have a way out.

As we have already defined, these are unconscious socialist revolutions, of February. They fall under the Leninist definition, broader than that of Trotsky: there is a revolutionary situation when those above cannot continue to rule as before and those below do not want to continue being ruled as before.

These triumphant February revolutions present a significant difference in relation to the Russian February. In this, the February revolution was headed and led by the proletariat, which did not happen in those we are defining.

Besides the two conditions already mentioned, it would be possible to add a third and fourth condition for these revolutions to succeed, always in the sense of expropriating the bourgeoisie.

The third condition is that the masses mobilized against the regime destroy, in the course of this mobilization, the bourgeois armed forces and with them, the bourgeois state. If this condition is not met, there can be no expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

The fourth condition is that the impasse is prolonged after the triumph over the old regime. Specifically, that imperialism assaults again the regime until forcing the petty bourgeois leadership of the revolution to expropriate the bourgeoisie as a defensive measure to avoid being annihilated.

There have also been, as we have seen, revolutionary situations that meet the first three conditions defined by Trotsky, but not the fourth. The best example is the Bolivian revolution of 1952, where the following happened:

- 1) Crisis of the bourgeoisie and its regime.
- 2) Radicalization of the petty bourgeoisie, in this case primarily the peasantry.
- 3) Actions and revolutionary will of the working class, which is organized in a revolutionary union that is also an organization of power, the COB. And it goes even further: it becomes armed forming its own militias and it destroys the army through an insurrection.

But the fourth condition does not occur, because there is no revolutionary Marxist party at the head of the working class.

So far, this type of revolutions has only happened in Bolivia, but it should be studied whether it is similar to those of Iran or Portugal even though these did not go as far. They triumphed over the counter-revolutionary regime, but so far they never triumphed over the bourgeoisie (there was no expropriation) or over the state (there was no workers state).

Finally, there are revolutions that overthrow a counter-revolutionary regime without destroying the armed forces and the bourgeois state, such as the Argentinian, Bolivian, Peruvian or Spanish of 1931,

which meet the two conditions common to all these February revolutions: chronic crisis of the regime and the bourgeois economy and revolutionary mobilization of the masses. Not having destroyed the armed forces, these revolutionary situations cannot lead in any way to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, i.e., the triumph of the socialist revolution.

These February revolutionary situations are preceded by pre-revolutionary situations, which might be called “pre-February”. These pre-revolutionary situations occur when the bourgeois regime goes into crisis and the people break with it leaving it without any social support. They are pre-revolutionary because the issue of power has not yet risen, but the conditions are ripe for it. They become revolutionary when the masses manage to unify their hatred of the regime in a great unified mobilization at national level, causing the crisis of the regime to become total and absolute.

Finally, it should be noted that the fact that this kind of situations and revolutions have taken place, does not negate the definition of Trotsky. It rather gives them precision as October pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations. Ultimately, these new situations and revolutions are still steps towards the Octobers that will inevitably take place again. That is, to the revolutions made by the industrial and urban working class as the leader of the toiling masses and directed by a revolutionary internationalist Marxist party.

# Has the Brazilian revolution begun?

## Letter from Nahuel Moreno to the leadership of Alicerce

Buenos Aires, 11 May 1984  
To the leadership of Alicerce<sup>1</sup>  
Dear Comrades,

Impacted by events that have shaken your country we have decided to follow the situation on a daily basis and read, no sooner they arrive, your documents. We thus think to collaborate with you, even more than we were doing, in the development of your political line.

We have read the following materials: the last two newspapers, the document of 28 April and the Internal Bulletin No. 17 of 3 May. We believe that your analysis of the situation can be summarized schematically in three points (you will say whether we are wrong):

*First*, you define the situation as a revolutionary as of “the gigantic rally of one million people in Rio de Janeiro by the campaign for direct elections”. You complete and give more precision to this definition with another: There was no revolutionary crisis. This crisis, like the fall of the government, the triumph of the amendment in Parliament and the general strike, was centimetres away from happening, could have taken place, but it did not because the leaderships betrayed the general strike.

*Second*, according to you, who emerged victorious from the vote in parliament, worn out, in crisis but triumphant, was the government (“it was a victory for the government at the expense of a brutal wear and without being able to reverse the revolutionary stage”, p. 2 document of 28 April 1984). The conclusion is obvious: in this confrontation the mass movement was defeated. It was not a historic defeat, it did not change the revolutionary situation, but a temporary defeat is a defeat.

*Third*, the defeat of the masses and the triumph of the government are not significant, because the workers and the people gave a colossal leap in political consciousness, as evidenced by the booping to Brizola. Do not forget that I am outlining the situation and there is some imprecision and confusion in your documents, fully justified because the events have just taken place.

This letter has the aim of bringing up our doubts, especially in regard to of these three characterizations. First things first.

### Has a revolutionary crisis opened since the mobilization of Rio?

Our first doubt is summarized in the subheading. You define the situation as revolutionary; we suspect that since the mobilization of Rio up to the vote in Parliament a revolutionary crisis opened. You define what happened as follows: “the government completely lost control of the situation, a characteristic figure of a revolutionary stage” (already quoted document, p. 1). Precisely for us what characterizes a

---

<sup>1</sup> **Alicerce** [Foundations]: Youth group of *Convergencia Socialista* [Socialist Convergence], Brazilian section of the LIT-CI. [Translators note].

revolutionary crisis is that the current government loses "... completely control of the situation". Our hypothesis is that as of the 1982 state elections, in which the government was defeated, opened the crisis of same, which was combined with the economic crisis to inaugurate a revolutionary situation. This, from the colossal and historic mobilization in Rio leapt to revolutionary crisis. The vote in Parliament closed this crisis with a colossal defeat for the government, not with its triumph, with a historical victory of the mass movement, rather than its defeat.

New light on a discussion

With the comrades in the leadership of your party who visited us we had a discussion more over form than substance. The comrades held that the situation of last year, and in fact earlier this year, was pre-revolutionary; for us it was revolutionary. We reached a formula of agreement: it was going from pre-revolutionary to revolutionary. You say in the document that what has happened shows that this definition was correct, because only in the last few weeks, since Rio, we have gone to a revolutionary situation.

We suspect that, both in the above discussion as well as the one now opening up between us, on the characterization of the current situation, there is more than just a discussion over form. Perhaps the crux of the matter is not having well specified definitions of revolutionary situation and revolutionary crisis. If this were the case, last year's discussions about whether the situation was revolutionary or not, acquire a new light. This is what we will try to verify.

### The different situations

Everything we say about revolutionary crisis and revolutionary and pre-revolutionary situations is tentative, since they are concepts we are developing and re-developing. They deal with many phenomena that have occurred in the post-war (and possibly in the world war itself), especially with the triumphant democratic and/or of February revolutions.

To start we had two definitions of revolutionary situation. One from Lenin: "the 'lower classes' do not want to live in the old way and the 'upper classes' cannot carry on in the old way". One from Trotsky, who gives four conditions that characterize it: first, a very acute crisis of the bourgeoisie; second, a massive turnaround of the petty bourgeoisie against the regime; third, revolutionary will and organization of the workers movement; fourth, the existence of a strong revolutionary Marxist party to lead the masses and which is firmly committed to taking power (I merely summarize Trotsky's definition, without repeating quotes which we have already given on other occasions).<sup>2</sup> Pre-revolutionary situation was defined by Trotsky following the same method and starting off from his definition of revolutionary situation. For him pre-revolutionary situation was equal to that of revolutionary less the fourth factor, i.e., of the existence of "a strong revolutionary Marxist party to lead the masses and which is firmly committed to taking power" as we summarized in the preceding lines. The characterization of pre-revolutionary situation was when the first three conditions of the definition of a revolutionary situation were met: "first, a very acute crisis of the bourgeoisie; second, a massive overturning of the petty bourgeoisie against the regime; third, revolutionary will and organization of the workers movement".

But as we have said many times, in this post-war, many revolutions triumphed without the conditions which, according to Trotsky, were required for a revolutionary situation. Thus, there have been triumphant revolutions, not only revolutionary situations, without much influence of the working class and without the latter heading the revolutionary process as a class (the third condition of Trotsky). Neither has there been any revolutionary victory led by a revolutionary Marxist party (the fourth condition of Trotsky). The most dynamic social sectors in almost all triumphant revolutions in recent decades, starting with the Chinese, were the peasantry and urban non-proletarian sectors, on the one hand. On the other hand, the parties in the leadership were petty bourgeois and/or bureaucratic, from Fidel Castro to Mao Tse Tung.

These facts have been leading us, for years, to consider the need to find other definitions of the revolutionary and pre-revolutionary situations. We believe we are close to solving the problem: the first two of Trotsky's conditions (bourgeois crisis and turning of the petty bourgeoisie against the ruling regime) have sometimes been sufficient to cause revolutionary situations, some betrayed by their leadership and others, despite of their leadership, which led to the triumph of the revolution.

<sup>2</sup> Trotsky's as well as Lenin's definitions may be found in the appendix of this book, pages 46-49.

If we were to summarize this new definition we would find the old Leninist formula: “there is revolutionary situation when the lower classes not to want to and the upper classes are unable to live in the old way”.

If this definition is correct, it underscores the need for a new definition of pre-revolutionary situation, for a compelling reason: the conditions of the revolutionary situation, as we have just come to define it, has one fewer constraint than Trotsky’s old definition of pre-revolutionary situation, since no longer is it essential that the working class be the vanguard and direction for the triumph of the revolution. How, then, do we define the pre-revolutionary situations that occurred in this post-war, or those which preceded the revolutionary situations or victories?

A first element to achieve progress in the definition is that it must have fewer constraints than the two we have taken to define the revolutionary situation. In other words, it has to be less than “a tremendous crisis of the regime and a massive turnaround of the petty bourgeoisie against the regime.” Under this reasoning, we believe we can give two provisional definitions (I insist on provisional, because here we are developing them daily): one genetic, it is the intermediate step of a counter-revolutionary or non-revolutionary to a revolutionary situation; the other structural, a colossal political, economic crisis of the regime. Perhaps it could also include that of a massive shift of the petty bourgeoisie to the revolution, although there no colossal crisis of the regime.

Returning to Lenin we would say, is “when those above cannot, and if they can those below do not want to”.

## **Revolutionary situation and revolutionary crisis**

It is our widespread opinion that in Brazil, for about a year, “those above cannot and those below do not want to”. Since then Figueiredo does not control the situation, but rather he is sailing adrift. Specifically, for over a year Figueiredo’s regime is in political crisis and the capitalist Brazilian regime is in economic crisis. Both crises have been increasingly acute and, at the same time, there is an increasingly massive shift of the population towards the opposition and towards confrontation with the Figueiredo regime. Lastly, we have defined the situation as revolutionary, because if there was only a crisis of the regime it would be pre-revolutionary.

You define revolutionary situation “when the government completely loses control of the situation”. If it happens, as it happened last year in Brazil, that there is a brutal crisis of the regime and a massive population shift against it, but the government has yet to lose total control of events, for you there is no revolutionary situation. For us there is.

This difference then shifts to the question of the revolutionary crisis.

For us, when “the control of the situation is lost” we are not simply before a revolutionary situation, but before a revolutionary crisis. And that is what it happened since the mobilization of Rio de Janeiro.

According to the description you make, after the voting in Parliament, the government came out much worse than before the voting, and before the mobilization. If you were consistent, you should write that the government “keeps losing control of the situation”. But if the entire process from mobilization of Rio up to the present you define it as “revolutionary situation”, you are never going to find anything that can be defined as a revolutionary crisis. Because revolutionary crises is precisely when the control of the situation is totally lost. This is exactly why it cannot last very long, weeks or, at most, two or three months. Although it is also possible that we will have to amend this statement and there may be a very protracted revolutionary crisis, perhaps as what is happening in Bolivia.

## **The revolution began in Rio de Janeiro**

We believe that from the big demonstration in Rio there was in Brazil a revolutionary crisis. That day, to use Trotsky’s famous phrase referring to the general strike with factory occupations in France, “the Brazilian revolution began”. As you can see, we find a strong parallel between Brazil and Argentina, but with a much faster pace in your country.

From the demonstration of Rio begins the defeat of the government. This suffers a series of reversals — including the parliamentary voting itself, to which we will refer further on — that left it shattered.

I do not know whether we can already speak of the government having been defeated, although I suspect it has been. Using a very cautious formula, which for me it falls short in relation to reality, at least we have to say that the revolution has already begun. At most, we can say that the revolution triumphed in the parliamentary voting.

What you yourself describe points in this direction. If revolutionary situation is that the control of the situation is completely lost, if this situation was opened from the demonstration of Rio; if after the parliamentary voting the situation is getting worse for the government... this means the government lost control of the situation in a full, absolute, impressive way. What name do we give to this process?

## A scheme instead of reality

You apply a scheme to reality and, as this scheme does not fit, you deny reality. For you, revolutionary crisis and triumph of the revolution was: general strike, triumph of the direct elections in Parliament and fall of Figueiredo. There was no strike, direct elections did not prevail in Parliament and Figueiredo did not fall. So for you there was neither revolutionary crisis, nor triumph of the revolution, but a triumph of the government.

Of course, ideally it would have happened like that. But this optimal sequence is just what did not happen. This does not mean that because our scheme did not happen then the exact opposite did happen: the government won and the masses were defeated.

Once again I give you the example we like so much of the boxing match. Ideally, the optimum would be that our boxer wins in the first round, in the first minute of the fight, by physical destruction and knockout of the opponent. Our boxer has all the conditions to achieve this categorical victory, but the coach, sold out to the adversary, avoids with his treacherous instructions victory in the first round, but cannot prevent a beating. Therefore the optimum did not happen, but it is very good and healthy that our boxer is able to impose another scheme: first round, he gives the opponent a great beating; second round, he leaves the opponent with a bloated eye and blood running from the nose; third round, he breaks a rib; fourth round, leaves him groggy.

What definition would we make of the situation at the end of the fourth round? If we are schematic, we say that the enemy fighter wins, because ours could not, due to the coach, win by knockout in the first minute of the first round. But the reality would be the opposite: the opponent is taking a severe beating and ours is running away with the fight.

This comparison serves to clarify the contradictions between the description you make of the situation and the definition to which you arrive. You yourself say that Figueiredo comes out of his apparent victory battered, destroyed, with an increasingly acute crisis. And you add that the masses have advanced greatly subjectively: they increasingly hate the government and Congress, they booed Brizola, etc., i.e. they come out with a great deal left in the tank. The picture you yourself paint is of a boxer, Figueiredo, who has received a huge beating, and another boxer who feels increasingly stronger and more confident, the mass movement. But this picture or description can only be explained if the latter boxer, although he did not destroy his enemy in the first round, has been winning and he continues to win decisively a round after another.

It is very dangerous to aim to apply schemes to reality, instead of beginning from an objective study of reality itself to see in what specific form our definitions take place. In Argentina, for example, there was a big discussion because many comrades thought that, as a general was still in government, nothing had happened, there had been neither a revolutionary crisis nor a revolutionary situation. With what we learned in Argentina, possibly if Figueiredo had fallen, even without general strike, you would have been correct in defining the situation and the crisis. But as neither the “Argentine scheme” took place, as Figueiredo remains and not another military, there is a danger that you confuse everything: there was no revolutionary crisis, Figueiredo did not lose but won, and so forth.

For us it is evident that he lost. That he left destroyed from each collision with the mass movement. And the discussion is whether he is only groggy or, as it is our impression, his seconds already threw in

the towel or the referee stopped the fight, i.e. he has already lost, but not by knockout but by technical knockout or by submission.

## **The fetishism of the general strike**

It seems to us that you make a fetish of the general strike. Your analysis suggests that apparently the direct elections were not voted and Figueiredo did not fall because the treacherous leaders restrained the general strike.

It is true that with a general strike Figueiredo would almost certainly have fallen and the amendment would have been voted. But the relationship cannot be mechanical; we cannot say it was absolutely certain. What is certain is that with a general strike the government would have been much weaker and the revolutionary process much stronger, the revolutionary process would have given a leap and, if we could triumph, this triumph would be today much more categorical. It is also true that the general strike immediately raises the question of power.

But making a fetish of the general strike, like the revolutionary trade unionists do, is very dangerous. The general strike is a colossal tool of the revolutionary process, but this does not begin nor ends with it. The general strike is just another method and slogan, of great importance, of course, of the revolutionary process.

In Brazil, as in many other countries, instead of general strike there was something equally important: a demonstration of one million in Rio and another of one and a half million in Sao Paulo. Both demonstrations were colossal levers of the class struggle. What we need to discuss is whether these two demonstrations defeated the government, although due to the bourgeois and bureaucratic leaderships of the workers movement, those wins appear mediated, distorted.

We do not understand why you make such an absolute difference between general strike and demonstrations in the streets; if there is a general strike, everything changes; if there is no general strike, although there are large demonstrations that change the situation, the government continues to prevail. Sometimes demonstrations have success equal to or superior to the general strike. Moreover, the general strike may fail because it was not well prepared, or it may succeed and be betrayed. The Shah of Iran fell mainly because of the street demonstrations, which were combined with the strike, but the decisive factor were the increasingly imposing mass demonstrations. In the United States there was no general strike, but the large demonstrations provoked one of the most dramatic reversals of class struggle when they forced Yankee imperialism to withdraw from Vietnam, suffering the first military defeat in its history.

We believe that the demonstrations of Rio and Sao Paulo — and the other accompanying cities — had the effect of a triumphant general strike. They meant the beginning of the defeat of the government and a colossal victory of the mass movement. And that defeat and that victory were expressed in the parliamentary voting itself.

## **The defeat of government and the triumph of the masses in parliament**

In relation to the voting on the amendment, we believe that you again apply a simplistic scheme and by identity principle: adoption of the amendment equals victory of the masses and defeat of the government; no voting for the amendment equals defeat of the masses and a win for the government. But the first truth does not imply that the opposite be true; although it is true that the adoption of the amendment would have been a complete and obvious triumph of the masses, it is not true that if this was not approved it was necessarily a defeat for the masses and triumph for the government.

This simplistic and by identity principle analysis (if A equals B, not-A equals not-B), prevented you from seeing what had actually happened with this specific electoral mechanics. You did not realize that this electoral mechanics distortedly expressed the colossal triumph of the mass movement and the government's defeat.

If there is, for example, a voting in the Senate, where the third part is bionic,<sup>3</sup> and to win two-thirds of the votes are needed, and you “only” got 60 percent ... who won and who lost? According to

---

<sup>3</sup> In Brazil “bionic” positions were those appointments made by the authorities in Brasilia at the time of the military dictatorship. [Translator's Note]

you, the government won because the two-thirds vote is not achieved. But a concrete, Marxist, analysis would show that it is a total defeat of the government — although the motion of the opposition has not succeeded — because this 60 percent, if we subtract the bionic sector, says that at least 85 percent of the population is against them, which is distortedly demonstrated in the very fact that nearly 90 percent of elected senators, not bionic ones, voted against the government.

Something like this happened with Deputies. The amendment was not adopted, not because a lot of deputies voted in favour of the government, but in spite of the opposite happening: only a small minority of the deputies voted for the government, while an overwhelming majority voted against.

The spectacular fact that you do not calibrate in all its importance is that the voting divides Brazilian politics in two eras. Before the voting, there were two political blocs in the country. After the voting, bipartisanship was broken forever. In Deputies there were not two blocks, but three, one opponent of the government, widely majority; one that is still aligned with the government overwhelmingly minority; and a third block, consisting of a large number of deputies, who ran away from chambers to avoid voting for or against.

The emergence of this centrist bloc is a key element of our analysis of the voting. Because it was pro-government and it has ceased to be. Although it did not come to vote with the opposition against the government; this is its dynamics. This is precisely why the amendment, although it achieved an overwhelming majority in the chambers, did not obtain the two-thirds that might give it the triumph. But that so many government supporters have broken up with it is the superstructural expression that it is completely in crisis.

The voting has left the government completely up in the air. It was shown that it has lost almost all the support it still had in the last election, which is reflected by the fact that the government bloc in Deputies is, today, the third block in influence. Now its fate depends on where the new centrist sector is going which, if it joins the opposition, can checkmate the government. And this forces the government to negotiate immediately, without any guarantee that it can impose anything in these negotiations. The voting, leaving it in overwhelming minority and causing the breakdown of its block, in fact liquidated the government, expressing in the superstructure and distortedly the victory the mass movement had achieved in the streets.

### Let us not put dates for the revolutions for now

In this method of trying to apply schemes to reality you go to a slightly serious extreme. You say, for example, that “the assumed form of voting the amendment marked a date for the revolution in Brazil, unlike Argentina and Bolivia” (document of 28 April, page 2). We fear that, for you, the revolution could only explode on a fixed date, which was on the voting of the amendment. From everything you say it derives, too, that it was a fixed date for the general strike.

Put another way, for you the revolution could only take place on the day of the voting on the amendment and with a general strike. As that did not happen, the revolution did not take place.

I alert you on this wrong method. Imposing dates and rules to revolution express an aspiration, a desire: to knock out the opponent by demolition in the first round. But this is useless. It prevents us from seeing reality, the rhythm of the class struggle and, therefore, to adapt to it our slogans and political line.

### The immediate perspectives

These exchanges of points of views on the definition of the Brazilian situation are not idle: from them arise the forecasts on the immediate perspective.

From the characterization you make, you get a correct prognosis: almost certainly the government crisis will continue. But, you add, it is not discarded, even though it is the least likely scenario, that a situation like the Chilean takes place, with a resistant Pinochet agglutinating around him the hardliners and violently repressing the mass movement.

From our analysis, however, it is clear that it cannot happen in Brazil anything at all similar to Chile. Pinochet violently resists because he has not yet been defeated. The Brazilian situation has widely

surpassed the Chilean due to the advance of the revolution. For us the dictatorship has been defeated or is on track to be inexorably defeated from the demonstrations and the parliamentary voting.

Let us leave aside, for the time being, whether this means it has already fallen. These two defeats have caused the government to be in a situation which is completely out of hand and it is forced to negotiate. Therefore, in our telephone conversation with Edu, we insisted that the situation was the same as that of Argentina, but much more dynamic. The current stage in Brazil is similar to that of Argentina when Galtieri entered into crisis and his succession was discussed. The military are negotiating with the bourgeois parties and the bureaucracy to see how they assimilate the defeat of the government to prevent the revolutionary movement of the masses from further development. We are in the negotiation stage with the Multiparty. We therefore believe that negotiation will prevail, and with a very specific goal: to fix how to dose the government's defeat.

This discussion, if we are right, has much to do also with the morals of the working class. It is different to tell it that it was defeated than to tell it that it has achieved much, including the defeat of the government, if the latter is true, since it would be ugly lying to it. If it is arranged that a negotiated president is anointed to call to direct elections within one or two years, you have to tell the workers that this is a colossal achievement that they got with their street demonstrations. And, at the same time, that they are trying to steal or administer this great triumph, using for it the treason of the trade union bureaucracy and the bourgeois parties.

We must explain to the masses with this revolutionary conquest they have blown to smithereens all the plans of the dictatorship, which intended stay a further six years (one year left for Figueiredo plus five years of a new mandate). And that the government controls absolutely nothing.

## The slogans and the program

This discussion is not idle because it is important to define our policy. If I am not mistaken since the voting in parliament you have incorporated several new slogans to your program: no to the negotiation-treason; no to the postponement of the general strike for when the amendment has been discussed with Figueiredo; general strike now to overthrow the government and get direct elections. These slogans are the expression of your current policy: they viciously attack the bourgeois opposition parties for wanting to negotiate with the government a way out and not continuing to fight for the direct elections; they repudiate the trade union bureaucracy for following the bourgeois parties and for delaying the call for an indefinite general strike to an indefinite date, the day of voting in parliament. They demand from the bureaucracy to set an immediate date for the general strike.

Being immersed in the events you have not had time to see how your slogans are linked with the analysis of the situation. We get the impression that you have fallen somewhat in empiricism raising slogans without sufficiently clarifying the situation and the results of the voting in Parliament.

We see a contradiction between your analysis of the situation and your current policy and slogans. The key to our program and slogans must start from the answer to a simple question: since the parliamentary election, has the stage changed or not? For us it has, from revolutionary situation pre triumph to revolutionary situation post triumph. For you it has not, as everything remains the same or worse with the pyrrhic victory of the government.

Here is where serious contradictions appear between your analysis, your implicit definition that there is no new higher stage caused by a triumph of the mass movement, and your political line and slogans. These are for a different stage and not for the same stage when they centre on the denunciation of the negotiations, the betrayal of the leaderships, posing general strike now for direct elections now. This either means that there was no defeat but rather a colossal victory or that you irresponsibly call for immediate general strike after a government victory. It is a question of knowing whether you are either against negotiations that are made to deepen a defeat (then General Strike Now! is no longer appropriate) or to strengthen the triumph (then yes, it should be the general strike the next day).

Because if as you say the government triumphed in Parliament, the bureaucracy is correct to postpone the confrontation with it for a more distant date and it is very right its line of first defeating Figueiredo's counteroffensive. If there was a triumph of the government there is inevitably a counteroffensive of the same. This must be precisely the explanation of the bourgeois opposition and the bureaucracy: we did

what we could to win the voting, but unfortunately, the government managed to defeat us, but morally the people won. Let us take advantage of this moral victory to negotiate with the government. The bureaucracy may use more sophisticated arguments, the betrayal of the opposition and variants of the kind to reach the same conclusion: "immediately we can do nothing". A good Marxist aims to see reality as it is. If there was an objective setback of the mass movement in the parliamentary election, the great task is to stop the government and recover from same. If this were the case, the bureaucracy with its wrong methods is right and we cannot denounce it as a traitor but for its bureaucratic leadership of a correct position: postponing the general strike.

We believe that the slogans you raise today are a big hit, but they only have factual basis in our analysis: the masses with their mobilization have gained victory after victory; the last one was the voting in parliament, which changed the stage. We should continue the mobilization and not stop it to negotiate. One more push and not even traces will be left of the military dictatorship.

If our definition that the revolution in Brazil has already started or that the democratic revolution has already won is correct; if the government had already been defeated or its defeat has already begun, then new political lines, program and slogans are needed. Empirically you reflect this need when you raise these new slogans that we have already discussed. But this is not enough. A new stage requires a new program.

For us the program for this new stage has several axes. The first and foremost is that it ceases to be or starts to no longer be the focus of our program Down with dictatorship! and Direct elections now! The directly transitional slogans of economic and political type begin to have much greater weight. We are riding two policies that must be combined but surpassing the old one. The greater weight in our current program becomes our positive proposal of government. And this central slogan can be no other than government of the PT and the two labour federations. Until the voting in parliament our proposal was general strike to achieve direct elections and throw out the government. Now we have to change radically and the call for a general strike must be done as a tactic to achieve the great strategic slogan of government of the PT and the labour federations.

As always we formulate all new definitions and program based on our method of trying to anticipate the possible perspective of future events. Just as last year we insisted upon you that we had to leave in the background the frontal slogan of Down with the government! for that of Direct elections now! and that the mass struggles and mobilizations against the government was going to happen through the latter, today we make a similar prognosis. The masses will move away or are already in the process of moving away from the struggle for direct elections. The same will begin to happen with the struggle to oust Figueiredo. This is due to two reasons: the first, that with the total defeat of the government the stage changed; the second, the betrayal of the leaderships that are going to instil in the masses that it is enough with what was achieved, that the dictatorship is finished in a short term, that in two or three years there will be direct elections for president and not in six years as the dictatorship wanted. That next president has committed to a democratic interregnum. The masses, grudgingly or not, will accept this situation. Because a crucial factor in the massive mobilization for direct elections was the fact that all bourgeois and workers opposition leaders ended up calling to the mobilization. Without this call the mobilization would have been much weaker and could have hardly defeated the government. Today the leaderships are satisfied with the victory achieved; they think it is enough and now they going to call for calm. This is also a new fact of life of critical importance. Therefore, they call a general strike for the parliamentary calends. Because of this our central slogan of government of the PT becomes ultra-propagandistic, since the combination of circumstances open to us is not as favourable as in the previous stage, which allows us to define a mobilizing slogan of national character.

We have to bring to the fore the fight against the economic crisis, layoffs and misery. We must focus the attack on the political and economic regime, prioritizing our old transitional program. And all this joined to the slogan of government of the PT and the labour federations and a political line of calling and pressure to the political and trade union leaderships of the working class.

The other central slogan of the stage remains the general strike ornamented with few slogans. At this stage we believe that economic ones or against the IMF and for non-payment of the debt.

It is necessary to study how to combine these slogans of workers government combined with the Constituent Assembly. We must also see (I do not know Brazilian legislation) whether we should raise:

Bionics out of the Senate! For immediate resignation of the bionics! Direct elections without bionics! This could be an intermediate slogan between Constituent Assembly and Direct Elections for President, since it would be Direct Elections for all Senators! It would be a slogan separate to that for Constituent Assembly and of immediate application, a slogan very important and very simple to explain to the mass movement. It could become relevant if, as I believe, the bourgeoisie arranges for the direct elections fixing a date two years away or something like that.

## **The masses level of consciousness**

I get the impression that you, just as you diminish the objective successes of the mass movement and the defeat of the government, are also too optimistic in the subjective field, in terms of the progress of their consciousness. You believe the masses already hate Congress and the bourgeois opposition leaders. You emphasize, for example, that the masses booed Brizola because he was not for the general strike.

We fully agree that the masses no longer believe in the government. It is a quantitative advance, because before they already did not believe in it. But even if you do not say it, it is clear you believe that there has been a qualitative leap in the consciousness of the masses regarding bourgeois agencies and parties; they repudiate congress, a million people booed Brizola; they break indeed with bourgeois institutions and “democratic” leaderships; and they continue advancing towards a great mass party, of class type. In the document, you say: “The PT and CUT have mass influence (or are in the process of becoming it)” (p. 5). In a subsequent Internal Bulletin you further advance: “It is quite likely that the PT get to have a spectacular weight in the masses, from there (it is already of masses right now and it will expand its influence qualitatively)”. The fact that you have advanced almost to the end in a few days indicates that your position is becoming more coherent.

We have some doubt that the leap in mass consciousness is so spectacular. We believe that they have taken an important step, but not to the extent of massively repudiating the parties and institutions of bourgeois democracy [...].

Well, comrades, I hope that our observations will help you somehow, and that if we do not convince you that then you prove it is us who are wrong. In the meantime know that we continue to follow your intervention, development and struggle to build a great party with mass influence; admirably.

Fraternal Trotskyist greetings.

**Nahuel**

# Appendix

## Lenin (1915)

To the Marxist it is indisputable that a revolution is impossible without a revolutionary situation; furthermore, it is not every revolutionary situation that leads to revolution. What, generally speaking, are the symptoms of a revolutionary situation? We shall certainly not be mistaken if we indicate the following three major symptoms: (1) when it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change; when there is a crisis, in one form or another, among the “upper classes”, a crisis in the policy of the ruling class, leading to a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth. For a revolution to take place, it is usually insufficient for “the lower classes not to want” to live in the old way; it is also necessary that “the upper classes should be unable” to live in the old way; (2) when the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual; (3) when, as a consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses, who uncomplainingly allow themselves to be robbed in “peace time”, but, in turbulent times, are drawn both by all the circumstances of the crisis and by the “upper classes” themselves into independent historical action.

Without these objective changes, which are independent of the will, not only of individual groups and parties but even of individual classes, a revolution, as a general rule, is impossible. The totality of all these objective changes is called a revolutionary situation. Such a situation existed in 1905 in Russia, and in all revolutionary periods in the West; it also existed in Germany in the sixties of the last century, and in Russia in 1859-61 and 1879-80, although no revolution occurred in these instances. Why was that? It was because it is not every revolutionary situation that gives rise to a revolution; revolution arises only out of a situation in which the above-mentioned objective changes are accompanied by a subjective change, namely, the ability of the revolutionary class to take revolutionary mass action strong enough to break (or dislocate) the old government, which never, not even in a period of crisis, “falls”, if it is not toppled over.

Such are the Marxist views on revolution, views that have been developed many, many times, have been accepted as indisputable by all Marxists, and for us, Russians, were corroborated in a particularly striking fashion by the experience of 1905. [...]

[...] In a word, a revolutionary situation obtains in most of the advanced countries and the Great Powers of Europe. [...]

[...] Will this situation last long; how much more acute will it become? Will it lead to revolution? This is something we do not know, and nobody can know. The answer can be provided only by the experience gained during the development of revolutionary sentiment and the transition to revolutionary action by the advanced class, the proletariat. There can be no talk in this connection about “illusions” or their repudiation, since no socialist has ever guaranteed that this war (and not the next one), that today’s revolutionary situation (and not tomorrow’s) will produce a revolution. What we are discussing is the indisputable and fundamental duty of all socialists — that of revealing to the masses the existence of a revolutionary situation, explaining its scope and depth, arousing the proletariat’s revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary determination, helping it to go over to revolutionary action, and forming, for that purpose, organisations suited to the revolutionary situation.

**Lenin, V. I.:** “The Collapse of the Second International”, 1915, *Lenin Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1974, Moscow, Volume 21, pages 212-217.

## Lenin (1920)

The fundamental law of revolution, which has been confirmed by all revolutions and especially by all three Russian revolutions in the twentieth century, is as follows: for a revolution to take place it is not enough for the exploited and oppressed masses to realise the impossibility of living in the old way, and demand changes; for a revolution to take place it is essential that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way. It is only when the “lower classes” do not want to live in the old way and the “upper classes” cannot carry on in the old way that the revolution can triumph. This truth can be expressed in other words: revolution is impossible without a nation-wide crisis (affecting both the exploited and the exploiters). It follows that, for a revolution to take place, it is essential, first, that a majority of the workers (or at least a majority of the class-conscious, thinking, and politically active workers) should fully realise that revolution is necessary, and that they should be prepared to die for it; second, that the ruling classes should be going through a governmental crisis, which draws even the most backward masses into politics (symptomatic of any genuine revolution is a rapid, tenfold and even hundredfold increase in the size of the working and oppressed masses—hitherto apathetic—who are capable of waging the political struggle), weakens the government, and makes it possible for the revolutionaries to rapidly overthrow it.

**Lenin, V.I.:** “Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder”, 1920, *Lenin Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1964, Moscow, Volume 31, p.17-118.

## Trotsky (1931)

1) For an analysis of a situation from a revolutionary point of view, it is necessary to distinguish between the economic and social prerequisites for a revolutionary situation and the revolutionary situation itself.

2) The economic and social prerequisites for a revolutionary situation take hold, generally speaking, when the productive powers of the country are declining; when the specific weight of a capitalist country on the world market is systematically lessened and the incomes of the classes are likewise systematically reduced; when unemployment is not merely the result of a conjunctural fluctuation but a permanent social evil with a tendency to increase. This characterizes the situation in England completely, and we can say that the economic and social prerequisites for a revolutionary situation exist and are daily becoming more and more acute. But we must not forget that we define a revolutionary situation politically, not only sociologically, and this includes the subjective factor. And the subjective factor is not only the question of the party of the proletariat. It is a question of the consciousness of all the classes, mainly of course of the proletariat and its party.

3) A revolutionary situation, however, begins only when the economic and social prerequisites for a revolution produce abrupt changes in the consciousness of society and its different classes. What changes?

a) For our analysis we must distinguish the three social classes: the capitalist, the middle class or petty bourgeoisie, the proletariat. The required changes in mentality of these classes are very different for each of them.

b) The British proletariat, far better than all the theoreticians, knows very well that the economic situation is very acute. But the revolutionary situation unfolds only when the proletariat begins to search for a way out, not on the basis of the old society, but along the path of a revolutionary insurrection against the existing order. This is the most important subjective condition for a revolutionary situation. The intensity of the revolutionary feelings of the masses is one of the most important indications of the maturity of the revolutionary situation.

c) But a revolutionary situation is one which must in the next period permit the proletariat to become the ruling power of society, and that depends to some extent, although less in England than in other countries, on the political thinking and mood of the middle class: its loss of confidence in all the traditional parties (including the Labour Party, a reformist that is, a conservative party), and its hope in a radical, revolutionary change in society (and not a counter-revolutionary change, namely, a Fascist).

d) The changes in the mood both of the proletariat and the middle class correspond and develop parallel to the changes in mood of the ruling class when it sees that it is unable to save its system, loses confidence in itself, begins to disintegrate, splits into factions and cliques.

4) At what point in these processes the revolutionary situation is totally ripe cannot be known in advance or indicated mathematically. The revolutionary party can establish that fact only through struggle; through the growth of its forces and influence on the masses, on the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie of the cities, etc.; and by the weakening of the resistance of the ruling classes.

5) If we apply these criteria to the situation in Britain we see:

a) That the economic and social prerequisites exist and are becoming more compelling and acute.

b) That the bridge, however, from these economic prerequisites to a psychological response has not yet been crossed. It is not a change in the economic conditions, already unbearable, that is required but changes in the attitude of the different classes to this unbearable catastrophic situation in England.

6) Economic development of society is a very gradual process, measured by centuries and decades. But when economic conditions are radically altered, the delayed psychological response can quickly appear. Whether quickly or slowly, such changes must inevitably affect the mood of the classes. Only then do we have a revolutionary situation.

7) In political terms this means:

a) That the proletariat must lose confidence not only in the Conservatives and Liberals, but also in the Labour Party. It must concentrate its will and its courage on revolutionary aims and methods.

b) That the middle class must lose confidence in the big bourgeoisie, the lords, and turn its eyes to the revolutionary proletariat.

c) That the propertied classes, the ruling cliques, rejected by the masses, lose confidence in themselves.

8) These attitudes will inevitably develop; but they do not exist today. They may develop in a short period of time, because of the acute crisis. They may develop in two or three years, even in a year. But today this remains a perspective, not a fact. We must base our policy on the facts of today, not those of tomorrow.

9) The political prerequisites for a revolutionary situation are developing simultaneously and more or less parallel, but this does not mean that they will all mature at the same moment — this is the danger that lies ahead. In the ripening political conditions, the most immature is the revolutionary party of the proletariat. It is not excluded that the general revolutionary transformation of the proletariat and the middle class and the political disintegration of the ruling class will develop more quickly than the maturing of the Communist Party. This means that a genuine revolutionary situation could develop without an adequate revolutionary party. It would be a repetition to some degree of the situation in Germany in 1923. But to say that this is the situation in England today is absolutely wrong.

10) We say that it is not excluded that the development of the party can lag behind the other elements of the revolutionary situation — but this is not inevitable. We cannot make an exact prediction, but it is not merely a question of a prediction. It is a question of our own activity.

11) How much time will the British proletariat need at this conjuncture of capitalist society to break its connections with the three bourgeois parties? It is entirely possible that the Communist Party with a correct policy will grow in proportion to the bankruptcy and disintegration of the other parties. It is our aim and duty to realize this possibility.

Conclusions: This explains sufficiently why it is totally wrong to say that the political conflict in England is between democracy and Fascism. The era of Fascism begins seriously after an important and, for a period of time, decisive victory of the bourgeoisie over the working class. The great struggles in England, however, lie ahead.

**Trotsky, Leon:** “What is a revolutionary situation?”, 17 November 1931, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930-31)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1974, pp. 352-355.

## Trotsky (1940)

The basic conditions for the victory of the proletarian revolution have been established by historical experience and clarified theoretically: 1) the bourgeois impasse and the resulting confusion of the ruling class; 2) the sharp dissatisfaction and the striving towards decisive changes in the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, without whose support the big bourgeoisie cannot maintain itself; 3) the consciousness of the intolerable situation and readiness for revolutionary actions in the ranks of the proletariat; 4) a clear program and a firm leadership of the proletarian vanguard – these are the four conditions for the victory of the proletarian revolution.

**Trotsky, Leon:** “Manifesto of the Fourth International on the imperialist war and the proletarian world revolution”, May 1940, in **Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)**, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1974, pp. 216-217.